

Young Adults' Choices for 2006



Logo illustration by Natalie Bellor

The 2006 Young Adults' Choices list is the 20th that United States 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 2004 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 2005 and February 2006 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 OK," or "I didn't like the book." The results were announced in May at the 2006 Annual Convention of the International Reading Association in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

Publishers sent the books to the five team leaders in different regions in the U.S. The team leaders' and trainees' 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 2006 project.

Team 1: Lisa Morris-Wilkey (team leader); Casa Grande, Arizona; two high schools, two middle schools, and one K–8 Catholic school; rural. Bonnie Purcell and Kristen Taylor (trainees); Utah; six high schools, two junior high schools, and one middle school; rural.

Team 2: Lorrie Gallo and Kathleen Broskin (team leaders); Pennsylvania; two high schools, one middle school, and one junior high school; rural. Jane Gross (trainee); Attleboro, Massachusetts; one high school and three middle schools; urban.

Team 3: Mary Long (team leader); Texas; five high schools; five middle schools; suburban.

Team 4: Patrice Kraus, Kathy Meyer, and Julie Powell (team leaders); West Des Moines, Iowa; one junior high school, two high schools, and one alternative high school; suburban and urban. Stephanie Burdic and Elizabeth Olson (trainees); Omaha, Nebraska; two high schools and three middle schools; suburban and urban.

Team 5: Barbara Sears (team leader); Clifton, Virginia; one high school, 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.

The project was directed this year by members of the Literature for Young Adults Committee and its chair, Cathy L. Denman.

Annotations contain bibliographic data, number of pages, and price. Publishers furnished information in May 2006, but prices are subject to change.

The annotated 2006 Young Adults' Choices list is downloadable from the International Reading Association website www.reading.org. Single copies of offprints are available for US\$1.00 for postage and handling. Send a self-addressed 9" x 12" envelope to 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 U.S. and Canada only) 800-336-7323 or (for international orders) 302-731-1600. To order by mail, send order to Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA, or fax to 302-731-1057. E-mail questions about orders to customerservice@reading.org.

Alosha. Christopher Pike.

The first in a series, *Alosha* begins the story of Ali Warner, 13, who is determined to increase awareness of logging issues in her community. In the midst of her struggle, Ali and her friends find themselves at war with the elementals—dark fairies, trolls, and dwarves. This fantasy novel leads Ali, her friends, a leprechaun, and a troll on a quest to discover the secrets to controlling the Yanti—a window that will prevent the elementals from destroying humankind.

Tor. 301 pp. US\$18.95. CAN\$26.95. Paper ed., Tor Teen. US\$6.99. CAN\$9.99.

Are We Alone? Scientists Search for Life in Space. Gloria Skurzynski.

This nonfiction account describes the efforts of scientists around the world to answer the question, "Are we alone?" By showing the interconnect-

edness of the many scientific disciplines that have come together in the search for life beyond our world, the author makes a case for extraterrestrial study and creates an interesting and visually inviting book. This book provides a glimpse into the lives of committed scientists filled with superhuman amounts of tenacity, patience, hope, and vision—all required qualities for such a far-reaching and intriguing search.

National Geographic Society. 92 pp. US\$18.95. CAN\$28.50.

Backstage Pass. Gaby Triana.

Sixteen-year-old Desert McGraw doesn't have a normal name and she certainly doesn't have a normal life. Her father is a famous rock star and her mother is his long-time manager. Moving from Los Angeles to Miami, Desert hopes to be known as a normal teen with a normal life and attempts to keep her celebrity family a secret. Developing new friendships and relationships proves to be difficult when trying to keep her secret, but once the secret is out, Desert discovers that life can be normal when shared with people she truly cares for.

HarperCollins. 224 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., HarperTrophy. US\$7.99. CAN\$10.99.

The Beckoners. Carrie Mac.

Mac shares a terrifying picture of bullying and violence that can be found in any school. Zoe is the new girl who is trying desperately to fit in and chooses the wrong social circle. After discovering the group's vicious and cruel control tactics, Zoe tries to extricate herself and her friend April from their grip. The results are more violence and cruelty while trying to make things right. The religious fundamentalist parents as well as the clueless and helpless teachers and administrators make the story even more chilling.

Orca Book Publishers. 217 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$19.95.

The Boy Who Couldn't Die. William Sleator.

After his best friend's death, 16-year-old Ken Pritchard sells his soul to a psychic so that he will never die. What he doesn't anticipate is becoming a zombie to carry out the orders of the psychic—orders which include murder. With the help of his friend Sabrina, Ken sets out to retrieve

his soul and encounters great adventure and horror along the way.

Amulet Books. 162 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$26.95. Paper ed., US\$6.95. CAN\$9.95.

The Burn Journals. Brent Runyon.

Eighth grader Brent Runyon ushers the reader through the horrific day of his attempted suicide to the day, eleven months later, when he reenters life at high school. This biography describes his daily struggle to survive with 85% of his body burned. Pain, guilt, and the courage to live with the consequences of a terrible decision are exposed through this intense documentation, giving the reader some unusual insight and possibly the author some emotional healing.

Alfred A. Knopf. 374 pp. US\$17.95. CAN\$25.95. Paper ed., Vintage. US\$12.95. CAN\$17.95.

Can't Get There From Here. Todd Strasser.

This is an insightful, frighteningly real, and engaging story about a group of homeless teenagers in New York City. Maggot, Rainbow, HIV-positive 2Moro, Jewel, and the narrator, Maybe, struggle to survive. Maybe's focus in life changes when 12-year-old Tears joins the group and Maybe decides she wants to help her. Strasser gives us a realistic portrayal of life on the streets—without the use of profanity—which leaves us with not only heroes, but hope.

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 198 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$23.50. Paper ed., Simon Pulse. US\$5.99. CAN\$8.25.

Contents Under Pressure. Lara M. Zeises.

Fourteen-year-old Lucy Doyle faces changing relationships with lifelong friends as well as rollercoaster emotions and decisions involved in dating an older boy. Add disappointment to Lucy's list: Her brother, Jack, brings home his pregnant girlfriend and is reluctant to become a responsible parent. Fast-paced, funny dialogue and a "gross out" younger brother add comic relief. Teens, parents, librarians, and even some boys will be satisfied with this "chick lit."

Delacorte Press. 244 pp. US\$15.95. CAN\$23.95. Paper ed., US\$5.99. CAN\$7.99.



Can't Get There From Here by Todd Strasser. Copyright © 2004. Used with permission of Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing.

Crank. Ellen Hopkins.

"Life was good before I met the monster. After, life was great...at least for a while." Hopkins's story delves into the life of academically gifted 17-year-old Kristina Snow, who discovers crank, or methamphetamine, on a visit to her errant father. Watching "Bree," Kristina's mature alter-ego, descend into addiction gives us a look into the frightening window of the fast track to drug addiction and its life-changing consequences. Told in free-verse poetry, this chilling book for advanced readers compels you to read on, only to discover there is no happy ending when it comes to addiction.

Simon Pulse. 537 pp. US\$7.99. CAN\$9.99.

Cruise Control. Terry Trueman.

This contemporary fiction book is a companion to Trueman's first novel, *Stuck in Neutral*, with the point of view changing from Shawn McDaniel (the brother with cerebral palsy) to Shawn's brother, Paul. Paul, an accomplished student and gifted athlete, is also a time bomb waiting to explode. Paul's journey through his senior year in high school is out of control as he deals with his anger toward his absent father and his love for Shawn—a love that threatens to trap and suffocate Paul with unwanted responsibilities.

HarperTempest. 160 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., US\$6.99. CAN\$8.99.

Dragon Rider. Cornelia Funke.

The dragon fantasies continue, and this one is perfect for both younger and older students—and even their parents. The dragon valley is doomed: humans plan to flood the valley and the caves. Firedrake, along with Sorrel the fairy and Ben the orphan boy, search for the Rim of Heaven, the place where dragons can live forever in peace. Though they face numerous dangers, their story is more whimsical than serious. The book is packed with adventure, mythical creatures, and dazzling experiments, and includes some black-and-white illustrations that appeal to younger readers.

The Chicken House. 523 pp. US\$12.95. CAN\$16.99.

The Dragon's Son. Margaret Weis.

This book continues the story of the uneasy relationship between dragons and humans begun in *Mistress of Dragons*. Those boundaries are further blurred and complicated by the birth of twin sons—Marcus, who is "human and born of love and magic," and Ven, "half dragon and half human, born of evil." Readers felt they knew more about Ven than Marcus, and they could identify with his struggle to find a place among the world of humans and dragons. This book is recommended for mature readers.

Tor. 334 pp. US\$25.95. CAN\$34.95. Paper ed., Tor Fantasy. US\$7.99. CAN\$10.99.

Emako Blue. Brenda Woods.

This is a tragic, harshly realistic account of a beautiful, talented 15-year-old student who becomes a victim of street violence. Her story is told through flashbacks in the voices of four classmates as they attend her funeral. In powerful but simple prose, written in the dialect of “the ’hood,” these teens learn that innocence alone will not protect them from the streets of south central Los Angeles.

G.P. Putnam’s Sons. 124 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$24.00. Paper ed., Speak. US\$5.99. CAN\$8.50.

Fighting the Current. Heather Waldorf.

Tee’s life is in turmoil. After an accident leaves her father’s brain damaged, Tee must revive a fragile relationship with her mother. Ethan, a new boy in town, lends insight and understanding to Tee’s plight. When Ethan breaks Tee’s trust, he seeks her forgiveness and delivers a strong lesson on the power of reconciliation. As Tee’s parents decide to remarry, she wonders how she will fit into the new situation. Tee tries to reconstruct the past by finishing her dad’s canoe project, but she realizes that her life is changed forever.

Lobster Press. 224 pp. US\$19.95. CAN\$24.95. Paper ed., US\$9.95. CAN\$12.95.

Going for the Record. Julie Swanson.

Leah’s life revolves around soccer, and she is determined to earn a scholarship and make the national team. Unfortunately, Leah’s father has devastating news; he has been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer and has only three months to live. Eventually, hospice care is called to prepare the home and family for the inevitable. Her strong family, loyal friends, and faith in God make Leah’s story unforgettable.

Eerdman’s Books for Young Readers. 217 pp. US\$8.00. CAN\$11.99.

Guitar Girl. Sarra Manning.

Molly and her gal pals, Jane and Tara, are the misfits of their school. To get respect and be noticed, Molly convinces her friends that they should start a band called The Hormones. Soon two older guys, T and Dean, join the band. The

girls find themselves signed up with a manager and The Hormones go on tour. Along the journey, 17-year-old Molly discovers the hazards of the music business, the pitfalls of being famous, and the ups and downs of falling in love.

Dutton/Penguin Putnam. 217 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$24.00. Paper ed., Speak. US\$6.99. CAN\$9.99.

How My Private Personal Journal Became a Bestseller. Julia DeVillers.

This is an amusing story about a girl named Jamie who is frustrated by all the images of beauty around her, and who is insulted daily by a group of catty “popular” girls. This book takes the reader into Jamie’s personal journal, in which she vents her anger through a made-up superhero called Isabella-IS—who sends positive rays to those who are hurting others. Her journal is accidentally handed in as an English assignment and, through a snowball effect, ends up at a publisher and becomes a bestseller.

Dutton/Penguin Putnam. 212 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.50. Paper ed., Puffin. US\$5.99. CAN\$8.99.

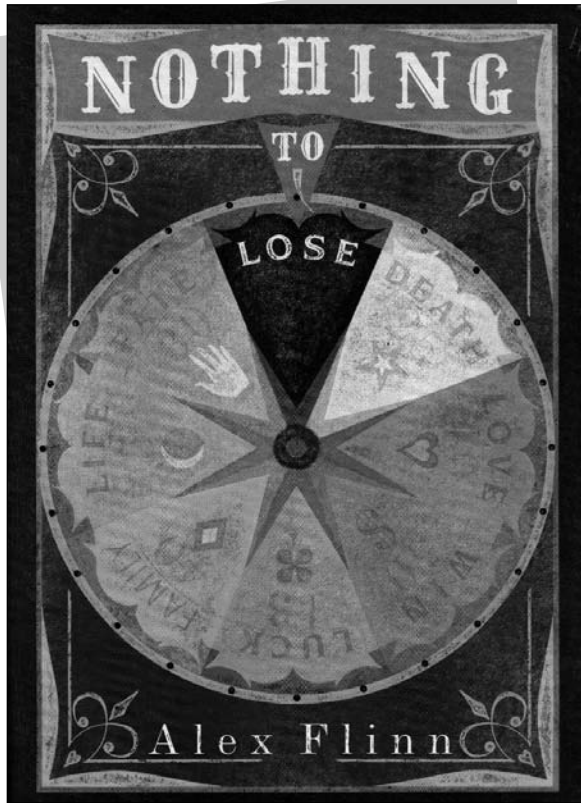
Jude. Kate Morgenroth.

Jude witnesses the brutal death of his drug-dealer father and is surprised to learn that the district attorney who interrogates him is his mother. Though he tries to adjust to his new suburban lifestyle, Jude is coldly betrayed by his mother’s boyfriend. He spends five years in prison for a crime he did not commit. While in prison, Jude resolves to study law and to pursue justice. After his release, Jude gradually uncovers the truth about his betrayal and finds enough strength to confront his mother and her boyfriend.

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 277 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$24.50. Paper ed., Simon Pulse. US\$5.99. CAN\$8.25.

Leap Day. Wendy Mass.

Today is Josie Taylor’s 16th birthday, but because she was born on February 29th, it’s actually her 4th “official” birthday. She is a typical teenage girl, and constantly has many things on her mind. And, like a typical teenage girl, Josie is curious about what other people are thinking. This is an



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out-of-the-ordinary book because you get to “leap” into Josie’s and the other characters’ minds! As you read you will learn to recognize and appreciate the characters’ perspectives.

Little, Brown. 216 pp. US\$16.99. CAN\$24.99. Paper ed., US\$7.99.

Midnighters: The Secret Hour. Scott Westerfeld.

Things are strange enough after moving from Chicago to a small town, but 15-year-old Jessica Day becomes even more confused when she realizes that she is a *Midnighter*—a group of people who can move about during the 25th hour when the rest of the world is frozen. As she settles among this group, she must battle the slithers and darklings as she learns to use her full powers. *Midnighters* is the first in a trilogy.

Eos. 304 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$19.99. Paper ed., US\$6.99. CAN\$9.99.

Nothing to Lose. Alex Flinn.

Like playing hot potato with a hand grenade, Michael Daye’s description of his own life screamed desperation. At 17, Michael felt he had nothing to lose. Michael runs away to join the carnival, where he thinks there are no questions asked. In a heart-wrenching journey, Michael finds that he can’t run away from the questions in his own heart. In this terrifyingly believable story, readers experience abuse, isolation, friendship, and finally, hope.

HarperTempest. 277 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$21.99. Paper ed., US\$6.99. CAN\$8.99.

One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies. Sonya Sones.

When Ruby Milliken’s mother dies, she is forced to move across the United States to live with her movie-star father. She is not impressed with the glamour of Beverly Hills or her father’s efforts to establish a relationship after a 15-year absence from her life. She is angry with her father, desperately feeling the loss of her mother, and lonely for her friends back home. This free-form journal reveals Ruby’s sensitivity, insightfulness, and humor as she grows to understand her father and come to terms with her new life.

Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers. 272 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$23.50. Paper ed., Simon Pulse. US\$6.99. CAN\$9.50.

Princess in Pink. Meg Cabot.

High school sophomore Mia Thermopolis is focused on planning her upcoming 15th birthday, and for a “breathtaking evening” at the prom with her boyfriend Michael. The problem is that Michael thinks going to the prom would be one of the lamest things he’s ever done. Added drama arises when Mia’s grandmother brings her poodle to Mia’s party at a chic restaurant. The dog gets loose and causes complete chaos, which leads to a national strike of the entire food and hotel industry. Will there be a prom? *Princess in Pink* is an amusing and lighthearted read.

HarperCollins. 256 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., HarperTrophy. US\$6.99. CAN\$9.99.

Remember D-Day: The Plan, The Invasion, Survivor Stories. Ronald J. Drez.

This concise narrative presents a wealth of information about the complexities of the task, the unpredictability of weather and the enemy, and the courage of all of the Allies—young and old, civilian and soldier—on one of the most important days in history. Using maps, photos, captions, and artifacts, the author brings new understanding of and interest in World War II to readers of all ages.

National Geographic Society. 60 pp. US\$17.95. CAN\$26.95.

The Schwa Was Here. Neal Shusterman.

Shusterman has written a true-to-life book about the fact that we can look right through certain people and not even see them. Calvin Schwa is one of those people and the only person who really sees Calvin is Antsy Bonano. Antsy tells us the story of “the Schwa” and how he came to be, why no one sees him (not even his father), and how he can walk into rooms—even the girls’ locker rooms or the principal’s office—and not be seen.

Dutton/Penguin Putnam. 228 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.50. Paper ed., Puffin. US\$5.99. CAN\$8.50.

So B. It. Sarah Weeks.

Heidi, the 13-year-old heroine in this beautiful novel, narrates the story of her and her mother’s (named So B. It) mysterious life. The account begins when 1-week-old Heidi and So B. It arrive on the doorstep of their future neighbor and caretaker, Bernadette. Heidi’s mother can speak only 23 words—each the title of a chapter in the book. When Heidi discovers a key to her past—an old camera with undeveloped photos—she departs on a quest that will inevitably change her life.

HarperCollins. 245 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., HarperTrophy. US\$6.99. CAN\$8.99.

Vegan Virgin Valentine. Carolyn Mackler.

Mara Valentine has “type A blood, a type A personality, and...an A-cup bra.” She is driven to academic success, desperate not to disappoint her parents. Mara has alienated most of her friends in her efforts to control everything in her life. However, Mara’s world is shaken when her trou-



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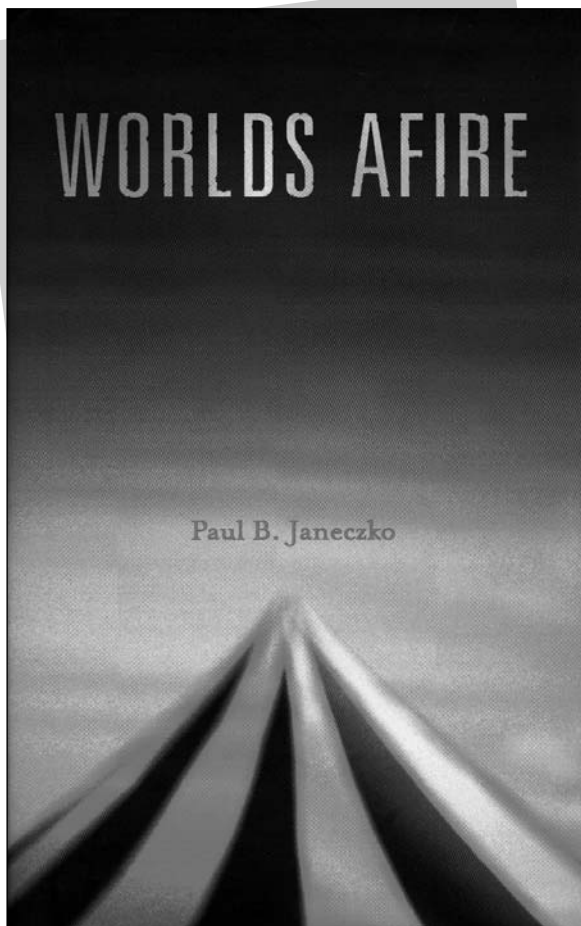
blemaking niece Vivienne (“V”) comes to live with her family. As the chaos subsides, V’s ability to cut through Mara’s veneer forces Mara to question the choices she has made, her narrow definition of success, and the limitations of her life plan.

Candlewick Press. 265 pp. US\$16.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., US\$8.99. CAN\$12.50.

Who Am I Without Him? Short Stories About Girls and the Boys in Their Lives. Sharon G. Flake.

This engrossing collection of short stories draws us into the lives of girls and the boys they love. Each story is a different scenario with a different outcome, causing the reader to laugh, cry, and most certainly reflect on romance and the opposite sex.

Jump at the Sun. 160 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$23.99. Paper ed., US\$5.99. CAN\$7.99.



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Worlds Afire. Paul B. Janeczko.

This story, written in narrative verse, is a powerful account of the 1944 Ringling Bros. and Barnum and Bailey Circus fire in Hartford, Connecticut. The fictitious voices of circus personnel, parents, children, police, firefighters, and neighbors meticulously detail this disaster, which was fueled by the paraffin and gasoline that waterproofed the canvas tent. These personal tales of triumph and defeat will haunt the reader long after turning the last page.

Candlewick Press. 92 pp. US\$15.99. CAN\$22.99.

The Year of the Secret Assignments. Jaclyn Moriarty.

When students from exclusive Ashbury High are paired with students from cross-town rival Brookfield in a penpal project, mayhem ensues. After a series of exchanges, Emily and Lydia befriend Charlie and Seb. But Cassie's contact, troubled student Paul Wilson, threatens her. With the help of Charlie and Seb, the girls find the perfect way to get revenge. A series of pranks almost gets Emily, Lydia, and Cassie expelled, but Charlie and Seb help save the day. This rollicking Australian novel is told in letters, journal entries, and e-mails.

Scholastic Paperbacks. 340 pp. US\$16.95. CAN\$22.99. Paper ed., US\$7.99. CAN\$10.99

A LIBRARY OF YA LITERATURE RECOMMENDATIONS

Not only is this year's annotated list of Young Adults' Choices available to download in PDF format, but visitors to the International Reading Association website can access lists published as far back as 1998. Also available are current and past Children's Choices and Teachers' Choices lists.

Visit the Web Resources area of www.reading.org to find the Choices lists, along with other freely available resources designed with reading professionals in mind.

