The 2005 Young Adults’ Choices list is the 19th 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 2003 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 2004 and February 2005 in selected school districts throughout the United States. More than 11,000 ballots were counted for the books submitted for this year’s project. Students marked, “I liked the book,” “It was OK,” or “I didn't like the book.” The results were announced in May at the 2005 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in San Antonio, Texas, USA.

Publishers sent the books to the five team leaders in different regions in the United States. 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; working with the teachers, librarians, supervisors, and principals to implement the program; and writing the annotations. 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 2005 project:

Team 1: Lisa Morris-Wilkey (team leader): Casa Grande, Arizona; two high schools, two middle schools, and one K–8 Catholic school; rural.

Team 2: Lorrie L. Gallo and Kathleen M. Broskin (team leaders): Marion and Indiana, Pennsylvania; two high schools, one middle school, and one junior high; rural.

Team 3: Barbara Rawls and Jeanne Welt (team leaders): Madison, Alabama; two middle schools; suburban. Mary Long (trainee): three high schools and five middle schools; suburban.

Team 4: Patrice Kraus, Kathy Meyer, and Julie Powell (team leaders): West Des Moines, Iowa; one junior high, two high schools, and one alternative high school; suburban and urban.

Team 5: Geraldine Barnes and Kim Ford (team leaders): Memphis, Tennessee; three high schools and three middle schools; urban, suburban, and rural. Barbara A. Sears (trainee): Clifton, Virginia; one high school and two middle schools; 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.

Members of Literature for Young Adults Committee, cochaired by Deborah E. Krull and Cathy L. Denman, have written annotations for each title. Their initials indicate annotations written by individual committee members. Reviewers include Geraldine Barnes, Kim Ford, Mary Long, Julie Powell, Barbara Rawls, Lisa Morris-Wilkey, Kathy Meyer, Lorrie L. Gallo, Jeanne Welt, Kathleen M. Broskin, Patrice Kraus, Barbara A. Sears, and Carol Reinhard.

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 2005, but prices are subject to change.

The annotated 2005 Young Adults’ Choices list is downloadable from the International Reading Association website www.reading.org. To order bulk copies by phone with a credit card, call (in the USA and Canada only) 800-336-7323 or 302-731-1600 (for international orders), and by mail, write to Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA. E-mail questions about orders to customer service@reading.org.

After. Francine Prose

After a nearby school shooting, Tom and his sophomore classmates react to the new, harsh security restrictions imposed by a grief counselor in order to control the students. Those who refuse to conform disappear to a detention camp from which no one returns. Tom risks his own life to protect their freedoms. LLG


The Afterlife. Gary Soto

After the boy wearing yellow shoes killed Chuy, he calmly lifted Chuy’s shirt and wiped the blood from his knife. Chuy didn’t know the boy. Minutes before, they had both been standing in front of the mirror, checking out their hair. Chuy
had even complimented him on his cool yellow shoes. Chuy’s death (afterlife) will take him on a journey where he will meet others like himself and learn about love, revenge, and life—after death. GB


**The Battle of Jericho.** Sharon M. Draper

Hazing is illegal, but the Warriors of Distinction have been doing it for years. The problem is that none of the adult former members or the faculty sponsor is aware that a jump from a chair has evolved into a jump from a second-story window. Add to this a girl infiltrating the ranks, and you get a suspenseful tale of what can happen when young people are willing to do anything to belong to a group. Jericho, Josh, Dana, and Kofi embark on the quest to join; one of them pays with his life. GB


**Begging for Change.** Sharon G. Flake

The obsession with money continues in this sequel to *Money Hungry* (2001, Hyperion). Raspberry Hill, an impoverished teen, struggles to do right by people, despite hard times. Through vivid images of urban poverty, violence, and drug addiction, the author implies that Raspberry does have choices. Will she give in to despair created by her grim environment as her father has done, or will she break the cycle of poverty and escape like her mother’s boyfriend, Dr. Mitchell? Several important themes are explored in this book of survival: prejudice, street violence, homelessness, and identity crises. LJW


**Blood Trail.** Nancy Springer

Starting with its dramatic cover, a trail of bloody footprints leading into a darkened room, this is a fast-paced tale of murder and suspicion. When his best friend, Aaron, is brutally murdered, Jeremy must deal with grief and anger. When he tells the police that Aaron was afraid of someone, he is faced with unexpected hostility from the residents of their small town. Alone with his thoughts, Jeremy is tormented by guilt; could he have done something to save his friend? Even reluctant readers will keep turning pages to discover who is at the end of the blood trail. KF


**The Creek.** Jennifer L. Holm

Twelve-year-old Penny’s neighborhood is terrorized by a psychopath. With the return of delinquent Caleb Devlin, everyone is sure he is responsible for the strange happenings, including the murder of a child. Penny and her friends try to stop him themselves. Advanced. LLG


**The Dark.** Marianne Curley

Ethan and Isabel, heroes from *The Named* (2002, Bloomsbury), are on another exciting journey, and they are joined by Isabel’s brother, Matt, who is getting accustomed to life in the Guard. Arkarian, their ageless mentor, has been kidnapped and sent by the Order to a dark underworld. His friends, forbidden to rescue him, have an ever-increasing connection to Arkarian. They are convinced that they must risk everything to find him, despite the consequences. This sequel stands on its own as a testament to the power of friendship and the strength of love. KMB


**Dr. Ernest Drake’s Dragonology: The Complete Book of Dragons.** Dugald A. Steer (Ed.)

The skin of a dragon, skeletal diagrams, examples of dragon script, and even a packet of dragon dust (which looks suspiciously like glitter) make this a book to gladden the heart of dragon dreamers everywhere. A publisher’s note inside the front cover states that Dragonology “purports to be the facsimile of an original,” which, without verification, must be taken as a “curiosity.” Given the scrapbook format, with fold-out maps and
flaps to lift, readers can almost believe that Dr. Ernest Drake really has painstakingly recorded a life’s worth of research on dragons. KF


**The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big Round Things.** Carolyn Mackler

In this Printz Honor Book, 15-year-old Virginia Shreves is the insecure, overweight daughter of thin, brilliant, good-looking parents and the sister of two equally perfect siblings. Virginia’s insights as she obsessively makes lists, such as The Fat Girl’s Code of Conduct, will bring a smile. However, it’s not all humorous as the title implies; eating disorders, date rape, and self-mutilation are but a few of the issues raised in this book. As Virginia grows to recognize that no one in her family is really perfect, she is able to stand up for herself and take charge of her life. PK


**East.** Edith Pattou

This fantasy novel retells the classic Scandinavian fairy tale “East of the Sun and West of the Moon.” Rose agrees to venture to a distant castle with a large white bear in exchange for a better life for her ailing family and, while there, her curiosity leads to more adventure and drama. LLG


**Eragon.** Christopher Paolini

Fifteen-year-old Eragon is thrust into an adventure of epic proportions when he finds what he erroneously believes is a blue stone. Eragon quickly discovers that it’s actually a dragon’s egg, which hatches to reveal a sapphire blue dragon, Saphira. Eragon and Saphira are destined for greatness if they survive their adventures and trials while Eragon trains to be a Dragon Rider. Being the first Dragon Rider in over 100 years, Eragon encounters constant danger. The evil King Galbatorix slaughtered the Dragon Riders and has no plans to relinquish the iron-fist hold he has over the land and people of Alagaesia. ML


**Fault Line.** Janet Tashjian

Becky, 17, is from a wealthy, educated, well-adjusted family, and she is an aspiring stand-up comic. When Becky meets Kip Costello, who is a handsome senior and a rising star in the comedy club scene, the two are inseparable, leaving Becky to balance Kip with the rest of her life. Soon the relationship goes from a loving one to a controlling one. The second time he hurts her, Becky ends up in hospital and Kip ends up in handcuffs. Readers will suspect Kip’s problems long before Becky does. KMB

The First Part Last. Angela Johnson

The last part (the beginning of this novel) finds 16-year-old Bobby raising newborn Feather. With little help from his mother, and none from the baby’s mother, Nia, Bobby has to cope with the pressures of senior year and parenting. It is not until the end of the book that readers learn the first part and the answer to the question that permeates the entire narrative—where is Nia, and why isn’t she with Bobby and Feather? GB


For Freedom: The Story of a French Spy.
Kimberly Brubaker Bradley

Life for Suzanne David, a 13-year-old French schoolgirl, dramatically changes in May 1940, when she and her best friend witness the brutal death of a neighbor killed by a bomb dropped directly in front of them. Then the Germans take over Cherbourg, and Suzanne and her family are forced from their home into poverty. Based on a true story, Bradley’s book makes war very human. It’s not about battles; it’s about humans with doubts and fears and courage. This novel immerses readers in the horrors faced by everyday citizens during the Nazi occupation. The real story, however, is in the chilling experiences of one of France’s youngest spies. JP


Full Tilt. Neal Shusterman

Nothing could prepare 16-year-old Blake for the nightmarish experiences he endures when he enters a mysterious amusement park to find and save his brother from the possibility of being lost forever. In order to rescue his brother, Quinn, Blake is challenged by the mysterious Cassandra to finish seven rides before dawn, or both he and his brother are doomed. Each ride challenges Blake’s innermost fears in a “Twilight Zone” manner, creating a thrilling but harrowing ride. ML


The Glass Café. Gary Paulsen

In this light comedy, 12-year-old Tony sets off a chaotic chain of events when he draws some pictures of the exotic dancers who work at the Kitty Kat Club with his mother, who is working there to finance her doctoral studies. After the sketches are entered in an art show, a child-welfare officer and police officer meet their match when they try to take Tony away from his fiercely protective mother. This first-person contemporary story is based on an incident from Paulsen’s past. LJW

**Inside Out.** Terry Trueman

Told from the point of view of a teen caught in a coffee shop holdup gone terribly wrong, this slim novel is a glimpse into the tortured mind of a suicidal schizophrenic. Zach is waiting in the shop for his mother to bring his medicine when Alan and Joey burst in and take hostages. His behavior becomes increasingly bizarre, and as the police, the parents, and the psychiatrist enter the situation, we come to realize that the voices in Zach’s head pose far more danger than the boys with guns. The tension builds, and Zach must find his own resolution. KF


**Milkweed.** Jerry Spinelli

In this historical novel, set in 1939, an orphaned boy wanders the streets of Warsaw, Poland, not even knowing his name. He survives by stealing food. He cannot remember any family, so he knows nothing about his background. He meets a group of Jewish boys who befriend and protect him. He doesn’t know if he’s a Jew or a Gypsy, so his friends tell him to claim that he’s a Gypsy—for his own safety. He eventually takes the name Misha and begins living with a Jewish family in the Warsaw ghetto. Because he is so naive, he has little understanding of what is happening around him and the devastation the German Nazi army has caused. BAS


**Molly Moon’s Incredible Book of Hypnotism.** Georgia Byng

Move over Harry Potter and Lemony Snicket! Here comes another plucky English orphan with extraordinary abilities. The much-maligned Molly Moon discovers she can hypnotize anyone or anything. Her amazing skills land her in New York as a Broadway star, but an evil professor wants to use her abilities to stage the crime of the century by robbing a high-security bank. As Molly realizes that she must use her powers responsibly, she recognizes that what brings happiness is neither fame nor fortune but true friendship. PK


**My Not-So-Terrible Time at the Hippie Hotel.** Rosemary Graham

Fourteen-year-old Tracy’s reaction to her parents’ divorce has devastated her self-esteem. She has stopped playing the piano and writing songs and has turned to junk food for comfort, which has resulted in 15 extra pounds. She is dragged by her father to spend the summer on Cape Cod in Massachusetts for “Together Time” at a hotel retreat for divorced parents. As the title suggests, the summer restores Tracy’s confidence and empathy. She discovers that she can get past...
the resentments and anguish to mend the relationship with her father and is, in fact, capable of friendship and romance. PK


A Northern Light. Jennifer Donnelly
Mattie Gokey loves words and dreams of being a writer. The reality of her life is very different as she struggles to raise her sisters after the death of her mother, get along with her unyielding father, and deal with her first love. During the summer, she becomes a waitress at a hotel. When the drowned body of a young woman turns up, Mattie reads the letters the young woman had given to her for safekeeping. In them, Mattie finds the strength and determination to live her own life. BR


Patiently Alice. Phyllis Reynolds Naylor
Alice is back and is growing up—having survived her freshman year of high school and her first breakup. Now she and her friends are setting off to be counselors at a coed summer camp for disadvantaged children. As Alice tries to cope with her changing world, she learns that life is rarely what you expect, and people you’ve known your entire life can sometimes surprise you. This is the newest book in the Alice series, and Naylor has proven once again that she understands the real-world struggles of many teens. JP


Pirates! Celia Rees
In this 18th-century adventure, Nancy Kingston, a wealthy merchant’s daughter, and Minerva Sharpe, her plantation slave, are forced to leave Jamaica so that Nancy can escape an arranged marriage to the evil Brazilian, Bartholome. Nancy and Minerva, masquerading as men, decide to join a band of marauding pirates aboard the ship Deliverance. Along the way, they discover that their friendship gives them the courage to overcome mutiny, dangerous storms, and the ever-searching Brazilian, who is determined to have Nancy as his own. LMW


The River Between Us. Richard Peck
Elderly relatives are always full of tales from their youth, but when 15-year-old Howard Hutchings visits Grandma Tilly, he finds out a great deal more than he anticipates as Tilly reminisces about growing up during the U.S. Civil War. Tilly’s narrative is rich with mystery and intrigue yet carefully interwoven with the dramatic experiences and adventures she and her family had during this time in history. The hardships and harshness of war and the prejudices of the time had a greater impact on generations in Howard’s family than he could ever imagine. ML


Shadow of a Doubt. S.L. Rottman
Ernest (Shadow) Thompson idolized his older brother, Daniel, who nicknamed Ernest for shadowing his every move. Then Daniel ran away for seven years, giving Shadow reason to become a real shadow by being apathetic and wearing nothing but black. Now, at age 15, Shadow is starting high school and finds opportunities to change his life. He joins the forensics team, makes new friends, and struggles to cope with Daniel’s surprise return. Shadow and Daniel’s new relationship reminds readers of the importance of looking beneath the surface when it comes to forgiveness, second chances, and new beginnings. KM


Storm Catchers. Tim Bowler
Thirteen-year-old Ella is kidnapped at gunpoint by a teenage boy who keeps her captive in a cave near the raging ocean in Cornwall, England. Ella’s brother, Fin, is filled with guilt over his sister’s kidnapping and tries to rescue her with the help of little brother, Sammy, and his powers of extrasensory perception (ESP). The stormy coastal setting drives the story from its suspenseful beginning to its ending and the discovery of horrifying family secrets. A spooky lighthouse, a child with ESP, ghosts, infidelity, blackmail, and storms breaking on the horizon create a compelling story. KM

Sweetblood. Pete Hautman

All teens know they are different, but Lucy's diabetes makes her too different. She decides to enhance her difference by dressing in the Gothic style and delving into vampire chat rooms. Her essay suggesting vampires were advanced-stage diabetics causes a ruckus at school and at home. Lucy must finally face up to her disease and come to terms with it after she makes some dangerous choices, both medically and socially. CR


Vampire High. Douglas Rees

When Cody Elliot's parents receive his mediocre report card, they insist that he change schools immediately. His choices are Our Lady of Perpetual Homework and Vlad Dracul Magnet School. For Cody, the choice is obvious. Before starting at the new school he has an interview with the headmaster and meets the school's yellow-eyed wolf Charon. After the first visit, Cody decides the school is definitely unlike any other he's attended. On the first day at Vlad Dracul he understands why he was admitted. Most of the students are vampires and die when they get wet. State standards require a water-polo team, so the school needs a few human kids for the team. Cody has many adventures and deals with the typical problems of most teenagers but in a most unfamiliar setting. BAS


Vampire Kisses. Ellen Schreiber

Raven, 16, has a passion for vampire lore. Wearing black clothes, black boots, black lipstick, and black nail polish, she finds it hard to fit in at school or home. Then, when a new family moves into the old town mansion, Raven is convinced that their son, Alexander, is a vampire and instantaneously becomes enamored with him. Trevor, the class bully, torments Raven, but she gets her revenge. As her connection with Alexander deepens, she comes to understand her family better. KMB


This is the graphic story of Wayne Theodore and the horrific abuse endured by him and his 11 siblings. Wayne is subjected to daily beatings, torture, starvation, and abandonment but eventually faces the reality of his abusive past so that he can overcome his own drug addiction, attempted suicide, and tendency to follow in his father's footsteps. His struggle and eventual triumph attest to the resilience of the human spirit. LMW