

TeenLibrarian

Monthly Newsletter

www.teenlibrarian.co.uk



Welcome to the mid-year edition of Teen Librarian Monthly! With the year half-gone and summer still to make a proper appearance (I am not even going to mention the World Cup) it is time to dive into what is on offer this month.

First up is a brief piece on libraries and volunteers assisting in libraries (a good idea) and volunteer-run libraries (not such a good idea). Then we touch briefly on the love-affair between teens and vampire fiction with a link to an article that may explain what it is all about. Scott Pilgrim is mentioned – a soon-to-be released film based on a series of graphic novels, and a list of GNs that have had cinematic adaptations that could be used for display purposes.

We then go on to look at two online writing communities for teens that are based in America but appear to be open to a global audience. Following that there is the Seventeen Project in which a teen is attempting to live a month of her life according to Seventeen magazine. This month's Eight Questions With... interview is with Jandy Nelson – author of *The Sky is Everywhere* the review of which is included in the newsletter.

Volunteers and Libraries

I have been a long-time fan of the idea of using volunteers in libraries, specifically using teens as volunteer assistants where possible. Due to a number of reasons, my work with volunteers has been limited but that is fortunately starting to change. The recent and disturbing suggestion on having libraries run by volunteers has led to a bit of an outcry. Andrew Motion summed it up very well in a recent article in The Guardian which can be read here: <http://bit.ly/akfWOx>.

Libraries are currently facing uncertain times, as are many public services. With rumours of budget cuts and staffing cuts floating around it is an unsettling time for us all. I have attended a number of talks in local

authorities about volunteer use in libraries and been involved in discussions on how to proceed with using a volunteer service in my previous library service. In all of these talks and discussions the role of volunteers was very clear, they were not permitted to perform duties that were usually run by paid members of staff.

In a time of staff and budget shortages we may become more reliant on volunteers to help us provide the level of service that we have always offered to the public.

I would be interested in hearing from librarians that have had experience in working with volunteers and also anyone that has pro or anti-volunteer views.

Have you wondered why Teens love Vampires?

An English lecturer has examined why teenage vampire books and movies have gripped young readers' imaginations nowadays and taken the crowd by storm.

<http://bit.ly/ctkJCw>

Scott Pilgrim

The soon to be six book graphic novel series by Bryan Lee O'Malley is the latest graphic novel adaptation that will soon be hitting the big screen this year. The series has proven to be extremely popular globally and with only six books in the series will be fairly inexpensive to pick up for library collections.

Graphic novels have proven to be very popular with film studios, and these days with the growing popularity of GNs in library collections, creating a display of movie tie-ins should not be too difficult.

An abridged list of GNs that have been adapted into films:

Ghost World

American Splendour

Iron Man

30 Days of Night

Batman

X-Men

Wolverine
Akira
Green Lantern
V for Vendetta
The Watchmen
The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen
From Hell
Spawn
Superman

Online Teen Writing Communities **Inkpop**

inkpop is an online network that connects up-and-coming authors with talent spotters and publishing professionals in the teen market. Writers are invited to post their books, short stories, essays, and poetry for the whole world to see. inkpop members identify and rank their favorite works and post their feedback and constructive criticism.

<http://www.inkpop.com>

SMITHTeens

SMITH is a home for storytelling of all forms and kinds, with a focus on personal narrative. We believe everyone has a story, and everyone should have a place to tell it. SMITHTeens is a space for non-adult contributors, aged 13-19.

Storytelling has never been easier, more democratic, and, on the good days, interesting. It's an amazing time for media makers, one in which content is often bottom up rather than top down, aspirational, populist, forward thinking, and most of all, participatory. SMITH is both a place for professional and never-before-published writers, artists, and photographers, bound together by a passion for storytelling.

<http://www.smithteens.com>

The Seventeen Magazine Project

Jamie Kellis is an 18 year old from Pennsylvania. She has decided to follow the gospel of Seventeen Magazine for a month:

This is what I will set out to explore. The goal of this project is to simply explore a dying aspect of teenage culture. I will live my life according to the tips provided by the June/July issue of Seventeen magazine and [Seventeen.com](http://www.seventeen.com) from today until the weekend of my high school graduation (June 21).

Conveniently, this project will also span the Most Important and Magical Night of My Teenage Life (i.e. senior prom). I will use this blog to record my findings, and to provide commentary on teenage life/the adolescent experience.

Here are the rules of the project:

1. I will read the entire June/July issue of Seventeen magazine from cover to cover.
2. Every day I will utilize at least one "beauty tip" (hair/makeup/skincare/whathaveyou) and one fashion tip.
3. I will follow all diet and exercise tips provided in the issue to a T.
4. I will participate in every activity recommended by the magazine (i.e. host a fright night, score your hottest summer hookup ever, be confident in a bikini, etc.)
5. I will apply for every single "freebie" offered by the magazine, every day.
6. I will consume all media recommended by the magazine at least once. (books/movies/music)
7. I will hang all provided pictures/posters of "hot guys" in my living environment.

Hopefully in following these rules I will be given the opportunity to shed some light on the modern teenage experience. On this blog, I will document my project, as well as offer commentary on media and teenage culture.

Full disclosure, I am probably far too self aware for this project to draw any sort of credible conclusion on the effects of teen magazines on teen girls. An initial "picture walk" of this month's issue seems to point to the idea that sarcasm/cynicism/self-awareness doesn't exist in the sub-21 world. Nonetheless, I am excited to see where this takes me.

<http://www.theseventeenmagazineproject.com/>

Librarians going Gaga

Students and faculty from the University of Washington's Information School perform a Lady Gaga remix ("Catalog")

This video has gone viral and possibly a large number of readers may already have watched it. This can be used in library orientation groups with teens, specifically on how to use the catalogue and even just as an ice breaker.

<http://bit.ly/dsleet>

Review: The Sky is Everywhere



When her fiery older sister Bailey dies, the air is sucked from Lennie's world. Torn from the safety of her sister's shadow, she finds herself taking centre stage of her own life and, despite a nonexistent history with boys, suddenly she's struggling to balance two.

First there's Toby. But what kind of girl falls for her dead sister's boyfriend? Then there's Joe, the new boy in town, with a jaw-dropping grin.

But how dare Lennie feel joy so soon >

It doesn't seem right that anything good can come out of Bailey's death - does it?

Since her sister died Lennie has had to live her life as herself - without the comfort and security of being a younger sister. She has to come to terms with a growing attraction - between her sister's grief-stricken boyfriend Toby who loved

Bailey as much as Lennie did, this love and loss brings them together in a search for consolation and confused love; and Joe who brings her out of her grief into something new.

Poems are scattered throughout the book that give hints on what Lennie's is feeling. It is the only way she seems to be able to express herself being unable to talk to her grandmother or friends. Throughout the book Lennie learns about herself and her family, including what happened to her mother and how to face up to the consequences of choices she makes.

The Sky is everywhere is a beautifully written tale about grief, joy, loss, love and all the things that make growing up so confusing and wonderful. It is one of the most emotionally charged books I will read this year.

I recommend it unreservedly for all lovers of coming of age tales and everyone else who loves well-written YA fiction.

Edited by: Matthew Imrie

Special thanks go to Jandy Nelson for answering the Eight Questions With... interview

Eight Questions With... Jandy Nelson

Q1 What made you decide to write for Teenagers?

I had no idea what was happening in the world of children's literature until I went to graduate school in that field. I hadn't written a word of fiction at that point, only poetry. But once there, I was introduced to the YA verse novel and got really, really excited about the possibility of writing one, even though I'd gone to school to study and write picture books. I immediately immersed myself in all the YA verse novels I could find as well as other YA and middle grade novels. I was blown away by the vibrancy of voices like Laurie Halse Anderson's, Francesca Lia Block's, Sharon Creech's, by the experimentation going on with form, by the overall urgency of the storytelling. It was a revelation! I decided I would indeed try to write a verse novel, but alas—it turned into prose (with some verse) about a week in. So, that's how my first teen novel *The Sky Is Everywhere* began, but there's something deeper. I not only love the urgency of YA storytelling, but the urgency of teen life itself, that period of time when everything is so new, so dramatic, so emotional, so confusing, so funny, so raw, so honest, so *everything*. I love that "everything" aspect of writing about/for teenagers, and love how teenagers dive headfirst into the big questions too. Also, there's nothing more joyful than writing about first love, more painful than writing about first losses, so it's an emotional and headlong ride writing for teens and I like that. It's a great aesthetic and emotional fit for me. But more simply, I adore teenagers, and a bunch of them keep popping into my head with stories to tell and I'm compelled to get those stories down on paper.

Q2 How do you get into the heads of your characters?

I think the question is more how do I get them out of my head! Lennie, the narrator of *The Sky Is Everywhere*, absolutely crashed into my psyche one day with her clarinet and worn copy of *Wuthering Heights* and took me over for years. And it's the same with the two teen protagonists I'm working with now in my

new novel. I'm not sure how I do it except by writing and writing and trying to stay true to my characters at every hairpin twist and turn of their stories, to track them emotionally, psychologically, physically, from the first page to the last. That's the goal anyway—to try to keep it as honest as possible—it takes many drafts.

Q3 Do you know instinctively what will appeal to Teens or is it more a hit or miss process?

I look at it a little differently. I try to focus on my teen characters, their issues, their stories, their emotional and psychological landscapes, try to stay true to them, and hope their worlds will interest their real life peers. So far, I've definitely felt like my characters are telling their stories directly to their peers, so I trust that.

Q4 What is the most satisfying part of the writing process for you?

I have two favourite parts. I love the beginning when I'm totally lost inside a story, so immersed that my fictional life overtakes my real one. I love the madness of that, when the story is pouring out and I feel this compulsion to get it down before I lose it. It's fevered, euphoric, like being in love. And I also adore the later stages of revision, the last drafts, when I'm playing with words, fiddling endlessly with this and that. At that point, I kind of just stare zombie-like at my computer screen for days living inside a particular sentence or scene or section trying to make it better, to make it come alive. For me, it's often during this later part of the process that (hopefully) the humor pops and the language starts to sizzle, and that's very satisfying.

Q5 Do you ever read the works of other Teen/YA authors? If yes what can you recommend?

Oh, yes. I'm so inspired by contemporary YA literature, by the buoyancy and vibrancy of the storytelling. For their brilliance with voice I love Laurie Halse Anderson and John Green.

For her story innovations I love Gabrielle Zevin, adored *Elsewhere*. For genius with language I really admire Francesca Lia Block and Marcus Zusak. And I love the Canadian writer Martha Brooks, her *Confessions of a Heartless Girl* is so wonderful. There are so many YA writers I love—I wish I could name every one. But probably my favorite contemporary novel in children's literature, though middle grade, is Sharon Creech's *Walk Two Moons*.

Q6 Are any of your novels based on personal experiences?

Yes, and no. Like Lennie, in *The Sky Is Everywhere*, I had lost someone very close to me and I wanted to write about that kind of catastrophic and transformational life event. I wanted to explore the intricacies and complexities of grief, so that aspect came from my life experience. But the ins and outs of Lennie's story are her own and bear no resemblance to my life. I very much wanted hers to be a first love story as well as a grief story, so, a novel in which joy and sorrow cohabit in very close quarters—I wanted Lennie's love to be almost as unwieldy as her grief. So yes, the story itself is fiction but I drew emotionally on my own experience in writing it. Additionally, the novel is choc full of people, places, things, moments, words, emotions, etc., that come from my life and the lives of those around me, but they are all kaleidoscoped into different configurations to tell Lennie's story. My family definitely laughs at certain things in the book that ring our bells, the kookiest stuff really: the houseplant, the pyramids, the green paintings—I stole all that from my crazy relatives.

Q7 What are you working on at the moment?

I'm currently working on my next novel which is called *The History of Luck/The Invisible Museum*. As the title reveals it's really two novels in one and it tells the stories of twins Noah and Jude, alternating between Noah's story which takes place when the twins are fourteen and Jude's when they're eighteen. It's full of secrets, lies, heartbreak, romance, grief, mad love, very strong passions. Both narratives revolve around a charismatic and mysterious sculptor who changes both the

twins' lives, and they, his. I'm very excited about it. Ultimately, it's a redemptive story about the transformational power of art and love, and the necessity of being true to your own wildly beating heart.

Q8 Do you ever do Library visits to Teen Reading Groups? If yes, what is the best way to get into contact with you or your agent about it?

Yes, I do. You can contact me directly at jandy@jandynelson.com.