



## An Overview of Young Adult Literature in Literary Studies

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### Abstract

Young adults have a vital role in our nation, and are future of the society. They experience countless problems just like adults. Family pressures like divorces, remarriages, and parental violence affect them very much. Myriad social pressures, and poor parental supervision lead them to delinquency, and commit crime. They tend to alienate from their families, and withdraw from society. Lack of parental care impairs their health, causes stress, and drives them to commit even suicides. Many young adults end up as alcoholics, and drug-addicts. The predicament of adolescent girls is more horrific than boys. Many unprivileged girls battle with sexual harassment which leads to teenage pregnancies, and contract sexually transmitted diseases. But in the global scenario, little attention is paid to the enormous crises faced by young adults. The voice of adolescents remains largely unheard in society. This paper gives an overview of the onset of young adult literature in literary studies.

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**Keywords:** - Young Adults, Myriad Social Pressures, Parental Care, Unprivileged

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*“Youth is the best time to be rich, and the best time to be poor.”*

- Euripides

### Introduction

Boys, and girls go from infancy to maturity throughout adolescence, which is a time of mental, emotional, social, and physical development. It is the transitional period between childhood, and maturity. It is a stage rather than an age. In general, adolescence lasts from the ages of twelve to twenty. Postponed adolescence lasts till age 21, and possibly as long as age 25. Early adolescence, middle adolescence, and late adolescence are the three stages of adolescence. Ten to twelve years old is considered early adolescence. Early in adolescence, the child's development rate accelerates, initially in the hands, and feet and then in the limbs. At

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this point, individuals exhibit a need for privacy, and cherish independence. The age range of middle adolescence is twelve to sixteen. When auxiliary hair, and sweat glands form, the height velocity curve peaks. The age range of late adolescence is sixteen to nineteen. The body resembles that of a young adult, and secondary sex traits have fully developed. Young adults start making plans for the future in late adolescence.

Adolescence is defined by the WHO as the period between the ages of ten, and nineteen. Adolescent emotional development is greatly influenced by physical growth, and development. In addition to having a different body than they had as children, adolescents also acquire newer perspectives, and dispositions. Many of them pretend to be the fittest adults in the world at this point. They may, therefore, also develop a severe inferiority complex.

Adolescence can be viewed as the culmination of a lengthy developmental process that starts at conception. By the conclusion of adolescence, a person's development has advanced to the point where they are considered adult by society, and the law, meaning they can live freely without supervision or direction. Adolescence is a "storm and stress" (Smith) time that portrays the unnerving turbulence of growth, according to Stanley Hall, the father of the scientific study of adolescence.

It is a time of transition in psychology, when changes take place in personality, social interactions, bodily changes, and cognitive changes. The child goes through a number of changes at this time of transition, including intellectual, emotional, and physiological ones. Also known as "the period of storm and stress," this time span spans from childhood to adulthood (Hendry 209).

Teenagers have a lot of hopes in life. The teenager is excited to engage with new situations, make new friends, and investigate their inner strengths. Teenagers want to think for themselves, set their own objectives, and figure out how to get there. Teenagers desire greater freedom to enjoy themselves. They enjoy life in their youthful dreams, despite the fact that they are not yet grown enough to handle life's obligations. Power, and love turn into powerful motivators in life. Adolescence is a time of abundant growth, and development, occurring between spring, and summer. During adolescence, both boys, and girls experience the pride, and happiness that comes with maturing. But they are kept in check by numerous constraints. These social, and family controls, force children to establish themselves, and follow the rules both within, and outside the family, in order to behave appropriately. Adolescents remain reliant on others despite the amount of assistance they receive.

The objective for the teenager is to develop their potential rather than just interact with others or the outside world. They make efforts to investigate their place in the world. During this phase, personality development becomes stronger, and stays that way for a long time. Adolescents who have their personalities properly shaped can become significant human resources for our country. As a result, the life script of adolescence lasts for a very long time. Making the correct job decision or having a solid strategy might help school-age adolescents settle into their future. As a result, this time is crucial for future planning. Adolescents who have wonderful times in their adolescence tend to remember such happy or pleasant experiences in their later years, while those who experience bitterness, find those memories unpleasant even as they remember them.

Rapid physical development, and significant emotional changes occur during adolescence. Despite the excitement of the change, both the parent, and the teen may find it confused and unsettling. This creates a gap between parents and kids. Teenage years are a time of increased stress. Stated differently, it might be characterized as a time of pressure, and turmoil. Social, and peer interactions, a desire for independence, and mental and physical maturity are all part of it. Adolescence is a theoretical construct that is always changing, and influenced by cultural, historical, psychological, and physiological factors. Steinberg says,

“This critical developmental period is conventionally understood as the years between the onset of puberty, and the establishment of social independence.” (Amin 2).

The use of chronological age to differentiate between life cycle phases is always cautioned against in literature. Young adulthood is defined for the sake of this research article as the teenage stage between the ages of twelve, and twenty-two, with the terms "youth" and "adolescents" being used interchangeably.

Young adulthood is the time when kids come out of their shells, and fly wide in a world full of dreams, and hopes. It is a time of transition, growth, and progress. In any country, young adults are the nation's future, and are essential to its progress. They serve as a nation's fundamental engine. They are the source, and reservoir of limitless energy. At every level, they represent their nation. Young adults play a more significant role in nation-building than one may imagine. To put it another way, the nation will advance, and succeed thanks to the work, and brains of young adults.

Young adults are a valuable resource for their country. They serve as a nation's foundation. Young adults shape the future of any civilization, since they form the backbone of a country. Every other age group, including children, middle-aged people, and senior folks, depends on the youth, and has high expectations of them. Because of this, young people are more significant than other age groups in both the present, and the future of society. As a result of society's heavy reliance on young people, young people have a responsibility to play because they hold the key to the future of their families, communities, and nation. A nation's youth are its greatest asset, and power. They are a society's potential energy. They are a country's pride. A person is endowed with a wide range of talents at an early age, including critical thinking, leadership, decision-making, dispute resolution, and cognitive functioning. To put it another way, youth is a stage that is full of unrealized potential, new vitality, and ideas that can be developed, and applied for the benefit of everyone. In addition, they possess the drive to put in a lot of effort, take chances, and succeed. Young people are frequently the ones fighting against political systems, crime, corruption, and whatever else they believe is wrong in society at large. They possess the zeal, and inventiveness to effect change. A person's youth is the period of their life when they make decisions. The most powerful factor that will propel a nation towards prosperity is its empowered youth. A country's future is determined by the caliber of its youth.

Youth's creative potential, along with its zeal, vitality, and adaptability, can do wonders for humanity. Numerous youth icons have left their imprint, and achieved immortality throughout the world's history. Young individuals from a variety of circumstances have positively impacted the world, and given their strength to worthy causes. In order to clear the path for educational integration in the United States, Ruby Bridges (1954) became the first Black child to attend an all-white primary school in Louisiana. She also battled enduring prejudice, and hostility. South African youth, led by Hector Peterson (1964-1972), rose to prominence as a potent symbol of opposition to racial injustice, and apartheid. A Pakistani child labourer named Iqbal Masih (1983-1985) assisted more than 3,000 youngsters in escaping Pakistani forced servitude. HIV/AIDS was inherited from his parents at birth, and Nkosi Johnson, also known as Xolani Nkosi (1989-2001), was denied admittance to a public school due to his status. He became an influential voice for treating HIV victims with equality, and respect as a result of his startling social experiences. In addition, he got the Children's Peace Prize posthumously, and formed a refuge for HIV mums, and their kids with his foster mother. According to Nelson Mandela, he was "an icon of the struggle for life." For many years, Om Prakash Gurjar (1992-) was a forced child slave, who was born into a family of bonded labourers. Born into a family of bonded labourers, Om Prakash Gurjar (1992-) spent several years working as a forced child labourer. He later joined the 'Bachpan Bachao Andolan movement' to fight for children's rights, and free other child workers. In 2006, he received the International Children's Peace Prize. Swedish school girl Greta Thunberg (2003-) rose to

prominence as a global environmental advocate. In order to rally support for direct action on global warming, Thurnberg started a school strike outside of Parliament in Sweden. She has become a global spokesperson for the environmental cause as a result of this nationwide strike spreading to other nations. At the ages of ten, and twelve, Melati and Isabel Wijzen founded the non-governmental organisation "Bye Bye Plastic," which has since grown to become a global cause. To make it even better, India's Swami Vivekananda is a youth idol whose moral example, and unmatched principles still serve as a source of inspiration, and guidance for young people today. Likewise, Malala Yousafzai, the youngest Nobel laureate, serves as an inspiration to young people due to her vigorous support of women's, and children's education as well as human rights in general.

A nation's downfall, and the breakdown of a positive culture might result from improper handling, and harnessing of youth strength. Young people in today's society, regrettably, sleep in a sluggish slumber of complacency. Due to numerous drawbacks, they are more likely to become anti-social components, and become victims of terrorism, drug addiction, alcoholism, smoking, hacking, cybercrimes, and mobile mania. Furthermore, by mind washing children, and guiding them down the deadly pathways of crime, and terror, egotistical individuals exploit their vulnerable minds. Despite the quick advancements in technology, and knowledge, the rate of crime, and violence in today's society is startlingly high. Giving young people a sound intellectual, and moral education is the best method to strengthen them. The goal of this study article is to help today's youth understand their inconceivable potential to build a world that is free from all forms of prejudice, and is wholesome, healthy, and peaceful.

Fiction that solely addresses the issues of young adults is known as young adult fiction. Compared to children's literature, it is significantly different. Children are the target audience for children's literature. Teens are the target audience for young adult literature. Themes covered in young adult literature include infatuation, dreams, sexual dilemmas, accidents, violence, deaths, tragedies, love, intergenerational conflicts, and much more. These themes are more sophisticated, and complicated than those found in children's literature. Young adult literature's primary themes are less evident in children's books. The goal of young adult fiction is to shield young people from the harsh truths of reality. It depicts many intricate issues that teenagers face, such as sexuality, drug, and alcohol abuse, suicide, and death. It is stated that young adult literature is characterized by growth.

Although young adult fiction is primarily written for teenagers, readers of all ages find the lively characters, and situations presented in these works to be enjoyable. The enormous popularity of the Harry Potter books, and other purportedly young adult series has demonstrated that nearly everyone can relate to the issues, and subjects discussed in young adult fiction. Young adult romance, dystopia, sci-fi, and fantasy are just a few of the many subgenres in young adult fiction.

Teenagers are interested in the concerns, issues, and life situations that are addressed in young adult literature. Even though this fiction is aimed for teenagers, adults have also found it to be fascinating. Young adult fiction frequently deals with friendship, relationships, first love, and the search for one's identity. Another name for young adult novels is coming-of-age or issue novels. To ease the transition between children's, and adult novels, young adult fiction was created.

One of the most vibrant, imaginatively stimulating fields of study, and interest is young adult literature. Young adult literature supports healthy teenage development by attending to young people's physical, emotional, moral, social, spiritual, and financial requirements. It is a work of literature that is relevant to young people's developmental stages. Its value is derived from both its artistic merit, and its applicability to the reader's daily life. The ability of young adult fiction to allow readers to recognize themselves in the book's pages is one of its main advantages. It presents young people as essential members of a wider human community. By

painting realistic pictures of teenager's inner life, young adult fiction also cultivates a deep understanding, empathy, and compassion for them. Young adult fiction encourages readers to accept all of humanity in this way. Additionally, young adult fiction prepares readers to face the reality of approaching maturity, and to take on the rights, and obligations of a responsible citizen.

Stories about coming of age are common in young adult novels. Throughout these books, teenagers are seen maturing into adults, resolving personal issues, and coming to terms with their acts. Young adult fiction has a variety of literary uses. It offers young people an enjoyable reading experience by focusing on real-life situations, and their numerous issues. Themes like friendship, getting into trouble, romantic, and sexual interest, and family life are common in young adult fiction. Narratives concerning self-identity, life, death, and individuality are among the other prevalent themes found in young adult novels. It helps readers identify role models, make sense of the world they live in, build a personal philosophy of being, cultivate a personal sensibility, and discern right from wrong by providing them with a relevant frame of reference. To put it another way, young adult literature helps young adults become more mature, tolerant, and civilized adults by expanding their horizons. To put it briefly, young adult literature supports the growth of young people in a healthy way.

Beginning in the early nineteenth century, young adult literature has a long history. In 1802, Sarah Trimmer distinguished young people as a unique demographic that differed significantly from children. Sarah Trimmer defined the young adult stage as spanning from the ages of fourteen to twenty-one in her magazine, "The Guardian of Education". The two seemingly comparable genres of literature were distinguished by her introduction of the names, "Books for Children" (for children under fourteen), and "Books for Young Persons" (for people fourteen to twenty-one) in this magazine. After then, a number of authors produced novels that reflected the emotions of young adults. Among them are C.S. Lewis, Francis Hodgson Burnett, Mark Twain, Lewis Carroll, Robert Louis Stevenson, Edith Nesbit, J.M. Barrie, L. Frank Baum, Astrid Lindgren, Enid Blyton, and Francis Hodgson Burnett. But *Seventeenth Summer* by Maureen Daly, released in 1942, is regarded as the first book written, and published specifically for adolescent females. Sport novels, and young adult romances written specifically for lads quickly followed its enormous success. J.D. Salinger's 1951 book, "The Catcher in the Rye", which has come to represent young adult literature, effectively captured the angst, and alienation of adolescence.

The Young Adult Library Services Association created the phrase "young adult" in the 1960s to refer to the 12-18 age group. Harper Lee's, "To Kill a Mockingbird" (1960) and William Golding's, "Lord of the Flies" (1954) are regarded as the founding works of contemporary young adult literature. Following the release of S. E. Hinton's, "The Outsiders" (1967), the 1960s saw the creation of the current classification system for young adult novels. In contrast to earlier young adult fiction, this book depicts a grim, and startlingly realistic side of adolescence. The Outsiders is still one of the best-selling young adult books ever written. Hinton wrote it in high school, and had it published when she was just sixteen. This book featured a sophisticated, modern realism aimed at teenagers. In the 1970s, Hinton was not the first author to choose to sensitively address adolescent themes. The books written by young adults in the 1970s are still authentic records of high school. The *Chocolate War* by Cormier gave the often-overlooked lives of teenagers a literary touch.

The "fab five" - Sylvia Path's, "The Bell Jar" (1963), Maya Angelou's, "I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings" (1969), Glendon Swarthout's, "Bless the Beasts and Children" (1970), Robb White's, "Deathwatch" (1972), and Rosa Guy's, "The Friends" (1973) - are the young adult novels that are most famously associated with the late 1960s, and early 1970s. Of these young adult novels, 'Deathwatch' won the Mystery Writers of America's 1973 Edgar Award for Best Juvenile Mystery.

In young adult novels, friendship, infatuation, romantic relationships, and identity concerns are frequently included subjects. Taboo topics like rape, murder, childhood pregnancies, and parental death were treated with utmost candour in these novels. There are other literary uses for young adult novels as well. Apart from offering young people an enjoyable reading experience, it highlights youth issues, and real-life situations while highlighting several societal inequalities.

Among the earliest young adult books include Johann David Wyss, "The Swiss Family Robinson" (1812), Walter Scott's, "Waverley" (1814), Charles Dicken's, "Oliver Twist" (1838), and "Great Expectations" (1860), Alexandre Dumas's, "The Count of Monte Cristo" (1844), Tom Brown's, "Schooldays" (1857), Lewis Carroll's, "Alice in Wonderland" (1865), Mark Twain's, "The Adventures of Tom Sawyer" (1876), and "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1884), Robert Louis Stevenson's, "Kidnapped" (1886), Rudyard Kipling's, "The Jungle Book" (1894), J. Meade Falkner's, "Moonfleet" (1898).

Despite the fact that young adult novels dates back to the 19th century, it wasn't until the 1960s that adolescents gained widespread attention. Young adult fiction's prime years are thought to have been the 1970s and 1980s. Adolescent studies started to take shape during this period, and a number of new teenage writers dared to capture the most nuanced emotions of young people in their writing. Some of the writers who were drawn to adolescent experiences were Maya Angelou, Rosa Guy, Sylvia Plath, Glendon Swarthout, and Robb White. In modern times, young adult novels have risen to tremendous heights of artistry.

Some have referred to the 1970s, and the middle of the 1980s as the "golden age" of young adult fiction. Previously forbidden subjects including rape, suicide, parental death, and murder were openly discussed in young adult novels in the 1980s. These books were very successful both critically, and commercially. J. K. Rowling's debut book, "Harry Potter", and "The Philosopher's Stone", was published in 1997, marking the beginning of her seven-volume Harry Potter series. Both young adults, and a broad adult audience were drawn to the Harry Potter series, which was praised for its maturity, and complexity. Many commentators have acknowledged that J.K. Rowling is responsible for the renaissance of young adult literature due to the enormous success of the Harry Potter series. The Hunger Games trilogy by Suzanne Collins further cemented the success of the Harry Potter books. A number of awards were established to promote Young Adult novels in response to the increasing popularity of Young Adult literature. A variety of honors, like the Alex Awards, and the Michael L. Printz Award, were established to honor, and support exceptional authors who were particularly successful in producing young adult fiction. Young adult literature is still growing into new genres, and media, including light novels, fantasy, mystery fiction, romance novels, graphic novels, and even subgenres including cyberpunk, techno-thrillers, and contemporary Christian fiction.

Readers, and critics have been embracing young adult fiction since the mid-1990s as a developing subgenre. Artistic creativity, experimenting, and most importantly, taking risks are all encouraged in young adult fiction. Not only does the new millennium begin in the year 2000, but young adult fiction also experiences a renaissance. The year 2000 is considered to mark the start of the second golden age of young adult fiction. The Harry Potter books by J.K. Rowling served as an inspiration for a whole generation of fantasy series authors. Subsequently, Suzanne Collin's dystopian novel, "The Hunger Games" (2008) and Stephanie Meyer's, "Vampire serial Twilight" (2005) were enormously popular. Along with the previously listed authors, several well-regarded adult authors have started writing for young adults, including Joyce Carol Oates, Francine Prose, Michael Chabon, Isabel Allende, Dale Peck, Julia Alvarez, T. C. Boyle, and many more. Globally, young adult fiction is currently experiencing a steady upsurge.

African American teen's individual, and communal lives were wildly misrepresented in young adult fiction, which was primarily created by Europeans, and Americans. In their

novels, white authors falsely, and hurtfully represented black young adults. According to their literature, black youngsters were exotic primitives, tragic mulattoes, and happy slaves. Black authors were angered by these egregious misrepresentations of Black youth, which led to the genre's emergence. The subtle, subtle, and subtle racism of their European American counterparts is countered by Black young adult literature, which offers a realistic portrayal of African American characters, and situations. In their books, African American writers attempted to encourage black youth to embrace who they are in a world where bigotry reigns supreme.

The literary, and critical survey of young adult fiction offers the attention of youngsters, and their role in the society. The history of black literature, and black young adult literature will inevitably include the rise of young adult literature. The groundwork for African American young adult literature was laid by Lorenz Graham, and Jesse Jackson, whose groundbreaking books "South Town" (1945), and "Call Me Charley" (1958) are well-known among African American teenagers, and Arna Bontemps's, "Story of the Negro" (1948), which won numerous accolades for the first time for a non-white writer. His children's book advocating for social justice, and peace earned him both the Jane Addams Award, and the Newbery Honor Award. "Zeely" (1967) is a young adult book written by Virginia Hamilton. She also received recognition for her 1974 book *M. C. Higgins the Great*.

The *Brownie Book* is a multi-genre, multidisciplinary, African diaspora-focused news magazine that was founded in the 1990s by W. E. B. Du Bois and Augustus G. Dill to highlight the accomplishments of Black children and youth. The *Brownies Book* was popular with kids of all races, even though it was set in an African American cultural setting. The *Brownies Book* aimed to teach black young adults to value education, and basic values, to be proud of their African roots, and African American cultural history, and to be loyal to their families. Similar to, "The *Brownies Book*", *Ebony Jr.*, another magazine targeted toward young adults, featured positive portrayals of black young adults. These children's publications are considered to be the birthplace of African American children's, and young adult literature, despite being a distinct genre. In the 1920s and 1930s, they gave Harlem Renaissance writers a platform, and encouragement to produce fiction specifically for African American young adults, and in the 1960s and 1970s, they supported the Black Arts Movement. African American young adults were shown in these books as a rich component of the broader American experience, while also depicting the world in all its richness.

Numerous novels by African American authors have addressed topics pertaining to young people. Walter Dean Myers, Jacqueline Woodson, Angela Johnson, Christopher Paul Curtis, Rosa Guy, Alice Childress, Joyce Carol Thomas, Nikki Grimes, Kristin Hunter, and Sharon Bell Mathis are a few of them. In addition to these authors, Toni Morrison, June Jordan, Alice Walker, Gwendolyn Brookes, and James Baldwin have all depicted youth experiences in their writing.

Jacqueline Woodson is commended for her young adult novels that examine issues of homosexuality, incest, and racial violence. Her writings can be characterized as books with a social conscience. Her writing is considered to be a literary offspring of the 'New Realism Movement', which emerged in the United States in the 1960s as a reaction to the sentimental children's books of the earlier decades. Issues including racial prejudice, drug addiction, child maltreatment, teen violence, and sexuality were all covered in her writings. Her *Hush* addresses young identity crises in a variety of ways. Another piece, "I Hadn't Meant To Tell You This", explored the bond between two girls as it relates to race and class. "I write about Black girls because this world wants to keep us invisible," says Woodson. By writing about all females, "I wish to show readers how strong we are, and what happens to our self-esteem when we turn twelve." quoted in ([Anatol 642](#)).

Similar to Woodson, Lucille Clifton, and Eloise Greenfield used poetry to address African American children's self-esteem. The story of an ethnically diverse group of young people who relate their perceptions of day, and night is told in Walter Dean Myer's 1969 book, "Where Does the Day Go?". Myer then discusses the experiences of teenage troops during the Vietnam War in his 1988 book, "Fallen Angels?". In Myer's 1933 novel, "Somewhere in the Darkness", fourteen-year-old Jimmy Little's grim reality is portrayed. He won numerous medals, and accolades for his young adult literature.

Diaper hair is a visual symbol of one's heritage, and a means of connecting with diaspora people, according to certain black young adult literature writers. In this sense, a thorough examination of how the black community views black hair appeared in young children's books, such as Bell Hook's, "Happy To Be Nappy" (1999), Tololwas M. Mollel's, "The Princess Who Lost Her Hair" (1993), Joyce Carol Thomas's, "Crowing Glory" (2002), and Alile Sharon Larkin's, "Dreadlocks, and the Three Bears" (1991). Patricia McKissack, and Mildred D. Taylor's stories provided insight into the life of young adults.

Examples of realistic fiction include Ellen Hopkin's novels, such as "Crank, Burned, Impulse, Identical, Glass, Trick, and Go Ask Alice" (1971), a sexually explicit book written by an anonymous author that offered a contentious look into the turbulent life of a young adolescent. These novels also served as a platform for telling the stories of young adult drug addicts, prostitutes, and teenagers with psychological disorders. Young adult novels with a social message were published by Robert Cormier in 1977 and 1979. His first book was titled, "The Chocolate War". High school, and middle school curricula frequently incorporate works by Mandy Hubbard (Year of Publication), Rudolfo Anaya, "Bless Me, Ultima" 1972, and Sandra Cisneros's, "The House on Mango Street" 1984.

Happiness, and sadness, success, and failure, health, and illness, and prosperity, and poverty are all part of human existence. It is difficult to find someone who has not gone through this. The idea that a problem only appears after a specific age is unsupported by scientific research. Issues can occur at any point in life. During adolescence, people take more risks. Adult supervision is therefore especially necessary during this stage. Young adults face several issues that have a significant influence on their development, just like adults do. A crucial period of a person's life is adolescence. It is a long, and formative time. Adolescence is a time of significant change in one's sense of self. During this time, passion, and inventiveness are high. Teens are neither children nor grownups, and this is the main cause of a lot of their issues.

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