



**RESEARCH PAPER**

**Classic and Universal Appeal in Young Adult Literature (YAL)**

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The carnage of two world wars profoundly affected writers of the period to view the world with newer lens. Young Adult Literature appeared as a product of age in 1960s as contemporary literary writing exploring coming of age problems tend to emphasize on fantasy, romance, dystopian, psychological and hybrid scientific realism genres. The research paper aims to highlight the appeal of YAL as universal and classic for all times and ages because YAL presents realistic fiction having therapeutic values. The rationale of writing this research paper is to explore and refute the statement of Young Adult literary author Chris Crowe who assumes YAL negative in appeal due to tendency of Bleak Realism. The research paper is qualitative in approach aims to analyze historical, social, cultural and psychological approaches to analyze YAL as canonized literature dealing with moral educational purpose of teenagers. The research paper helps the literary students of English Literature to understand the diversity YAL has in its chronotopes to reinvigorate teenagers for realization to grow faster than to grow old in order to understand themselves, their roles and responsibilities in society.

**Introduction**

Christopher Everett Crowe is an American professor specializing in Young Adult literature. He has written many renowned articles and book of YAL Including, what is YA Literature? (1998), The Problem with YA Literature (2001) and in the Last Taboo: Spirituality in YAL (2005); his debuted novel. In his article Problem with YA Literature he asked, "Have you ever wondered what exactly can be considered YA literature?" (2001, P. 146). Young Adult literature is fiction written for readers falling in between 12 to 18 years of age. Young Adult literature witnessed popularity in 1950s and since the year 2000 there is steadily increase in readership due to globalization of YA Literature along with its collaboration with the film industry and TV serials. Katherine T. Bucher and defines YAL as:

YAL is difficult to define because the definition itself changes from time to time. However the criteria that were used in selecting books to receive the Printz Award and the Edwards Award given to the honor and author for his/ her contribution to young adult with a window by which they can view the world, which

will help them to grow and to understand themselves and their role in society. (2010, P. 134)

From above definition it is clear that YAL highlights contemporary problems of society correlate with age and experiences of the protagonist regarding issues of Coming of age such as identity crisis, moral ambivalence, mental disorder, psychological ramifications, Racism, gender stereotypes, sexism, LGBT, suicide, dystopian world, divine encounter, hybrid scientific realism, hopelessness, homelessness, forced marriages and cultural conformity etc. In the mid of 19th century American literature began to shy away from the spiritually based ritualistic stories and evolved protagonist plagued with Captivity Narratives of self and corrosive Other. The issues Teen Protagonist deals with on a day-to-day basis tend to be harsher which caused adolescents to Grow Up faster than to Grow Old. The phenomenon is known as Tweenager appeared in 1987 in an article Marketing and Media Decisions which means by denaturalization process children developing into adults. YAL resists this process of aging prior to puberty therefore Therapeutic Nature of pedagogy surrounds YAL to provide teen's picture of other teens who suffer similar events to learn from their experiences. Swiderek stated, "Their pain and unhappiness do not come from books. It comes from life" (35).

The rise of the YAL coincides with a shifting in national consciousness towards countercultural phenomenon in 1960s to 1980s. The key movements the Swinging Sixties, Hippie Culture, Baby Boomer and Sexual Liberation revolution rejected mores of American life. Stanley Cohen used the term Moral Panic in 1971 for threat to Social Norms. Chris Crowe in his article *What is Young Adult Literature* stated:

One of my department colleagues who teaches YAL uses an historical literary approach and includes *Little Women* and *Ann of Green Gables* in his reading list. I, on the Other hand, don't include anything published before 1967 the year S. E. Hinton's novel *The Outsider* that clearly established the realistic novel for teenage book market. (1998, P. 121)

*The Outsider* (1967) is a monumental novel by S. E. Hinton of coming of age. The book focused on Socio - Economic condition of two gangs, the Aristocratic Socks and lower - class Greasers. The working - class Greasers and the upper - class Socks. The major themes of the book revolve around gang violence, drinking and family dysfunction. In an interview Hinton stated that like every other teenager, was sure that adults had no idea what is going on.

In 1960s youth counterculture adopted Drug Rehabilitation (LSD) and Psychedelics as a sort of euphoria in manners, morals and fashion of youth to let them free from clutches of Past regressions and constraints. The approach in YAL shifted to Depressive Literature (1970). The term was coined by Nicholas Tucker and applied to the school of Frank Realism that rejected optimism began to emerge in work of H. E. Hinton's *The Outsider*. Natalie Babbitt stated, "Teenagers do not need a fiction of their own: they are quite ready to move into the world of adult fiction" (Engdahl, 2019, P. 03). *The Outsider* falls into genre of Problem Plays. Sheila Egoff describes three reasons of popularity of Problem Plays.

- The novel belongs to the category of realistic fiction therefore, have Therapeutic value.
- The novels are new to the readers and provides them meaningful experiences to those who are alien to it.
- The novels due to realistic appeals infused a desire to grow up in children (Sturm, 2009, P. 39 - 47).

From 1960s onward Americans underwent a dramatic shift in terms of their methods of self - identification. The lack of ideals in YAL allows very little room for spiritual transcendence or self - aggrandizement. YAL characters and readers search for mental peace and confounded by the fact that the harsh conditions of their world constantly militate against it. Thus, both readers and characters of YAL are held captive by the Otherness of society based on fear, ignorance and moral ambiguity. In this way characters devoid of moral behavior became role models and source of inspiration for YAL readers. George Herbert Mead posited, "Society shapes self - shapes social behavior" (Spanke, 2010, P. 160). Ironically while seeking verisimilitude, our perception, our vision, our relationship to our surrounding environment, becomes blurred to the point where we question the validity of the external world. Chris Crowe stated in his article *Problems with YA Literature* that most YA books are bad Because Objections generally fall into two categories:

- They aren't classic.
- They corrupt young.

#### **Objection #1: They Aren't Classic.**

YA books generally not fit in classification of literary classics. The concept of classics got changed from, "Beowulf, Shakespeare's plays, pride and prejudice, war and peace" to Harry Potter Series (2001, P. 122). Chris Crowe cited the words of Anthony Holden from The Observer in his article, "The victory of Harry Potter "would have sent out a signal to the World... that Britain is a country that refuses to take itself seriously" (2001, P. 147).

YAL belongs to The Me Decade 1970s. The term was coined by Tom Wolf to describe new attitude of America in the direction of Atomized Individualism and away from Communitarianism. He cites the economic Boom of Post-war affording the average American a sense of self- determination providing hallucinogens similar to religious ecstasy. Therefore, YAL focused on the actual and everyday issues of life with burgeoning emphasize on seeing myself in my surrounding where teenagers be pigeonholed in a world of chaos and doubt.

#### **Objection #2: They corrupt young**

Chris Crowe stated, "I am personally acquainted with the lure of YA literature" (2001, P. 146). He feels that teenagers must read the Classics, not below anything than canonized literature. It can spoil teenager's cultural literacy

consciousness, weaken student's mind, waste valuable educational time and resources. Teenagers reading Bleak generalization R or NC - 17 rated material resulting Cognitive Dissonance that caused greater damage to fragile minds making them feel as they are victims of captivity of their own circumstances.

Transcendentalist Emerson and Thoreau viewed the world as void Wasteland waiting to be shaped by their own agency and unique design, today's narcissist view the world as a mirror. Thus, one's identity is a subject to change with a corresponding change in setting. This notion reflects the shift in national conscience from being a culture of character to one's personality. Because mirror focuses on present neglected past rendering future uncertainty. The perspective offers explanation for Absence of Parenthood or Motherhood in YAL fiction to highlight disorder, undisciplined innermost anxieties mirror in narratives.

### Literature Review

The mansion of YAL has million windows but to define and each is justified in its way. The generic search for value judgements in good or bad fiction is useful for critical analysis. Chris Crowe's rejection of Anne of Green Gables and Little Women on the basis of publication before 1967 is ironically unjustified, unfair and misleading comment. Contemporary children's literature is trespassing coming closer to mainstream literature having important feature of Postmodernity: "polyphony, generic eclecticism, disintegration narrative structure, inter-subjectivity and metafiction. Literature is the product of milieu of age reflects the tonal shifts of advancements. Anne of Green Gables and Little Women laid foundation for YAL as Coming of age and domestic Problem Plays presents particular issues related to ages. In both plays the teenagers become adolescent in order to survive in new environment, they must play a role different from their culture of teenagers. Chris Crowe contends that contemporary YA literature lacking in depth and artistic development of the Great work of literary Canon having negative effects on teenagers for the topic of vulgarity it bears.

and adult literature. Majority of Intellectuals proposed the possibility Crossover phenomenon started before 1900 because of less availability of books for children and teenagers' therefore same book appeals to young adult children and adult. Historically, the Crossover phenomenon in Literature had existed for a long time such as Dennis book Courtesy in 1477 and The Fables of Aesop in 1484 are included in it.

From Middle Ages to the Renaissance majority of European population were illiterate, could not understand teachings of new religion Christianity in Latin therefore king Alfred (849- 899) translated work of Latin into old English. The Mystery, Morality, Miracle plays up to the Interlude were performed in dumb shows by clergy for instructions of Children, Young adult and Adults. Once printing press emerged in 1474 by William Caxton Guttenberg Bible was published in picture books, horn books and primers up till 19th century and blurred the distinction among Children, teenagers and adult use. According to Beckett Don Quixote Cervantes 1547 John Bunyan's The Pilgrims progress 1678, Daniel Defoe's Robinson Crusoe 1719, Jonathan Swift's Gulliver Travels 1726, Mark Twain's Huckleberry Fin 1884, Charles Dicken's David Copperfield 1850, *Lousia May Alcott's*

*The Little Women* 1868, R. L. Stevenson's *Treasure Island* 1882, H. G. Well's *The Time Machine* 1895, Montgomery's *Ann of Green Gables* (1908) are included in list of crossover literature. When books for children and young adults became available numerously an advanced phenomenon of Child-to-Adult Crossover and Adult-to-Child crossover takes place. Chris Crowe in his article mentions two confusions clearly about children's literature and young adult literature.

1. The Newbury awards complicated the issue. The American library Association States that Newbery Medal recognizes the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children published in US. ALA uses the term children in general sense some of the

Newbury Medal and Honor books seem suitable for Teenage reader appears to be more appropriate for pre-teens. The Newberry list is a reliable guide to good book but not all books on the new medal and Honor list can be considered YAL.

2. Universities usually the font of all knowledge are not even sure what YAL is.

Historically Crossover Literary Appeal:

Crossover literature is the classification of books categorized under Young adult, children

Don Gallo argues that, "Bible is the best example of literature people want their children to read, ignoring the fact that the Bible overflows with sex, violence, treachery, betrayal, theft, adultery, Incest, bigamy, illegitimacy simultaneously assumes the roles of both the puritan minister proclaiming the lessons from book to savage other as students captivity" (Akres, 2011, P. 152).

Same conflicting ideas resonates in YAL. This is the need of the time to infuse children and young adult with educational purposes to sort out the problems that is the basic fact for Chris Crowe did not hold the reason to call YAL for promoting negative appeal to young adults. On the other hand he made statement for *Ann of Green Gables* and *Little Women* which are poles apart from Frank Realism and unsophisticated narration. The theorist of Children's literature and YAL Barbara Kiefer, Katherin T. Butcher, Kaavonia M. Hinton, Michael Meyer and Edgar Roberts asserted the idea that if the literary elements characters, plot, setting, background, symbolism, irony and techniques are same for YAL and Children's literature therefore bearing same chronotopes.

### **Chronotopes in Crossover Literature**

In the following section chronotopes of four selected plays are compared and analyzed to check the classic and universal appeal of past and present.

### **Genre**

There is no distinguishable difference between genre styles in Children's and YAL fiction. Some genre is fantasy, Fairytale retelling, paranormal, dystopian,

science fiction, magical realism, historical fiction, adventure, mystery, thriller, epistolary, Romance, psychological, horror, problem plays and coming of age.

### **Anne of Green Gables**

The genre of *Anne of Green Gables* is bildungsroman, coming of age, realistic, educational literature and above all classic that has timeless appeal to enjoy. The novel continuously has a sense of displacement and crossing over in-between-ness of boundaries that symbolizes transformative vision of imaginative child to role taking theory of an adult. The novel has an everlasting appeal for all ages and all countries translated into 36 languages and announced as, Nation's best loved novel. It is adapted in film from 1919 to 2011, adapted in radio production from 1941 to 1997, Stage productions, TV series, sequel, prequels, live action, mini-series, recreation and animated TV series from 1979 to 2009. The popularity of play itself appeals to crossing over from child to YAL.

### **Little Women**

*Little Women* is bildungsroman, coming of age, realistic and sentimental novel. Due to immense popularity and commercial success Alcott penned down two sequels featured *Little Men* (1871) and *Jo-boys* (1886). It was one of the teachers' top 100 books for children announced by National Education Association. The novel is adapted to film for 7 times and staged since 1912 till 2019. It is adapted into TV series by 1958 to 2018. It is adapted in drama *Spring Girl* in 2018.

### **Perks of Being a Wallflower**

The genre of novel is coming of age, epistolary and psychological. The text becomes New York best seller books. In 2012 it is adapted into film version. It has been translated into 31 languages. The mobile has been banned book in America due to subjects of molestation, sex, pregnancy and mental disorder.

### **To Kill a Mockingbird**

Genre is classic buildings roman and reality fiction won Pulitzer Prize. In 2006, British Librarians pronounced the book, "as one every adult should read before they die". Lee was awarded Brotherhood medal in 1962, presidential Medal of Freedom 2007 for novel.

### **Narrative Technique and Teenager Protagonist**

Books for children and YA literature are written with an educational narrative related to psychological, Cognitive, social and personal development.

### **Anne of Green Gables**

Anne is 11 yrs. old orphan in the absence of parenthood, she begins to live in Green Gables after Thomases and Hammonds. The narrative begins with Child Rearing theories of positive psychological parenting, child guidance behaviorism, social learning and child development. The child rearing in the novel emphasized on children arrived in world with tools capacities of growth and development like Anne. The conflation of Anne as Subject and Anne as Teller creates elusive narrative concept. She is uninterrupted chatterer that serves Heteroglossia narrative

perspective (coined by Mikhail Bakhtin, child speech to others). Anne's vocalness reinforces the importance of female voices and opinion contained there in the Home, School, the Church, the Community and the System. The depiction of child narrator overturns the long-standing Victorian practices of childrearing adage, "children should be seen not heard" (P. 122).

Her speech forms a pattern across the text binds isolated incidents together leading to coherence establishing relationship between text and reader. Her imaginary friends Katie Maurice and Violetta are technical devices to permit her free license to talk all time, "it seems impossible for you to stop talking" (P. 59). Her red hair symbolizes rebellious zeal, distinct personality, uniqueness and charm, "if she were a wild divinity of shadowy places" (P. 114). She is combination of beauty, intelligence and imagination, "thinks of nothing but beaux" (P. 207). She is an agent of healing power for Matthew, Marilla, Diana and Barry in their distress. She goes through the process of perfection she receives by Marilla that transforms her as an independent entity who led Story Club Group in Avonlea, won Avery Scholarship to pursue BA degree to become a teacher and finally proved as generous and sincere daughter to pay back values, sympathies, love and ethics to Green Gables family.

### **Little Women**

*Little Women* is written in third person Omniscient point of view this means narrator knows all the girl's thoughts, feelings, actions, past, present and future. The novel tells the story of four teenager protagonists March sisters Meg, Jo, Beth and Amy ages between 12 till 16. They live with their mother Mrs. March in New England while their father serves for army during the American Civil War. The Reader follow the girls growing up, their domestication, dreams, expectations, falling in love, solving their issues, marriages and finding path in life. The narrative author approaches are gender theory and feminine vocalist because women in Western World used to be attributed to private life the house and family and man attributed to public sphere everything outside home. The civil war during which the first part of the play started after presidential election in 1861 is a struggle between North and South Over issues of slavery. The absence of fatherhood is the narrative in which women had to stay behind took new roles look after domestic chores, train their children and to take part in public life as well. The time period marks first stage of feminism therefore play shows American woman had the options to develop themselves artistically into writers, artists, critics, teachers and nurses of society as we noticed in play.

### **Perks of Being a Wallflower**

The narrative is bildungsroman which creates a social space in which protagonist Charlie who is 15 years old can record and evaluate his own personality within social environment. The letters revealed tribulations of achieving reconciliation between personal desire and social demands of 1990s America, "so this is my life and I want you to know that I am both happy and sad and I am still trying to figure out how that could be" (P. 89). The anonymity of the friend whom Charlie addresses his letters is a device by Chobsky as a way to connect readers to story. The style makes Charlie told by his teacher Bill, "great writer one day" (P. 101). The absence of replies

from the addressee makes novel confessional tone, "just tell me how to be different in a way that make sense" (P. 156). He evolves from passive observer to an active participant as a writer and writing appears as Therapeutic tool helps to define and develop his identity and communicative purpose, "I guess we are who we are for a lot of reasons... where we come from we can still choose where we go from there" (P. 211).

While kissing Sam he feels change of heart and conduct in moment of Epiphany. He was sexually abused by Aunt Helen that is why repressed and finding difficulties in participating in life. His experiences of masturbation, drug experiments with Marijuana and LSD, suicide of Michael led him to realize world is not an innocent and easy place as he thought. He becomes a realist faces perks in his life and finds it is the only way he gets through them which defines his personality. Thus, concludes his journey into maturity of mental and spiritual growth towards self- cultivation and self- education of a blooming flower.

### **To Kill a Mockingbird**

Story is written in first person from the perspective of Scout only 6 years old when novel begins and 8 years old when novel ends. Historical context is framed by the Great Depression, Jim Crow laws and Civil Right Movement in south to claim equality and justice for African American in racially prejudice America. The novel depicts the life of scout, Jem whose father Atticus Finch is appointed to legally represent Tom Robinson a Negro falsely accused of raping a white girl Mayella Ewell. The novel revolves around ethnical otherness in Maycomb. Primary socialization teaches child what group it belongs to but their fathers and servants contradict the sense of group ethnic identities. Throughout the novel scout Learns Atticus advice how to respect others no matter who they are from where they come from. He influences children to understand others before any judgement can be made on basis of skin color. She learns how to, "climb into another person's skin and walk around it in it" (P. 144).

### **Themes**

#### **Anne of Green Gables**

Anne appears as agent of social change for feminist appeal one who disrupts normative values that surrounds adults. She makes up imaginary friends idealizes notion of romance and love but beneath this World of Wonder lies the budding intellect of independent women and autonomy. Education plays an integral part for her development. Her first hero is her teacher Mr. Stacy who inspired her to learn not only to better herself but to become a teacher. She sees education and expansion of mind as her Dream to be fulfilled, "I read in a book once that a rose by any other name would smell as sweet" (P. 139).

She wants new name Cordelia to change to new identity to begin fresh and forget the past incidents of life. She hopes for optimistic appeal that she will overcome her despair and disappointment and looks forward to the dynamic way of life regardless of difficulties encountered in past. The novel Mirrors on Appearance and



Reality when Mathew picks her up from bright river station she is dressed in a very short, very tight, very ugly dress of yellowish white Wincey. After Marilla decides she will stay at Green Gables, she makes her three new dresses, "neat and clean and new" but she longs for puffed sleeves that Mathew provides. With passage of time she becomes wise enough knowing the fact that clothing will not change her identity while it's her strength of character, positivity and education that will bring change. She transforms from a child to develop and functional responsible member of a society proving kinship do not rely on blood ties.

### **Little Women**

Alcott in the play centers on the independent spirit of New Woman in March sisters. Term is coined by Henry James to exercise self - control for own lives weather personal, social and economic making societies egalitarian and free than to live in liminal situations and in between position. March sisters understand their roles in society to claim their identities to get thier own salvation. Meg marries young creates own family, Beth is subservient and dutiful to parents, Amy focus on own pleasure, art, personality and Jo struggles for personal and professional life, "Our burdens are here, our road is before us, and the longing for goodness and happiness is the guide... which is true Celestial City" (P. 211).

Alcott questions the validity of gender stereotypes with both male and female. Jo does not want to be conventional female she wears dress with a burn mark with leather boots that symbolizes no femininity and deviant spirit. Similarly, Laurie wants to pursue music at a time that is culturally feminine Pursuit instead of business. *Little Women* showed life of American middle-class girls with socially conservative behavior of male dominant Society that didn't allow them to legitimized dreams.

### **Perks Of Being a Wallflower**

The story reveals how children problematizes and questions their feelings and emotions during process of transformation after trauma. The story shows how people can Blossom when they except for who they are and their painful conditions. Charlie undergoes process of Growth and Experience, becomes part of social environment, and preserved wisdom and care for others. Before traumatic event he is talkative, Jolly, bugging, communicative, curious and affectionate. He feels isolated, excluded having problems in building relationship with others after traumatic experience of Aunt Helen's molestation followed by her death. Michael's death is second traumatic experience the encountered. Michael was his close friend when he was in Junior High School suicide incident made him blame himself indirectly because he hopes he can help him. With Bill, Patrick and Sam he entered into the new environment of proper attention and comfort which makes him strongly open to experience friendship, love and relation. He manages distress about his dream for Sam that gives him courage to tell her. He develops into kind of personality who becomes part of social environment by keeping secrecy of everyone. He keeps secret of father's crying incident at mash, Patrick's relation with Brad, sister's pregnancy and abortion and his own secret of molestation. Therefore, preserve wisdom, care and responsibility in supporting kith's and kin.

## To Kill a Mockingbird

*To kill a Mockingbird* revolves around the loss of Innocence, equality and fair play of justice, “Mockingbird don’t do one thing but make music for us to enjoy. They don’t eat a people’s gardens... it’s a sin to kill a Mockingbird” (P. 199).

Scott is a child brought up in absence of motherhood love in guidance of Calpurina. At School she is disillusioned by teacher Miss Caroline who stops reading her and writing letter to Dill. Miss Caroline orders Scoutt to tell her father to stop teaching her as he doesn't know how to teach. Scoutt Innocence ended up in school when Cecil Jacobs accused her having a father who supports nigger thus, she first tastes racism. The discrimination is clearly seen in description of Maycomb hometown before and after trial of Tom Robinson. At first it was a classic town famous for hospitality, kindness but begins to change when Atticus takes over the case, “It was a time of vague optimism... it had nothing to fear but fear itself” (Lee, P. 177).

From Colonial law to 20th century the Supreme Court passed laws to prohibit interracial marriage until 1967. In 1863 the term Miscegenation was coined to advocate interracial marriages. In the play Mr. Raymond is isolated from society for having relation with black woman and children. Oppression and humiliation are exercised in society and African American are deprived of their opportunities, amenities and basic rights. The play portrays institutionalized hegemony of criminal justice system that deliberately ignored evidences and allowed a guilty white man to go freely. Atticus is partially blind in his left eye required glasses to see clearly despite this fact has insight on equality and brought up his kids with impartiality to all members and community regardless of their skin color. Therefore, author mentions that those who turned blind eye to racial difference live in harmony with everybody.

## Conclusion

The detailed discussion explored that Chris Crow in his statement witnessed only one side of coin the Golden Age of young adult literature that begin in 1970 with the publication of

S. E. Hinton's *The Outsider* to effectively tackle relevant contemporary problems of adolescence in Frank Realism in tone of Depressive Literature. However, his rejection of *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Women* out of the circle of YAL is unjust, unfavorable and uninspired comment. The books are multipurpose genre and written for all age’s cross audience. In detailed description, researcher elaborated Chris Crowe’s objection, confusion and observation about YAL categories. Both plays fit in YAL classification suitably on two grounds,

- They are Classics.
- They have moral educational Purpose.

YAL is the product of milieu of every age. Contemporary YAL writers added betterment, refinement and critical analysis to existed work of YAL to diversify according to advancement of society. However in four selected plays the teenager

protagonists make Journeys from violence to self – control, prejudice to tolerance and code of honor to code of law to gain self - maturity, self - respect, self - reliance, self - acknowledgement, self - enrichment, self - determination in diverse ways. The teenager protagonists in four selected plays fought against captivity narratives underwent therapeutic nature to achieve self – identity. As major tropes have been evaluated, analyzed and discussed through historical literary approach so it could not be wrong to include *Anne of Green Gables* and *Little Woman* in reading list of YAL as canonized literature.

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