***Every Day* and Young Adult Literature**

**Faculty/Staff Book Discussion, 3/30/15, California State University, Northridge**

**Erin Delaney, Discussion Leader**

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| **Freshman Common Reading Selection Criterion #2:**  Does this book encourage freshmen to grow intellectually?  **Key Questions:**   1. How do we know that a book encourages intellectual growth? (attributes of the text) 2. How can we ensure that a book encourages intellectual growth? (up to us, in part) |

**Young Adult Literature:**

Intended audience: fuzzy age range (12-18? 14-21? 14+?)

Becca Rackley, author of “[What Is Young Adult Literature?](http://www.columbiatribune.com/arts_life/family_life/blogs/great_books_teen_readers/what-is-young-adult-literature/article_5e170a6c-1f70-56d0-8856-29c408ed674c.html),” argues that YA is more adult than it is young. The genre focuses on the transition from childhood to adulthood.

Characteristics:

* Adolescent protagonist who faces challenges and must develop and grow (to a degree)
* Identity issues: contrast the need to belong with the feeling of being “other”
* Frank discussion of sex, drinking, and drugs
* Some swearing
* Ineffective, absent, or antagonistic adults

Benefits to Readers:

* Engrossing books encourage literacy
* Addresses the needs of readers in transition from childhood to adulthood
* Fosters empathy when protagonists are different from the reader
* Gives readers the opportunity to develop a personal philosophy and sense of ethics: “What would I do? Do I agree with the character’s choice?”

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| Imogen Russell Williams, in “[What Are YA Books? And Who Is Reading Them?](http://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2014/jul/31/ya-books-reads-young-adult-teen-new-adult-books),” states, “To me, YA means challenge – encountering diverse protagonists and situations I'll never experience myself (including being a teenager again) but which stretch me to empathise with and contemplate.” |

**Our Incoming Freshmen:**

**Question:** How does the information about Young Adult Literature above apply to our incoming freshmen?

Fall 2015 Course Offerings (according to CSUN Portal on 3/25): **146 sections** of 113A and 114A in English, Asian American Studies, Africana Studies, Central American Studies, Chicano Studies, and Queer Studies. There will also be **80 sections** of 115 offered.

Together, these courses will serve approximately **4800** **students** (2,900 in 113A and 114A, and another 1900 in 115).

Works cited:

Rackley, Becca. “What Is Young Adult Literature”? *Columbia Tribune*. 7 July 2011. Online, Accessed 14 April 2015.

Williams, Imogen Russell. “What Are YA Books? And Who Is Reading Them?” Blog. *The Guardian*. 31 July 2014. Online. Accessed 14 Apr 2015.

**Increasing Intellectual Growth**

**Or, What Can We Do to Ensure that *Every Day* Encourages Intellectual Growth?**

**Journal Assignment:**

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| Over the course of the semester, you will write four journals on *Every Day* by David Levithan. Each *Every Day* journal will be typed and printed so we can discuss your ideas in class.  Each reflection will answer the following questions: (4-6 sentences each)   1. What was this section of *Every Day* about? 2. What surprised you about this section? 3. To what extent do you agree with A’s decisions and behavior in this section? 4. What ethical issues does this section discuss?   You will also write three discussion questions about the assigned section of the text. Good discussion questions will:   * Go beyond comprehension * Ask the class to analyze the text and present their opinions * Require an understanding of the text * Be thought-provoking and conversation-inducing * Require more than a one word answer |

**Activity: Brainstorm other ways to encourage intellectual growth when reading *Every Day*.**

1. Skill Development:

* Annotation and other writing skills
* Reading strategies
* Class discussion including critical thinking
* Time management
* Preparing for assignments (quizzes, essays, or projects)
* Memory
* Ethical decision-making: A decides not to interfere. Would you? What’s the right thing to do?

1. Making Connections:

* How does the text relate to your experiences as a college student?
* How might someone in your major use this book?
* How does A make the transitions between different identities? How might this relate to your own transition into a college student?
* What kinds of families does A encounter? What kinds of sibling relationships does the book portray? How do these portraits differ from your own family experiences?
* What is your own code of ethics?

1. Research Topics:

* Transgender identity
* Addiction
* Sex in teen relationships
* Cutters (self-harm)
* Ableism
* Religion
* Depression
* Technology and personal safety
* Memory-making
* Resilience
* Undocumented teens in LA
* Books and music in *Every Day*

1. Diversity and Identity:

* Carefully examine chapters about members of diverse groups, like the transgender boy Vic and the obese boy Finn
* Examine the depiction of adults. How helpful are they? How do they compare to real adults students interact with?
* Some readers suggest that the book does not deal critically with race. Do you agree?
* How did you picture the smoker? Why?
* Are the characters in this book round (do they change over time?) or flat (no change)?

1. Ethics and Philosophy:

* A’s Code of Ethics and ways A violates that code
* Where does a person’s identity “live?”
* How does the book encourage empathy? Are there characters A doesn’t have empathy for? What actions (if any) are you required to take?
* Who is A, exactly?
* To what extent is Rhiannon and Justin’s relationship abusive?
* Love is a source of change for A. Would you agree that love adequately justifies all of A’s choices?
* Could CSUN host a lecture or a lecture series with philosophy faculty discussion the nature of the self? The mind-body problem?
* To what extent is A entitled to A's own life? In other words, does A have a right to pursue his/her own interests?

1. Agent of Success:

* To what extent can A act on A’s own behalf? What aspects of A’s life can A control?
* This can also connect to ethics: To what extent should A act on A’s own behalf?
* Compare to the students. To what extent can they act on their own behalf and control their lives?