

## Hey Teens and Adults, Too - Check Out the Teen Books of Today

It's 1979, Billy Joel's song "Just the Way You Are" is Grammy's song of the year, Sony introduced its Walkman and I turned 13. Yikes, 13 years old, big glasses, braces and as my mom likes to say, a big attitude. I had been a "library rat" since I was 5 and by age 13 I had explored every nook and cranny of this library and utilized every section - with one notable exception.

At 13 I had very little use for our "teen department". I had graduated from the Children's department, took one look at the teen books that all seemed to be about Betsy and Joe going to the prom, and decided that I was ready for sterner stuff. Off I went to the adult section to explore the world of murder, monsters and mayhem.

Fast forward 30 years, it's 2009, I'm still a library rat, and best of all, now I get paid for it! Life is grand. I was given the opportunity to assist in developing our teen collection and happily discovered that the face of teen fiction has changed greatly in the last 30 years. I quickly found myself engrossed in the "Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing" by M.T. Anderson. This is an amazing work of historical fiction that completely changed the way I look at the period.

"Twisted" by Laurie Halse Anderson is a great story about a young boy who decides to take responsibility for his life. This one kept me up way too late one evening.

Shh... . don't tell my boss, but "The Hunger Games" by Suzanne Collins made me late for work one day. I had to know how it ended, and I certainly couldn't wait 8 hours to find out!

I must admit that I tell everyone that I read all of these teen titles because it's part of my job. I mean if you want to build a collection, you have to know your product, right? Right? Actually, the truth is that a good book is a good book, and I love a good story, no matter if it's labeled teen or if it is from the adult department.

A young adult or teen label no longer means a shallow story about teen romance, or even teen vampires. The teen section is now the home of some great literature, whether it's the haunting tales of Neil Gaiman and Markus Zusak, the exciting and fantastical "Graceling" by Kristin Cashore or the dramatic "What I Saw and How I Lied" by Judy Blundell.

Okay, so all of you that were thirteen in 1979 and might have skipped through the teen department on your way to the adult section. STOP! Back up and visit the teen department. You'll find great stories, great writing, and yes, even a fair share of murders, monsters, and mayhem.

I've given you some suggestions, so now it's all up to you. I don't know if Betsy and Joe ever did go to the prom, but I do know that there are lots of books that you simply can't miss and a lot of them are shelved in our teen section. If you don't know where the teen section is, just ask and we'll show you the way. I look forward to seeing you there. I've got a lot of catching up to do.

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