

## **Chapter 2**

### **An Overview of Young Adult Dystopian Fiction in the 21st Century**

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## 2.1. Introduction

J.K. Rowling published *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1998. There has been a revolution in book selling and reading ever since. People have become more and more attracted to children's literature and young adult literature. Whether it is science fiction, fantasy or realistic fiction, young adult literature is successful in capturing the minds of people. Film adaptation of the *Harry Potter* series contributed immensely to the popularity of young adult genre and it has become a global phenomenon. To quote a few, there are *Twilight*, *Percy Jackson*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Maze Runner*, *I Am Number Four* and *The Fifth Wave*. Through literature, movies and TV shows, young adult literature continues to be at the top of the charts worldwide.

In order to grasp the idea of young adult literature, we must have a clear understanding about young adults. Who is a young adult? Which age group does they belong to? There are different categorizations based on the age group of these people. Cambridge Dictionary defines a young adult as "A person who is in his or her late teenage years or early twenties". So, young adults are also called teenagers. In general, a young adult is a person ranging in age from their late teens or early twenties to their thirties. During this phase of life, young adults further build up their basic reasoning abilities, form relationships based on shared values and belief systems, modify their risk taking behaviors and make decisions dependent on future consequences. Developmental themes emerge as these young adults mature towards adulthood. In the words of J. de Jong Gierveld:

During young adulthood, young men and women are confronted with various life transitions and have to make decisions about their future. How

long will they continue in full-time education, when will they look for a job, or will they combine work with schooling? Will they seek a partner, or choose to remain single? What are their attitudes towards starting a family of their own? This period in life is generally regarded as a first step towards adulthood in that it incorporates a move from dependence towards independence, in both financial and emotional terms as well as in terms of a young adult's social life. As such, it is an important life-course phase because each transition changes and determines the young adult's position within society (Smelser and Baltes, *International Encyclopedia of the Social & Behavioral Sciences* 98).

Let us now focus on the reading interests of the young adults. Subject matters and the genres of young adult literature associate with the age and experience of the protagonist and subsequent supporting characters, usually confronting real world problems for the first time. Common themes of this genre include friendship, first love, relationships, and identity. According to Michael Cart:

The term “young adult literature” is inherently amorphous, for its constituent terms “young adult” and “literature” are dynamic, changing as culture and society — which provide their context — change. When the term first found common usage in the late 1960's, it referred to realistic fiction that was set in the real (as opposed to imagined), contemporary world and addressed problems, issues, and life circumstances of interest to young readers aged approximately 12-18. Such titles were issued by the

children's book divisions of American publishers and were marketed to institutions – libraries and schools – that served such populations.

Moving onto young adult dystopias, *The Hunger Games* is an example of dystopian literature. What is meant by the term dystopia? *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* defines dystopia as “A modern term invented as the opposite of utopia, and applied to any alarmingly unpleasant imaginary world, usually of the projected future” (100). This term was coined by the English philosopher John Stuart Mill. Dystopian societies appear in numerous artistic works, particularly in fiction which are set in the future. Some of the basic components in dystopian literature are, excessive measures to police society, unjust laws, pressure to conform, media manipulation and propaganda, measures to cover up flaws and lies within society, attempts to erase or revise society's history, suppression of the arts, restricted or complete absence of individual freedom, division of individuals into special and unprivileged groups, little hope for change economic manipulation, defective, misconstrued, or manhandled progresses and suppression of emotions.

In a dystopian story, the protagonist's society itself usually serves as the enemy; it is the society which effectively acts against the protagonist's aims and desires. This type of persecution every now and then is established by an extremist or dictator government, bringing about the loss of civil liberties and unsound day to day environments, brought about by quite a few conditions, such as world overpopulation, laws controlling a person's sexual or reproductive freedom, and living under constant surveillance. Regardless of whether a general public is seen as a dystopia is normally controlled by one's perspective; what one individual may think about being a horrible dystopia, another may discover totally satisfactory or even semi- utopian. For example, in the event that

you couldn't care less about multiplying, at that point living in a world in which the birth rate is carefully managed wouldn't appear to be a lot of tragic to you; to somebody who esteems that without a doubt, nonetheless, having society reveal to you how, when (or how regularly) you can reproduce would appear as though something out of a bad dream or an individual who hates perusing or scholarly reasoning probably won't give it a second thought if books are prohibited, or even pursued down and decimated, as in *Fahrenheit 451* by Ray Bradbury. Dystopias are often seen as “cautionary tales,” but the best dystopias are not didactic screeds, and the best dystopias do not draw their power from whatever political or societal point they might be making; the best dystopias address the more profound implications of what it is to be one little piece of an overflowing progress and of what it is to be human.

We can assume that dystopian literature reached its modern form in the nineteenth century. Edward Bellamy's 1888 novel *Looking Backward* and Samuel Butler's *Erewhon* backs up this argument. E.M. Forster's *The Machine Stops* introduced the idea of technological dystopian fiction. Many great dystopian works were produced after this, such as *We* by Yevgeny Zamyatin, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* by George Orwell. M. Keith Booker states that “Together, these three novels are the great defining texts of the genre of dystopian fiction, both in [the] vividness of their engagement with real-world social and political issues, and in the scope of their critique of the societies on which they focus.”(20)

Ray Bradbury, Philip K. Dick and Anthony Burgess were other important dystopian writers lived during the last century. Dystopian literature made great progress after the 1970s, with prominent writers including Margaret Atwood and Cormac

McCarthy coming up with their own modern visions of dystopia like *The Handmaid's Tale* and *The Road*. Writers of young adult fiction like Suzanne Collins and Veronica Roth also gave the genre a boost in popularity with their twenty-first century young adult trilogies *The Hunger Games* (2008) and *Divergent* (2011).

Our real concern is about young adult dystopian literature and its influence on popular culture. For that, we have to assess the impact of these novels on the lives of people especially in America and all around the world. We do surely get a glimpse from the excerpt of the following article from *The New Yorker* magazine by Jill Lepore:

“Dystopianism turns out to have a natural affinity with American adolescence”.

From all these facts we have discussed, it becomes crystal clear to us that a large section of American population is very much indulged with fiction in general and dystopian fiction in particular. They are very much aware of the social and political issues and this draws them to dystopian literature. This is where we can see the value of dystopian literature. Dystopian literature has helped to highlight many social ills that society can use as red flags to determine if the power system has gone too far.

Focusing on young adult dystopian literature, the setting, themes, and characters in dystopian fiction are an appropriate fit with the intellectual changes that occur during adolescence. As adolescents develop, they are able to grasp bigger, more abstract concepts and consequences in the world around them and can engage in more critical thinking; they also show increasing interest in issues related to society at large. Dystopian novels that grapple with more profound cultural and moral issues are often well received by young minds that are developing the ability and even willingness to grapple with complex ideas. As adolescents approach adulthood, they start giving more consideration

to the structures and systems that lie ahead. This includes career possibilities and lifestyle choices, but also more abstract systems such as moral principles and social norms. Ethically, youths are moving from the high contrast perspective on youngsters toward the more nuanced perspective on grown-ups, and the large number of significant transitions they experience can lead to uncertainty about their identities and futures. This uncertainty and questioning is part of the process through which teenagers develop their own set of values. Dystopian fiction highlights protagonists who are likewise questioning the underlying values of a flawed society and their identity within it: who they are going to be and how they are going to act. Every choice the characters make can carry enormous consequences, often to the point of significantly altering the world they have always known. Young Adults associate them with these protagonists as they feel their lives are similar to these characters.

This intense connection to the material resonates deeply with readers and can often spark change in their lives and in the societies in which they live. For example, the Harry Potter series of books by J. K. Rowling center around a young wizard who must constantly negotiate good versus evil. This contemporary series has blossomed into a subculture of Harry Potter within society that include conferences, sporting events, and even a theme park with a land dedicated to the events, characters and places presented in Rowling's series.



## 2.2. Rise of Young Adult Literature/ Fiction

The early examples of young adult or teenage literature in English language can be traced back to the eighteenth century, but these cannot be included into the category of the coming of age, young adult, or children's novels of the present day. Some of these earlier works are widely considered as classics by the critics and readers. *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland* (1865) and its sequels by Lewis Carroll, *Treasure Island* (1883) and *Kidnapped* (1886) by the Scottish writer Robert Louis Stevenson are the prime examples of this category. The list also includes the works of Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women* (1868) and its well-known sequels *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo's Boys* (1886), the novels of Frances Hodgson Burnett's *Little Lord Fauntleroy* (1886), *A Little Princess* (1905), and *The Secret Garden* (1911). The list continues with the works of Rudyard Kipling like *The Jungle Book* (1894), *Kim* (1901) and the adventure novels of the American writer Mark Twain with iconic characters like *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* (1876) and the *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (1884). There are also many other works appealing to the young readers like *What Katy Did* by Susan Coolidge, *Anne of Green Gables* by the Canadian author L. M. Montgomery, Peter Pan books by J.M. Barrie, and the works of L. Frank Baum. Even though all these classics were written for children and the teenagers, the proper young adult fiction with its special traits emerged only in the twentieth century.

*Let the Hurricane Roar* (1933) by the American writer Rose Wilder Lane is considered by many as the first novel written for the teenage or young adult readers. The novel is based on real life events from the childhood of the writer Rose's mother Laura Ingalls Wilder. This short novel was reissued with the title *Young Pioneers* from the

year 1976. The book's length and the writing style were perfect for the young adult market of that time and the novel was always a part of the public libraries and the high school libraries in America.

Another important work that can be considered as YA fiction is the novel *Seventeenth Summer* (1942) by Maureen Daly. The novel *Going on Sixteen* (1946) by Betty Cavanna comes next in this list of early YA books. Many of these novels incorporated themes like love in school time, coming of age, sports in schools, adventures with friends, and student career decisions. School students started to identify themselves with characters of their own age and the problems faced by these characters which are similar to their own. Up to this point, YA literature remained mostly realistic and dealt with real life situations. But the interest of young readers turned to fantasy, supernatural and science fiction most probably with the publication of *The Hobbit* and *The Lord of the Rings* by Tolkien and *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis.

All these events and genres contributed immensely in the development of young adult literature as a popular literary genre. Especially in the United States, public libraries and bookstores spread across all the states and towns in the twentieth century. School and University education in the Arts and Humanities also encouraged reading and it led to the establishment of more libraries in schools and all the educational institutes. As research in literature and culture became more prominent in the twentieth century, this also contributed to the sales and increasing popularity of young adult fiction. Though it can be argued that the literature for young adults came into the forefront since the publication of Little House series by Laura Ingalls Wilder, which came out during the

1930s, teachers and librarians were reluctant to accept the existence of YA literature as a separate genre than children's literature.

Author of *Starship Troopers* and *Stranger in a Strange Land*, Robert A. Heinlein wrote several novels aimed at the teenagers. These novels written by Heinlein for the young adults are collectively known as the Heinlein juveniles, starting with *Rocket Ship Galileo* which was published in 1947. One of the novels in this series, *Podkayne of Mars* (1963) is notable for having a girl as the protagonist because most of the young adult novels at that time had male protagonists as these were targeted at the male readers.

Young adult literature started to become a properly shaped genre after 1950, most probably with the publication of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951), as it became highly popular among the young adult readers even though it was meant for an adult audience. Themes discussed in the novel by Salinger like identity crisis and alienation has become common traits of young adult literature. The protagonist of the novel, Holden Caulfield, stands out as an icon of teenage rebellion in literature.

The trend in the popularity of adult literature with young adult readers continued with the novel *To Kill a Mockingbird* (1960) by Harper Lee. The novel is also an example of a Bildungsroman or a coming of age novel. In the United States, it is widely read in high schools and middle schools. As a coming of age novel, the book is also compared to *Catcher in the Rye* and *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*.

*The Outsiders* (1967) by S. E. Hinton properly laid the foundation to the contemporary stream of young adult fiction in the opinion of many critics. Hinton's work depicts a realistic and grim tale of young adults, which was rare to occur in literary

works. *The Outsiders* must also be the first novel targeting and marketed for the young adult audience because Hinton was herself a young adult when she wrote it. Hinton authored the book when she was only sixteen years old and while she was a high school student at Will Rogers High School, Tulsa, Oklahoma and she was eighteen years old when the book was first published by Viking Press on 24th April 1967. The setting of the novel is also Oklahoma and it features a male protagonist, Ponyboy Curtis.

Jon Michaud from *The New Yorker* magazine explains the idea of considering *The Outsiders* as the first young adult novel in his article:

S. E. Hinton recalls that when she published her debut novel, “*The Outsiders*,” in 1967, “there was no young-adult market.” Her book, written by a teen-ager about teenagers in Tulsa, Oklahoma, was issued in hardcover by the Viking Press and then in softcover by Dell—both adult trade imprints. ““*The Outsiders*’ died on the vine being sold as a drugstore paperback,” Hinton told me, but her publisher “noticed that in one area it was selling very well. Teachers were using it in classes. All of a sudden, they realized that there was a separate market for young adults.”

There were several notable books published specifically for the young adult readers after the groundbreaking success of *The Outsiders*. Hinton’s own work *Rumble Fish* (1975) is one among them. Both *The Outsiders* and *Rumble Fish* were adapted into Hollywood films by the infamous film director Francis Ford Coppola. YA literature began to cover more themes than the realistic models of Hinton. Robert Cormier came up with the idea of a secret society in high school in his novel *The Chocolate War* (1974). Madeleine L’Engle introduced the science fantasy genre to teenagers through her *Time*

Quintet, starting with *A Wrinkle in Time* (1962). American writer Gary Paulsen wrote the wilderness survival novel *Hatchet* (1986) for young adults.

Like adult literature, Young Adult literature will continue to evolve and improve, but regardless of how the field develops in the future, it will always owe a debt of gratitude to the influence provided by the early boundary makers and boundary breakers of literature for teenagers.

### **History of the Young Adult Literature in the Twentieth Century**

Twentieth century is the era in which young adult or teenage literature was properly introduced as we have discussed in the previous section. We are going to have a look at the important works and developments in the field of young adult or literature in the twentieth century as a whole. British novelist Kenneth Grahame wrote *The Wind in the Willows* in 1908, and it must be one of the earliest novels written for children and teenagers without any human characters as all the characters in the novel are animals. Alan Alexander Milne is known for writing and creating one of the most beloved animal characters in children's literature: the teddy bear Winnie-the-Pooh. *Winnie-the-Pooh* was published in 1926 and it still continues to be featured in films, TV shows and various other media. Paddington Bear is a well-known character which also resembles Winnie bear. Paddington is also a popular character with film adaptations and the fictional bear was introduced by the British author Michael Bond in the novel *A Bear Called Paddington* published in 1958.

Theodor Seuss Geisel (popularly known with his pen name Dr. Seuss) published several books for children that have an everlasting influence in popular culture. Dr. Seuss

published his debut book *And to Think That I Saw It on Mulberry Street* in 1937. He went on to write several remarkable books including *Horton Hears a Who!* (1955), *The Cat in the Hat* (1957), *How the Grinch Stole Christmas!* (1957), and *The Lorax* (1971). Dr. Seuss was a prolific writer and he produced more than sixty books in his career.

Another important writer in the long list of the twentieth century children's literature authors is E.B. White. Elwyn Brooks White was an American writer and he is best known for his books for children like *Stuart Little* (1945), *Charlotte's Web* (1952), and *The Trumpet of the Swan* (1970). White received a number of awards and honours for his works including the Newbery Honor for *Charlotte's Web* in 1953, American Academy of Arts and Letters Gold Medal in 1960, Presidential Medal of Freedom in 1963, Laura Ingalls Wilder Award in 1970, National Medal for Literature in 1971, and the Pulitzer Prize Special Citation for his Letters of E.B. White in 1978.

British novelist Roald Dahl dominated the field of children's and teenage literature from the 1960s to the 1980s. Most of his novels belong to the fantasy genre. Dahl's books are among the most sold in the world and the unofficial calculations estimate that his books have had a sale of more than two fifty million copies. Many of Dahl's works are considered as masterpieces today and his best known works are: *James and the Giant Peach* (1961), *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* published in 1964, *Fantastic Mr. Fox* published in 1970, *The BFG* (The Big Friendly Giant) published in 1982, *The Witches* (1983), and *Matilda* published in 1988. Roald Dahl had won the World Fantasy Convention Award for Life Achievement in 1983 and the Children's Author of the Year award in the British Book Awards of the year 1990. For his individual novels, Dahl won the New England Round Table of Children's Librarians Award, the

Millennium Children's Book Award, Surrey School Award, and the Blue Peter Book Award for *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. He received the Surrey School award and the Nene award for *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*. His book *Danny the Champion of the World* received the California Young Reader Medal for and the Surrey School Award. He also won the Deutsche Jugendliteraturpreis Award, Federation of Children's Book Groups Award for *The BFG*. *The Witches* received the New York Times Outstanding Books Award, the West Australian Award, the Whitbread Award, and the Federation of Children's Book Groups Award. Dahl was once again awarded the Federation of Children's Book Groups Award for his novel *Matilda*. Most of his novels were adapted into movies by well-known film makers like Steven Spielberg, Robert Zemeckis, Wes Anderson, and Tim Burton.

Young Adult Literature has become much more popular after the 1980s. Books like *Bridge to Terabithia* (1977) by Katherine Paterson, *Madame Doubtfire* (1987) by Anne Fine, *The Westing Game* (1978) by Ellen Raskin, *The Secret Diary of Adrian Mole, Aged 13¾* (1982) by Sue Townsend, *Homecoming* (1981) by Cynthia Voigt, *Hatchet* (1986) by Gary Paulsen, *Holes* (1998) by Louis Sachar, etc. made it possible for the young adult genre to progress through new and different directions.

*Bridge to Terabithia* deserves special mention here because it was among the few young adult fantasy novels that were published between Hinton's *The Outsiders* and Rowling's Harry Potter series, two milestones in the young adult literary trope. There is also *A Series of Unfortunate Events* by Lemony Snickett (Pen name of Daniel Handler), which is a fantasy book series that consist of thirteen books.

Young Adult literature addressed various situations in human life and all the social and cultural developments were reflected in the novels of the twentieth century. We can see themes like abuse, sexual violence, drug addiction, diseases, disability, family, friends and peer groups in the lives of teenagers, history, religion, pregnancy, parenthood, poverty, and survival among others. Science Fiction, fantasy, and the supernatural fiction for children and young adults existed also at the same time. Many of these books were part of the school libraries while some others were banned and challenged by the public and the school authorities for their rebellious themes. Many of these works are accepted as classics today as the times changed. A detailed description of the themes, characteristics, and the categories of young adult literature is provided in next section.

### **2.3.Characteristics and Categories of Young Adult Fiction**

As we have discussed before, young adult fiction has specific characteristics and traits. The plot is always centered with a young adult or teenage protagonist and the narrative will mostly be a first person revelation of incidents through the eyes of the teenage lead. The problems of the adolescents like identity crisis and the trouble of fitting in or adjusting within the society is always highlighted. Family life was also an important part of all the earlier young adult novels as almost all of them were realistic in nature. This changed drastically with the abundance of YA Science Fiction and Fantasy subgenres. Themes of friendship and love affairs are also common in young adult fiction as it is the time where these feelings are the strongest as we have all experienced in our lives. All the characteristics and categories of young adult fiction that I found relevant are discussed in this subsection.



### **Gothic, Horror and Supernatural**

Horror and supernatural literature always captured the attention of the reading public. This is not different in the case of the young adults either. Among the large number of books written for children and young adults, some books deserve special mention. These books are: *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* by Shirley Jackson, *Carrie* and *It* by Stephen King. *The Vampire Diaries* series by L. J. Smith (Lisa Jane Smith) can also be included in this list. Even though not technically a young adult novel, *We Have Always Lived in the Castle* is a first person narrative by the protagonist, 18 year old teenager Mary Katherine Blackwood. Stephen King's *Carrie* is about Carrie White, a sixteen year old high school girl with supernatural abilities. *The Vampire Diaries* is about a high school girl Elena Gilbert who is entangled in romance with vampires, similar to the *Twilight Saga* by Stephenie Meyer.

### **Mystery and Thrillers**

Unlike the other subgenres of Young Adult literature, it is extremely difficult to find good quality crime and mystery thrillers with teenage protagonists. I have put together some YA books which belong to the mystery and thriller category. A book worth special mention here is *I Know What you Did Last Summer* (1973) by Lois Duncan. Duncan is known for her books for children and teens, especially mysteries and supernatural fiction. The novel was adapted into a film of the same name in 1997 and it further developed two sequels. A web series based on the novel with the same name was released in 2021 on Amazon Prime Video and it partially proves that YA literature and media is still on demand. Another highly popular book series with a young adult protagonist is the Alex Rider series by the English novelist Anthony Horowitz. The book

series include thirteen novels and seven short stories. *Stormbreaker*, the first book in the series, was published in the UK in 2000 and in the United States in 2001. A film adaptation of the novel titled *Alex Rider: Operation Stormbreaker* (*Stormbreaker* in the UK) was released in 2006. A TV series based on the book series with the title *Alex Rider* debuted on Amazon Prime Video in 2020. The series continued with the second season in 2021 and the third season is currently in development owing to the positive reviews and viewership of the past two seasons. A quite recent immensely popular novel can also be included in this list. The book is *Where the Crawdads Sing* (2018) by the American writer Delia Owens. The novel has a young adult female protagonist named Catherine “Kya” Clark. *Where the Crawdads Sing* is the debut novel of Delia Owens and it had a sale of more than fifteen million copies, adding it to the list of the most sold individual books of all time that too within a short time span. A film adaptation of the novel with the same name directed by Olivia Newman and featuring the British actress Daisy Edgar-Jones as Kya was released on July 15, 2022.

### **Speculative Fiction**

A remarkable number of works were written in the twentieth century for children and young adults in the field of fantasy. But in the case of science fiction, post-apocalyptic fiction and dystopian fiction, the case is totally different. Only a few books and book series can be included in this category that too from after the 1950s like the *Time Quintet* (1962 – 1989) by Madeleine L'Engle, *Ender saga* by Orson Scott Card (1985 to the present) and *The Giver Quartet* (1993–2012) by Lois Lowry. More than these novels, Robert A. Heinlein contributed immensely to the field of young adult

science fiction. Heinlein's novel *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947) was a landmark in the case of science fiction for young adults. As the critic C. W. Sullivan points it out:

The publication of this book was a significant marker in many ways. First, *Rocket Ship Galileo*, like the eleven others that followed in the series, was published in hardcover by Scribner's. This novel, unlike most of Heinlein's other science fiction and science fiction in general, did not see first light in the pages of a pulp magazine or as a paperback book. *Rocket Ship Galileo*, in its mainstream format and from an established publishing house, went straight to public libraries and school libraries where it sat on the shelf with all of the other fiction deemed suitable for young readers and could be checked out by those young readers. Because of the hardcover format and because of Scribner's reputation, Heinlein's juveniles escaped much of the criticism then being leveled at science fiction paperbacks and pulp magazines. Science fiction did not become instantly credible because of the Heinlein-Scribner's partnership, but it did receive a large push in that direction. (Young Adult Science Fiction 21)

Another book worth mentioning here in the context of science fiction is *Z for Zachariah* (1974) by Robert C. O'Brien. According to C.W. Sullivan, the novel has been regarded as a Young Adult classic for its haunting vision of a post-apocalyptic future. (p. 28) *Children of The Dust* (1985) by Louise Lawrence is also a relevant dystopian and post-apocalyptic novel for young readers in connection with our discussion. The journey of young adult speculative fiction continued through the works of Monica Hughes, Lois Lowry, Philip Reeve, M. T. Anderson, Scott Westerfeld, Patrick Ness, James Dashner,

and the authors of prominence in my thesis, Suzanne Collins and Veronica Roth among many others.

### **Love and Romance**

Love, affection, infatuation are common at the time of adolescence. For many people, love and romance start from their school period itself. The themes of love and romance are the central aspects in several young adult novels and maybe a few of these are worth mentioning here. One of these works is *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* (1999) by Stephen Chbosky. The novel narrates the story of Charlie, an introverted high school student who experiences change in his life because he is going through adolescence and dealing with his feelings and emotional turmoil as he interacts with his friends and family and his new found crush. American author John Green's novels also explore the realms of love and romance. Especially two well-known novels by John Green namely *Looking for Alaska* (2006) and *Paper Towns* (2008) fit right into this category. *Looking for Alaska* is about a teenage boy named Miles Halter and his experiences in high school including with that of girlfriends and a girl on whom he had a crush, Alaska Young from where the novel's title comes from. *Paper Towns* works on the romantic entanglement between two adolescent characters Quentin Jacobsen and Margo Spiegelman and their friends. Irish writer Sally Rooney's *Normal People* (2018) can also be included in this category.

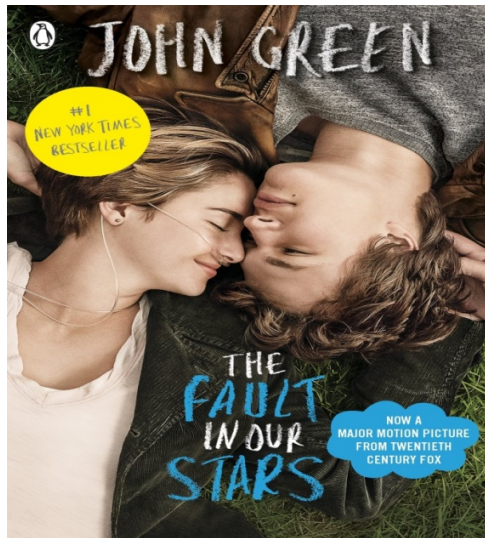
### **History and the Past**

Young Adult literature occasionally includes events and the cultural aspects from the past and some novels written in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries describe the way of life prevalent at that period of time. Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird*, J. D.

Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye* and Susan Eloise Hinton's *The Outsiders* are all artifacts from the past now and these works are known for the social commentary incorporated within. In addition to this random inscription of historical elements, a few novels for young adults can be exclusively called historical novels.

English writer Rosemary Sutcliff was a pioneer in the field of historical fiction and she authored a good number of books exclusively for children and young adults. Sutcliff's novel *The Eagle of the Ninth* (1954) deserves special mention in this context. This is the first novel in Sutcliff's trilogy of Roman Britain and the sequels of the novel include *The Silver Branch* (1957) and *The Lantern Bearers* (1959). Historical novels for children and young adults are not that common in English literature and these do not reach the list of bestselling books. But an exception to this usual plight of the category is the novel *The Book Thief* (2005) by the Australian writer Markus Zusak. The book is a bestseller all around the world and it was translated into more than sixty three languages. Zusak's novel is set in the Nazi controlled Germany during the Second World War and is about an adolescent girl named Liesel Meminger and her family. Khaled Hosseini's 2003 novel *The Kite Runner* can also be included in this category as it narrates the story of two teenagers in Afghanistan and provides a glimpse into the history of the country in the late twentieth century including the end of the monarchy, invasion of the Soviet Union and the Soviet–Afghan War and also the cruel reality of Taliban terrorism. There are numerous books set in the Nazi Germany, British colonies and at the time of the world wars and the books look into the situation of victims who had to suffer under inhumane situations.

## Diseases and Disability



Themes like illness, diseases and disability of teenagers are rarely a part of the young adult books. Usually, there will be a disabled character that is either sympathised by the other characters or is a rebel who does not want the pity of others. But a few novels concentrate entirely on the lives of characters that are suffering from a serious illness or bedridden from accidents. Two novels from the twenty first century are perfect examples for this category of works. First novel of this category in our discussion is *The Fault in Our Stars* (2012) by John Green. The book narrates the story of sixteen year old girl Hazel Grace Lancaster who suffers from lung cancer and a teenage boy she meets from the Cancer Kid Support Group, Augustus Waters and their ensuing romance. Another novel that belongs to this category is *If I Stay* (2009) by Gayle Forman. Forman's book is about the seventeen year old Mia Hall who is hospitalized and is in a coma after a car accident.

#### **2.4.YA and Children's SF and Fantasy Literature in the 20th Century**

This section is about the predecessors of the works analysed in my thesis. As we have seen before, several children's works from the nineteenth century and the early twentieth century had elements of fantasy and science fiction incorporated in them. But it took a while for the YA genre to be properly formed and the Fantasy and Science Fiction works had especially captured the attention of the young readers. Most possibly, English author Edith Nesbit was among the first writers in this long history of speculative works. Nesbit's fantasy works like *Five Children and It* (1902), *The Phoenix and the Carpet* (1904), *The Story of the Amulet* (1906), *The Enchanted Castle* (1907), and *The Magic City* (1910) were all popular among the children and teenagers of that time and have become classics now.

At the same time Scottish writer James Matthew Barrie (commonly known as J. M. Barrie), created an immortal character in children's literature, Peter Pan. Barrie is also the author of several other works, but his tales of Peter Pan overshadowed all of them that lead him to be known as the author of the Peter Pan books. Peter Pan; or, the Boy Who Wouldn't Grow Up was the original title of the work and it was first staged and published as a play in 1904. It was later adapted into a novel in 1911 by J. M. Barrie himself and the novel is also known as Peter and Wendy. The work is notable in the context of my research because it features an imaginary Utopian island called the Neverland. Barrie also wrote several sequels to the novel including *Peter Pan in Kensington Gardens* (1906) and *When Wendy Grew Up – An Afterthought* (1908). The work was highly influential in popular culture and it was adapted several times to films and the best of these are: *Peter Pan* (1924), the first and a silent film adaptation of the work, *Hook* (1991) by Steven

Spielberg, *Peter Pan* (2003) by P. J. Hogan, and *Pan* (2015) by Joe Wright. An upcoming film titled *Peter Pan & Wendy* directed by David Lowery is currently in development.

The trend in fantasy literature for children and teenagers continued with the Oz series starting with *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz* (1900) by L. Frank Baum, *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* (1902) by Beatrix Potter, *Doctor Dolittle* books by Hugh Lofting, John Masfield's *Midnight Folk* (1927) and *The Box of Delights* (1935), *Mary Poppins* (1934) by P. L. Travers, *The Hobbit* (1937) and *The Lord of the Rings* by J. R. R. Tolkien. Tolkien and his friend C. S. (Clive Staples) Lewis were the pioneers of children's and young adult literature in English language for a while. *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C. S. Lewis was also a landmark in YA and children's literature.

After the 1950s, American writer Ursula K. Le Guin came to the forefront of speculative literature and her *Earthsea* series starting with *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968) was influential in several aspects like making person of colour the protagonist of her novel. The works of Le Guin are important in the context of my research because she wrote some important science fiction and dystopian works like *The Left Hand of Darkness* (1969) and also books for young adults. Around the same time, British author Roald Dahl started to gain attention and he dominated the field of fantasy works for young readers for a while. There is also the less known but brilliant novel *Howl's Moving Castle* (1986) by the English writer Diana Wynne Jones. Next in the list of prominent fantasy writers for the youngsters is the English writer Philip Pullman. Pullman's fantasy trilogy *His Dark Materials* consist of the novels *Northern Lights* (1995) [*The Golden Compass* in North America], *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000).



American writer Stephen King is a prodigy when it comes to young adult literature. Known for his works of fantasy and supernatural horror, Stephen King has been a part of the American popular culture almost for the last fifty years. His brilliant and wildly imaginative mind produced iconic young adult characters like Carrie, Charlie McGee in the novel *Firestarter* (1980), Arnie Cunningham, Dennis Guilder, and Leigh Cabot in his novel *Christine* (1983) and the film adaptation of the novel John Carpenter's *Christine* released in the same year. It (1986) is a novel that deals with horror and the adolescent life at the same time. King's novel series *The Dark Tower* is also written for the young adult readers. The latest work written by Stephen King for young adults is *Gwendy's Button Box* (2017), a novella he co-authored with Richard Chizmar.

In the field of science fiction, novels for young adults started receiving recognition possibly with the publication of *A Wrinkle in Time* in 1962 by Madeleine L'Engle. Even then, I could find only a few young adult science fiction novels produced between the 1960s and 2000 that is worth mentioning here. One among these is *Ender's Game* by Orson Scott Card which was published in 1985. Young Adult dystopias probably start with the well-known first novel of William Golding, *Lord of the Flies* which was published in 1954. But the proper young adult dystopian novel that is set in a futuristic society perhaps started with the novels of the British-Canadian writer Monica Hughes namely *Devil on My Back* (1984) and its sequel *The Dream Catcher* published in 1986. But the work which is widely recognized as the first definitive young adult dystopian novel is *The Giver* published in 1993 by the American author Lois Lowry.

Through all these stepping stones, science fiction and fantasy literature for children and the teenagers reached its peak in popularity with the Harry Potter series. An

idea which grazed the mind of Joanne Kathleen Rowling while waiting on a train in England became a phenomenon on popular culture. Children and the teenagers around the world are still buying copies of the printed books of the Harry Potter series and many of us are awaiting the new books and the possible new films from the Harry Potter franchise.

## **2.5.Young Adult Fantasy Milestones**

When we think about fantasy literature and films, two names immediately comes to our minds. They are *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Chronicles of Narnia*. The journey leading to the huge popularity and the international recognition of the Young Adult or Teenage or Children's Fantasy and Science Fiction literature began with these two novel series. All of this leads back to the publication of *The Hobbit* in 1937, the first novel set within J. R. R. Tolkien's fictional universe. I will be discussing all the seminal works of fantasy belonging to the category of Young Adult or Children's Literature in this section.

### ***The Hobbit***

Tolkien's first novel set in the fictional Middle Earth, *The Hobbit or There and Back Again* was first published in September 1937 by George Allen & Unwin publishers in the United Kingdom. J. R. R. Tolkien himself designed and illustrated the book. *The Hobbit* was nominated for the Carnegie Medal and won an award from the New York Herald Tribune in the category of juvenile fiction. The novel narrates the journey of Bilbo Baggins who is a humanoid creature called the hobbit with a group of dwarves seeking their long lost treasure. Tolkien's novel is followed by its sequels forming *The*

*Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Peter Jackson adapted the novel into a live action film trilogy from 2001 to 2003.

### ***The Lord of the Rings***

Tolkien's sequel to *The Hobbit*, *The Lord of the Rings* is an epic high-fantasy novel by J. R. R. Tolkien. Written in stages between 1937 and 1949, *The Lord of the Rings* is one of the best-selling books ever written, with over 150 million copies sold. Although often called a trilogy, the work was intended by Tolkien to be one volume of a two-volume set along with *The Silmarillion*. For economic reasons, *The Lord of the Rings* was published over the course of a year from 29 July 1954 to 20 October 1955 in three volumes titled *The Fellowship of the Ring*, *The Two Towers*, and *The Return of the King*. The work is divided internally into six books, two per volume, with several appendices of background material. *The Lord of the Rings* has since been reprinted many times and translated into at least 38 languages. Its enduring popularity has led to numerous references in popular culture, the founding of many societies by fans of Tolkien's works, and the publication of many books about Tolkien and his works. It has inspired many derivative works, including paintings, music, films, television, video games, and board games. It has helped to create and shape the modern fantasy genre, within which it is considered one of the greatest books of all time.

### ***The Chronicles of Narnia***

*The Chronicles of Narnia* is a series of seven fantasy novels by British author Clive Staples Lewis. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes and was originally published between 1950 and 1956, *The Chronicles of Narnia* has been adapted for radio, television, the stage, film

and video games. The series is set in the fictional realm of Narnia, a fantasy world of magic, mythical beasts and talking animals. It narrates the adventures of various children who play central roles in the unfolding history of the Narnian world. The Chronicles of Narnia is considered a classic of children's literature and is Lewis's best-selling work, having sold over 100 million copies in 47 languages. The Chronicles of Narnia is specifically important in the category of Children's and YA literature because only the children and the teenagers can enter the fictional land of Narnia. Lewis was a close friend of J. R. R. Tolkien, author of *The Lord of the Rings*. Both men served on the English faculty at Oxford University and were active in the informal Oxford literary group known as the Inklings.

### *The Earthsea Cycle*

The Earthsea Cycle, also known as Earthsea, is a series of high fantasy books written by the American writer Ursula K. Le Guin. Beginning with *A Wizard of Earthsea* (1968), *The Tombs of Atuan*, (1970) and *The Farthest Shore* (1972), the series was continued in *Tehanu* (1990), and *Tales from Earthsea* and *The Other Wind* (both 2001). In 2018, all the novels and short stories were published in a single volume, *The Books of Earthsea: The Complete Illustrated Edition*, with artwork by Charles Vess. Earthsea novels are some of the most acclaimed and awarded works in literature—they have received prestigious accolades such as the National Book Award, a Newbery Honor, the Nebula Award, and many more honors, commemorating their enduring place in the hearts and minds of readers and the literary world alike.

### ***His Dark Materials***

His Dark Materials is a trilogy of fantasy novels by Philip Pullman consisting of *Northern Lights* (1995; published as *The Golden Compass* in North America), *The Subtle Knife* (1997), and *The Amber Spyglass* (2000). It follows the coming of age of two children, Lyra Belacqua and Will Parry, as they wander through a series of parallel universes. The novels have won a number of awards, including the Carnegie Medal in 1995 for *Northern Lights* and the 2001 Whitbread Book of the Year for *The Amber Spyglass*. In 2003, the trilogy was ranked third on the BBC's *The Big Read* poll. The London Royal National Theatre staged a two-part adaptation of the trilogy in 2003–2004. New Line Cinema released a film adaptation of *Northern Lights*, *The Golden Compass*, in 2007. A HBO/BBC television series based on the novels commenced broadcast in November 2019. Pullman followed the trilogy with three novellas set in the *Northern Lights* universe: *Lyra's Oxford* (2003), *Once Upon a Time in the North* (2008), and *Serpentine* (2020). *La Belle Sauvage*, the first book in a new trilogy titled *The Book of Dust*, was published on 19 October 2017; the second book of the new trilogy, *The Secret Commonwealth*, was published in October 2019. Both are set in the same universe as *Northern Lights*.

### **The Harry Potter Phenomenon**

Harry Potter has become a household name within a short period of time after the publication of the first novel, *Harry Potter and the Philosopher's Stone* in 1997. It was published in the United States the following year by Scholastic Corporation under the title *Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*. Since the release of the first novel, the books have found immense popularity, positive reviews, and commercial success worldwide.

They have attracted a wide adult audience as well as younger readers and are often considered cornerstones of modern young adult literature. As of February 2018, the books have sold more than 500 million copies worldwide, making them the best-selling book series in history, and have been translated into more than eighty languages. The last four books consecutively set records as the fastest-selling books in history, with the final installment selling roughly 2.7 million copies in the United Kingdom and 8.3 million copies in the United States within twenty-four hours of its release.

The original seven books were adapted into an eight-part namesake film series by Warner Bros. Pictures. In 2016, the total value of the Harry Potter franchise was estimated at \$25 billion, making Harry Potter one of the highest-grossing media franchises of all time. Harry Potter and the Cursed Child is a play based on a story co-written by Rowling. The success of the books and films has allowed the Harry Potter franchise to expand with numerous derivative works, a travelling exhibition that premiered in Chicago in 2009, a studio tour in London that opened in 2012, a digital platform on which J. K. Rowling updates the series with new information and insight, and a pentalogy of spin-off films premiering in November 2016 with *Fantastic Beasts and Where to Find Them*, among many other developments. Themed attractions, collectively known as The Wizarding World of Harry Potter, have been built at several Universal Parks & Resorts amusement parks around the world.

### ***The Twilight Saga***

The Twilight Saga is a series of four vampire-themed fantasy romance novels, two companion novels, and one novella, written by American author Stephenie Meyer. Released annually from 2005 through 2008, the four books chart the later teen years of

Isabella "Bella" Swan, a girl who moves to Forks, Washington, from Phoenix, Arizona and falls in love with a 104-year-old vampire named Edward Cullen.

Since the release of the first novel, *Twilight*, in 2005, the books have gained immense popularity and commercial success around the world. The series is most popular among young adults; the four books have won multiple awards, most notably the 2008 British Book Award for "Children's Book of the Year" for *Breaking Dawn*, while the series as a whole won the 2009 Kids' Choice Award for Favorite Book. In November 2011, the series had sold over 120 million copies worldwide with translations into at least 38 different languages around the globe. The four *Twilight* books have consecutively set records as the biggest-selling novels of 2008 on the USA Today Best-Selling Books list and have spent over 235 weeks on the New York Times Best Seller list for Children's Series Books.

The books have been adapted into The *Twilight Saga* series of motion pictures by Summit Entertainment. The film adaptations of the first three books were released in 2008, 2009, and 2010 respectively. The fourth book is adapted into two full-length films—the first film being released in November 2011, and the second film in November 2012.

### ***Percy Jackson & the Olympians Series***

*Percy Jackson & the Olympians* is a pentalogy of fantasy novels written by American author Rick Riordan, and the first book series in the *Camp Half-Blood Chronicles*. The novels are set in a world with the Greek gods in the 21st century, and follow the protagonist Percy Jackson, a young demigod who must prevent the Titans, led

by Kronos (Cronus), from destroying the world. The first three books were published in the United States by Miramax Books before it was folded into Hyperion Books, which published the following books. All the books were published in the United Kingdom by Penguin Books. Five supplementary books, along with graphic novel versions of each book, have also been released. As of January 2022, the books have sold more than 180 million copies worldwide, making it one of the best-selling book series of all time. Two sequel series, The Heroes of Olympus and The Trials of Apollo, follow.

The first book was adapted into a film titled Percy Jackson & the Olympians: The Lightning Thief in 2010, which was commercially successful, but received mixed reviews from critics and the audience as it has very few similarities to the book. An adaptation of the second book, titled Percy Jackson: Sea of Monsters, was released in 2013, also to mixed reviews. A TV series based on the novels is currently in production for Disney+.



## 2.6. YA Science Fiction Milestones

### *A Wrinkle in Time*

*A Wrinkle in Time* is a young adult Science Fiction novel written by American author Madeleine L'Engle. First published in 1962, the book won the Newbery Medal, the Sequoyah Book Award, the Lewis Carroll Shelf Award, and was runner-up for the Hans Christian Andersen Award. The main characters – Meg Murry, Charles Wallace Murry, and Calvin O'Keefe – embark on a journey through space and time, from galaxy to galaxy, as they endeavor to rescue the Murrys' father and fight back The Black Thing that has intruded into several worlds. The novel offers a glimpse into the war between light and darkness, and good and evil, as the young characters mature into adolescents on their journey. The novel wrestles with questions of spirituality and purpose, as the characters are often thrown into conflicts of love, divinity, and goodness. It is the first book in L'Engle's Time Quintet, which follows the Murry family and Calvin O'Keefe.

### *Ender's Game*

*Ender's Game* is a 1985 science fiction novel by American author Orson Scott Card. Set at an unspecified date in Earth's future, the novel presents an imperiled humankind after two conflicts with an insectoid alien species they dub "the buggers". In preparation for an anticipated third invasion, Earth's international military force recruits young children, including the novel's protagonist, Andrew "Ender" Wiggin, to be trained as elite officers. The book originated as a short story of the same name, published in the August 1977 issue of *Analog Science Fiction and Fact*. The novel was published on January 15, 1985. Later, by elaborating on characters and plotlines depicted in the novel,

Card wrote additional books in the Ender's Game series. Card released an updated version of Ender's Game in 1991, changing some political facts to account for the then-recent dissolution of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War. The novel has been translated into 34 languages.

Ender's Game was recognized as "best novel" by the 1985 Nebula Award and the 1986 Hugo Award in the genres of science fiction and fantasy. Its four sequels—*Speaker for the Dead* (1986), *Xenocide* (1991), *Children of the Mind* (1996), and *Ender in Exile* (2008)—follow Ender's subsequent travels to many different worlds in the galaxy. In addition, the later novella *A War of Gifts* (2007) and novel *Ender's Shadow* (1999), plus other novels in the Shadow saga, take place during the same time period as the original. A film adaptation of the same name, written for the screen and directed by Gavin Hood, and starring Asa Butterfield as Ender, was released in October 2013. Orson Scott Card co-produced the film. The novel has also been adapted into two comic book series.

### ***The Isis Trilogy***

*The Keeper of the Isis Light* is a science fiction novel for young adults by Monica Hughes, published by Hamish Hamilton in 1980. Monica Hughes (November 3, 1925 – March 7, 2003) was an English-Canadian author of books for children and young adults, especially science fiction. It is the first of three books in the Isis series, or *The Isis Trilogy* in its omnibus edition. This book won the 2000 Phoenix Award from the Children's Literature Association as the best English-language children's book that did not win a major award when it was originally published twenty years earlier. The novel is followed by its sequels *The Guardian of Isis* (1981) and *The Isis Pedlar* (1982) and these together form the *Isis Trilogy*.

## 2.7.YA Dystopia Milestones

### *The Giver*

*The Giver* is a 1993 American young adult dystopian novel written by Lois Lowry, set in a society which at first appears to be utopian but is revealed to be dystopian as the story progresses. The protagonist of the story, a 12-year-old boy named Jonas, is selected to inherit the position of Receiver of Memory, the person who stores all the past memories of the time before Sameness. *The Giver* won the 1994 Newbery Medal and has sold more than 12 million copies worldwide. A 2012 survey by *School Library Journal* designated it as the fourth-best children's novel of all time. It has been the subject of a large body of scholarly analysis with academics considering themes of memory, religion, color, and eugenics within the novel.

In Australia, Canada, and the United States, it is required on many core curriculum reading lists in middle school, but it is also frequently challenged. It ranked #11 on the American Library Association list of the most challenged books of the 1990s, ranked #23 in the 2000s, and ranked #61 in the 2010s. The novel is the first in a loose quartet of novels known as *The Giver Quartet*, with three subsequent books set in the same universe: *Gathering Blue* (2000), *Messenger* (2004), and *Son* (2012). In 2014, a film adaptation with the same title was released, starring Jeff Bridges, Meryl Streep and Brenton Thwaites.

**Monica Hughes- *Devil on My Back* and *The Dream Catcher***

***Devil on My Back***

*Devil on My Back* is a young adult dystopian novel by Monica Hughes. The book was first published in 1984 and is the first book of Hughes' ArcOne Series.

***The Dream Catcher***

*The Dream Catcher* is a young adult dystopian novel by Monica Hughes. Kirkus features an insightful review of the novel: After the End of Oil, the universities established protected enclaves to preserve humanity. Ruth's enclave has stressed philosophy and empathy to create a mind-linked web for support of all. However, Ruth, 14, has rare talents which set her apart from her comrades and put her in contact with another faraway enclave. There, science and technology have become perverted, resulting in a slave society with the masters surrendering control to the computer. Ruth leads a party to the twisted enclave, where, with Luke, who also has special powers, they subdue the computer and free the slaves. This is an example of anti-science fiction, where technology gone wrong is the villain.

## 2.8. Young Adult Science Fiction, Fantasy and Dystopias in the 21st Century

Young Adult literature progressed considerably as a literary genre in the past twenty years or in other words the twenty first century. As we have discussed earlier, Young Adult literary works like *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Ender's Game*, *The Giver*, *His Dark Materials*, and the *Harry Potter series* paved the way for the Young Adult Fantasy, Science Fiction, Dystopian and Post-apocalyptic Fiction that dominated the last two decades and the trend still goes on. This section provides an overview of all the important works belonging to the Young Adult Fantasy, Science Fiction, and Dystopian works which we have not discussed before. Many of these novels were also adapted into popular film series or individual films.

### The Mortal Engines Quartet

*The Mortal Engines Quartet* (Hungry City Chronicles in the United States), also known as the Predator Cities Quartet, is a series of epic young adult dystopian steampunk novels by the British novelist and illustrator Philip Reeve. He began the first volume of the series, *Mortal Engines*, in the 1980s, and it was published in 2001. Reeve then published three further novels, *Predator's Gold* in 2003, *Infernal Devices* in 2005, and *A Darkling Plain* in 2006. The novels have won a number of awards, including the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize in 2002 for *Mortal Engines* and the 2006 Guardian Children's Fiction Prize and the 2007 Los Angeles Times Book Prize for Young Adult Fiction for *A Darkling Plain*. It has been adapted as a 2018 feature film by Christian Rivers. The film was produced by the infamous film director Peter Jackson.

### ***Coraline and The Graveyard Book* by Neil Gaiman**

*Coraline* is a dark fantasy novella written for children and young adults by British author Neil Gaiman. The book was published in 2002 by Bloomsbury and HarperCollins. It was adapted as a 2009 stop-motion animated film, directed by Henry Selick. *The Graveyard Book* is a young adult fantasy novel by Neil Gaiman, and it was simultaneously published in Britain and America in 2008. Gaiman won both the British Carnegie Medal and the American Newbery Medal recognizing the year's best children's books, the first time both named the same work. Time magazine included the novel in its list of the 100 Best Young-Adult Books of All Time.

### ***Feed* by M. T. Anderson**

*Feed* (2002) is a young adult dystopian novel of the cyberpunk subgenre written by M. T. Anderson. The novel focuses on issues such as corporate power, consumerism, information technology, data mining, and environmental decay, with a sometimes sardonic, sometimes somber tone. From the first-person perspective of a teen boy, the book takes place in a near-futuristic American culture completely dominated by advertising and corporate exploitation, corresponding to the enormous popularity of internetworking brain implants.

### ***Uglies* Novel Series**

*Uglies* is a book series by American writer Scott Westerfeld for young adults. Westerfeld originally intended for *Uglies* to be a trilogy. However, after publishing the series' first three novels, *Uglies*, *Pretties*, and *Specials*, he ultimately wrote an additional

fourth book, *Extras*. *Uglies* is a 2005 science fiction novel by Scott Westerfeld. It is set in a future post scarcity dystopian world in which everyone is considered an "ugly," but then turned "Pretty" by extreme cosmetic surgery when they reach the age of 16. It tells the story of teenager Tally Youngblood who rebels against society's enforced conformity.

### **Chaos Walking Series**

Chaos Walking is a young adult science fiction series written by American-British novelist Patrick Ness. The series has won almost every major children's fiction award in the UK, including the 2008 Guardian award, the James Tiptree, Jr. Award, and the Costa Children's Book Award. *Monsters of Men* won the Carnegie Medal in 2011. It has been praised for its handling of themes such as gender politics, redemption, the meaning of war, and the unclear distinction between good and evil, all threaded through its complex, fast-paced narrative.

### **The Mortal Instruments**

The Mortal Instruments is a series of six young adult fantasy novels written by American author Cassandra Clare, the last of which was published on May 27, 2014. The Mortal Instruments is chronologically the third series of a planned five in The Shadowhunter Chronicles but was the first one published. *The Mortal Instruments: City of Bones* is a 2013 urban fantasy film based on the first book of The Mortal Instruments series. It was directed by Harald Zwart, with a script written by Jessica Postigo. A reboot television series titled *Shadowhunters*, premiered in 2016 on Freeform and ran for three seasons.

### **The Maze Runner (Novel Series)**

*The Maze Runner* is a series of young adult dystopian science fiction novels written by American author James Dashner. The series consists of *The Maze Runner* (2009), *The Scorch Trials* (2010) and *The Death Cure* (2011), as well as two prequel novels, *The Kill Order* (2012) and *The Fever Code* (2016), a novella titled *Crank Palace* (2020), and a companion book titled *The Maze Runner Files* (2013). The sixth novel, titled *The Maze Cutter*, set 73 years following the events of *The Death Cure*, is set to be released on October 4, 2022. The book series was adapted into a trilogy of films by Gotham Group and Temple Hill Entertainment, and distributed by the 20th Century Fox Film Corporation. All these films are directed by Wes Ball and the T.S. Nowlin wrote the screenplays for the three films. *The Maze Runner* was released on September 19, 2014, *Maze Runner: The Scorch Trials* was released on September 18, 2015, and *Maze Runner: The Death Cure* was released on January 26, 2018. Dylan O'Brien, Kaya Scodelario, Thomas Brodie-Sangster, Ki Hong Lee, Will Poulter, Rosa Salazar, Dexter Darden, and Patricia Clarkson play important roles in the film series.

*The Maze Runner* series is highly significant in my research because it was published almost at the same time as *The Hunger Games* and *Divergent* series. These three book series form the arc of young adult dystopian fiction and played an important role in placing YA dystopia as the most sought after genre in literature, films and TV shows. Even though *The Maze Runner* shares many common elements with the two series in our discussion, a noteworthy difference between *The Maze Runner* and the other two series is that it has a male protagonist.



***The 100* (Novel Series)**

*The 100* is a series of young adult science fiction novels by Kass Morgan. First book in the series, *The 100*, was published on September 3, 2013, by Little, Brown Books for Young Readers. *Day 21*, its sequel, was released on September 25, 2014, and the third book *Homecoming* was released on February 26, 2015. A fourth novel, *Rebellion* was released on December 6, 2016. Prior to the publication of the first book, television producer Jason Rothenberg became interested in adapting the story for the screen. The eponymous TV series adaptation premiered on March 19, 2014, on The CW Network, starring Eliza Taylor and Bob Morley as Clarke Griffin and Bellamy Blake, respectively. The TV series was highly popular and it ran for seven seasons, concluding with the final season in 2020.

***The 5th Wave* (Novel Series)**

*The 5th Wave* is a trilogy of young adult post-apocalyptic sci-fi novels written by American author Rick Yancey. The series started in May 2013 with the first book, *The 5th Wave*. A sequel titled *The Infinite Sea* was published in 2014. The trilogy concluded in 2016 with the final book, *The Last Star*. In March 2012, Columbia Pictures picked up the film rights to the trilogy, with Graham King and Tobey Maguire attached as producers. A film adaptation of the first novel in the series was released on January 22, 2016. It was directed by J Blakeson, with a screenplay by Susannah Grant, Akiva Goldsman, and Jeff Pinkner. The film stars Chloë Grace Moretz, Nick Robinson, Ron Livingston, Maggie Siff, Alex Roe, Maria Bello, Maika Monroe, and Liev Schreiber.

### ***Matched* Trilogy**

The *Matched* trilogy is a young adult, dystopian fiction series written by American author Ally Condie, set in a centrally governed Society. The Society seems to be formed after an apocalyptic global warming event. The novel *Matched* was published by Dutton Penguin in November 2010 and reached number three on the Children's Chapter Books bestseller list in January. Previously working with a small, Utah-based publisher (Deseret Book Co.), Condie took her manuscript to Penguin Random House, after being advised so from her director at Deseret Book. This helped the novel reach a national audience. The *Matched* novel has been optioned to the Walt Disney Company for film adaptation. Foreign rights were sold to 30 countries before publication. The second book, *Crossed*, was published in November 2011, and *Reached*, the final book in the trilogy was published on November 2012, completing the trilogy.

### ***Delirium* Trilogy**

*Delirium* is a dystopian young adult novel written by Lauren Oliver, published on January 1, 2011, by HarperCollins (HarperTeen). The story focuses on a young woman, Lena Haloway, who falls in love in a society where love is seen as a disease. *Delirium* is the first novel in a trilogy, followed by *Pandemonium*, and *Requiem*. Oliver's first novella, *Hana*, was released after *Delirium* and shows Hana's perspective on the events of *Delirium*. Another novella, *Annabel*, was released on December 26, 2012 as an e-book and has events before those unfolding in *Delirium* such as details the story of Lena's mother prior to the events. third novella, *Raven*, was published along with the third book,

Requiem, on March 5, 2013 as an e-book and follows Raven on her life and adventures between the events of Pandemonium and Requiem. On March 5, 2013, all three of the novellas (Hana, Annabel, and Raven) were released together in a softcover book. Oliver's first book, *Before I Fall*, was published on March 2, 2010, by HarperCollins in the United States, and by Hodder & Stoughton in the United Kingdom. The book follows Sam, a teenage girl, who has to go through the last day of her life seven times and each time learns new values and the mysteries surrounding her death. Open Road Films released the film version in theatres on March 3, 2017, with Zoey Deutch portraying the main character, Samantha Kingston.

### ***Red Rising Trilogy***

Red Rising is a dystopian science-fiction young adult to adult novel trilogy written by Pierce Brown. It consists of Red Rising, Golden Son and Morning Star, published in 2014, 2015 and 2016 respectively by Del Rey books, an imprint of Random House. It is followed by the Iron Gold Trilogy.

### ***Legend (Novel Series)***

*Legend* is a 2011 dystopian young adult novel written by American author Marie Lu. It is the first book in the Legend series followed by Prodigy, Champion, and Rebel. Lu draws inspiration from events and experiences throughout her life and media she has consumed such as the movie *Les Misérables*. *Legend* is set in dystopian Los Angeles, in a time where North America has devolved into two warring countries: The Republic and The Colonies. Mixed into this fight is a rebel group, known as the Patriots. The novel

series revolve around the characters Day and June, two 15 year-olds from opposite sides of the economic spectrum.

### ***Red Queen* (Novel Series)**

*Red Queen* is a young adult dystopian-fantasy series by Victoria Aveyard. Published in February 2015, it was her first novel and first series. Aveyard followed up with three sequels: *Glass Sword*, *King's Cage* and *War Storm*. *Red Queen* won the 2015 Goodreads Choice Award for Debut Goodreads Author and was nominated for the 2015 Goodreads Choice Award for Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction. Publishers Weekly found "There's an unmistakable feeling of déjà vu to this first installment in the Red Queen trilogy, which shares several plot points and similarities with the Hunger Games series, ... Fortunately, Aveyard's conclusion leaves the story poised to depart from this derivative setup."

### ***The Circle***

*The Circle* is a 2013 dystopian novel written by American author Dave Eggers. The novel chronicles tech worker Mae Holland as she joins a powerful Internet company. A film based on the novel, adapted and directed by James Ponsoldt, was released in April 2017. Emma Watson (Mae Holland), Tom Hanks (Bailey), Karen Gillan (Annie), Ellar Coltrane (Mercer) and John Boyega (Kalden) play the lead roles.

### ***Silo* (Novel Series)**

*Silo* is a series of post-apocalyptic science fiction books by American writer Hugh Howey. The series started in 2011 with the short story "Wool", which was later published

together with four sequel novellas as a novel with the same name. Along with *Wool*, the series consists of *Shift*, *Dust*, three short stories and *Wool: The Graphic Novel*.

### **Unwind Dystology**

The Unwind Dystology is a series of young adult dystopian science fiction novels by the American author Neal Shusterman. It consists of *Unwind*, *UnWholly*, *UnSouled*, and *UnDivided*, as well as the companion books *UnStrung* and *UnBound*. A TV series of the first book is currently being planned. Neal Shusterman calls his Unwind series of books a "dystology". It would appear he made up the word, by combining "dystopia" and words for a series of books like "trilogy". A dystopia is a bleak world; the opposite of a utopia. Dystology is an example of a portmanteau word.

### ***Ready Player One***

Ernest Cline's *Ready Player One* is an innovative and intellectual young adult dystopian novel released in 2011. This sci-fi story recounts the quest of an ordinary teenager named Wade Watts who relies on an extremely advanced virtual world, OASIS, to live out most of his life: he attends school, hangs out with friends, and entertains himself all through a digital avatar. In 2012, the book received an Alex Award from the Young Adult Library Services Association division of the American Library Association and won the 2011 Prometheus Award. A film adaptation of the novel was released on March 29, 2018, directed by Steven Spielberg from a screenplay by Zak Penn and Cline, and the cast include Tye Sheridan, Olivia Cooke, Ben Mendelsohn, Lena Waithe, T.J. Miller, Simon Pegg, and Mark Rylance. A sequel to the novel by Cline, titled *Ready Player Two*, was published on November 24, 2020. Ernest Cline also wrote the young

adult science fiction novel *Armada*, about a teenager who plays an online video game about defending against an alien invasion and it was published on July 14, 2015.

### **The Grishaverse**

The Grishaverse is a fictional shared universe of fantasy novels, short story collections, and a television adaptation created by American author Leigh Bardugo. As of 2021, there are nine novels in the Grishaverse: the *Shadow and Bone* trilogy, the *Six of Crows* duology, the *King of Scars* duology, and two short-story collections. Eric Heisserer adapted the two series of books in the Grishaverse by Leigh Bardugo, the *Shadow and Bone* trilogy (2012–2014) and the *Six of Crows* duology (2015–2016) for Netflix. All eight episodes of the first season premiered on April 23, 2021. In June 2021, the series was renewed for a second season, also consisting of eight episodes, which is scheduled to premiere in 2023.

### **2.9. Conclusion**

There are some specific elements that appeal to teens in young adult dystopian literature. One among them is inhumanity and isolation. Whatever the backdrop of the dystopia may it be a violent society, a tyrannical government, an over commercialized world, and the protagonists come to understand that their society has become inhumane. They are appalled by the attitudes and actions of those within their culture, nauseated at the lack of concern and even the open coldness of others toward situations that are cruel and unjust. As protagonists awaken to the realities around them, they feel an overwhelming sense that life has lost the value that it once had in the world; respect for life has been sacrificed for comfort or security. In young adult dystopian novels, it is

often this inhumanity that pushes the protagonists to action. Katniss Everdeen of *The Hunger Games* and Jonas of *The Giver* belong to this category of protagonists.

In *The Hunger Games*, Suzanne Collins illustrates a desolate world where survivors of the post-apocalyptic North American continent of Panem are segregated into twelve separate districts and tasked with specific responsibilities of harvesting the Earth's remaining natural resources. The districts are subjected to the cruel oppression and exploitation by the continent's governing body, the Capitol, which applies its range of prominence over them through the work of a domineering tyrannical system, the cornerstone of which is the Hunger Games. In the novel, Collins highlights the contrast between the poverty and destitution experienced by the inhabitants of the districts, and the wealth and power possessed by the ruling class residing in the Capitol, detailing a futuristic dystopia civilization that is characterized by class warfare and bears an uncanny semblance to the highly divisive nature of American society today.

At the opening of *The Hunger Games*, Katniss is clearly aware of the injustices around her. To this point in her life, however, she has learned how to survive within them, and has no real thoughts of changing things. When her younger sister Prim is randomly selected as a tribute for the violent yearly games, however, the cruelty of the authorities becomes personal. Katniss's experiences in the Hunger Games fuel her disgust at what life in her society has become—bohemian at the capitol, impoverished in the districts—and how the Games are used to control and intimidate otherwise innocent people. She is angered at the articulate eagerness many have for the vicious Hunger Games, and apparently more irritated by the smug mentality that wins wherever else. At

the point when she perceives how modest life has become, she is driven to the brink and sets out to do whatever she can to change things.

*The Giver* begins with Jonas' apprehension about his Ceremony of Twelve, when he will be assigned his lifelong job. At the Ceremony, Jonas learns that he has been selected to become the next Receiver of Memory, the highest position in the community. Jonas starts preparing under the current Receiver of Memory, a more seasoned man whom Jonas calls The Giver. The Giver lives alone in private rooms that are fixed with racks brimming with books. Jonas' training involves receiving, from The Giver, all of the emotions and memories of experiences that the people in the community chose to give up in order to attain sameness and the illusion of social order. Eventually, through memories, The Giver teaches Jonas about color, love, war, and pain. Jonas starts to comprehend the pietism that exists in his community— that is, the illusion that everything in the community is good when in fact it isn't. The individuals seem to cherish one another, but they don't really know what love feels like because their lives are an act; their responses have been prepared. Jonas understands that individuals have surrendered their opportunities to feel and think as people, choosing instead to be controlled by others. Those who do not live up to the standards of this Utopian society are immediately “released”. Jonas later finds out that this release process is equivalent to that of death. This novel is a criticism on nations under military or authoritarian governments.

In the book *Birthmarked* by Caragh M. O'Brien, Gaia has been training to be a midwife, just like her mother. At the start of the novel, she helps deliver a baby, then dutifully takes that newborn from its mother's arms and gives it to the authorities. But the desperate pleas of the newborn's mother echo in her mind, and she begins to question the



authorities' actions. These doubts, along with the mysterious disappearance of her parents, lead her to sneak into the Enclave (the seat of power) in search of answers. Once inside, she sees (in light of her training as a midwife) the epitome of inhumanity—the execution of a husband and his full-term pregnant wife for defying society's strict mating laws. This is a defining point for Gaia, and she gets resolved to follow her own feeling of good and bad, in spite of the laws of the Enclave.

While today's teens mature in societies that are not nearly as cruel or twisted as those frequently described in dystopian texts, these protagonists' growing understanding of the society around them mirrors important growth taking place for young adult readers. As protagonists in dystopian young adult literature come to recognize the truth about the societies they live in, they often feel alone, separated from family and friends who do not share the same realizations. As a result, one of the conflicts they face is deciding whom they can trust with their understandings of their society's problems and with their plans to take corrective action.

Most young adult novels feature a protagonist who is faced with challenges, external or internal, and who must overcome those challenges as part of coming of age or establishing an identity. Dystopian young adult novels feature a similar theme, with the challenges faced often arising from the failures of society. Katniss Everdeen, in Collins' Hunger Games trilogy faces physical challenges in the form of the Games, but she must also deal with internal moral dilemmas as she questions the actions she has taken to preserve her life and family in the arena. These questions become even more problematic as, in later books in the series, she is exploited as a leading figure for the rebel against President Snow and the degenerate administration of the twelve districts. In the context of

challenges such as these, dystopian fiction for young adults describes protagonists who arrive at an acknowledgment about their role in the bigger society: they come to see themselves as agents, individuals with a will (often in sharp contrast to the will of the society) and with the capacity to not only disagree with prevailing opinions but to act out against them. This notion of a protagonist's agency mirrors teens' own growing sense of their role as agents in a larger community, and explains in part the appeal of dystopian fiction to so many young people.

The protagonists of young adult dystopias gradually develop a sense of agency and potential influence as they become aware of the flaws in their society. While this growing awareness can seclude them from others, the actions they take and even their increased understanding of the truth are often aided by a relationship of some kind with another character in the story. This relationship, sometimes romantic, provides a catalyst for both the protagonist's changing perceptions about the society and his or her willingness to take action against the conventions of that society. Romance and friendships are, not surprisingly, elements that teenagers are quite interested in. The beginning of adolescence and its going with hormonal changes, just as moving societal expectations that encourage young men and young ladies to see each other in romantic ways, connect with the romantic relationships portrayed in young adult fiction. And friendships represent, as already discussed, a significant part of adolescents' sense of personality and self. Young adults try to associate their own lives with these works and this makes them popular among these people. From all these facts, we feel strongly that the connections between these novels and teens' lives and concerns argue for a need to showcase these books as we converse with teens about their reading. While the same could be said of most young

adult literature, dystopian literature seems to speak particularly to young adults at this time and to the choices and challenges they face as they move toward adulthood.

While the experiences and examples of the fictional world may be exaggerated and set in fantastical worlds, the sentiments and practice of questioning and positive action are ones the reader will need in their own life when considering who to vote for, how to respond to prejudice and partiality, and where to remain on the social and cultural issues in their lives.

Literature for young people is the world in the pages of a book. Here we can find real life matters like Adolescent pregnancy, eating disorders, family issues, friendship stresses, international politics, first love or terminal illness, waiting to be read and waiting to be learnt from, waiting to be used as the blueprints for a lifetime of opinion. Young adult fiction is more than a story. It is the chance to discover what your identity is and what you put stock in from the wellbeing and security of a book. It is a political environment. Reading is a private experience which allows us to share worlds, a portal through which the private individual can enter a political environment and come back a changed being. For caring, principled and passionate young adult readers, this is perhaps one of the things that make reading such a compelling and meaningful experience.

A very interesting fact about the readership of young adult novels is that approximately 55 percent among them are adults. Caroline Kitchener tries to find out the reason of this trend in her article published in *The Atlantic*. In her own words: “I consulted the president of a young-adult publishing imprint, a professor of young-adult literature, a few Masthead members who love YA, and Green himself. Here’s what they

said: “These books are about coming of age, and we’re still coming of age. They’re good, and they’re being recognized. A good story is a good story”.

Everything we have discussed so far proves that both teenagers and adults are interested in young adult literature. Of course we have to consider that much of this young adult literature is dystopian in nature. Also, there are a number of awards given exclusively for young adult literature at present and this explains the popularity and importance of this genre. Most important among these are: Michael L. Printz Award, Margaret A. Edwards Award, William C. Morris Award, Westchester Fiction Award, Boston Globe-Horn Book Award, Cybils Award, Canadian Library Association Young Adult Canadian Book Award and The Bookseller YA Book Prize. Furthermore, most of these young adult dystopian works are adapted into movies. *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Maze Runner*, *The Giver*, *Ender’s Game*, *Ready Player One*, and *The 5th Wave* are some good examples. It is also very interesting to state that most of these movies were highly successful and many of us are familiar with the movies more than the books. These movie adaptations play a great part in the worldwide circulation and the marketing of these books.

In conclusion, it is hard to ignore the immense success of young adult literature and the reasons behind it. Young adult fiction is more than a story to the reader, it challenges their perception of the world and offers the opportunity of self-discovery from the security of a book, answering questions such as ‘What do I believe in?’ and ‘What type of person do I want to be?’ It ultimately prepares the young adult readers for their entry into the adult world as well as encourages enthusiasm for, and a love of reading. For these reasons, young adult literature is an indispensable part of our popular culture.