



Sandy Buyze and Grace Morgan decide which title their YA book group will read next.

# TEACHERS AS READERS

## Promoting the Joy of Reading to Students

by Margriet Ruurs

*"My seventh graders will love this book!"*  
*"Do you think spirit bears are real?"*  
*"I liked the voice of the main character but was the problem solved in a realistic manner?"*

These are some of the discussions heard as my Teachers As Readers (TAR) group meets, sipping a glass of wine and discussing the latest book we have read. Teaching children to read isn't just about spelling and grammar. Sharing the joy of reading should be a huge part of what we do as teachers. One of the most pleasant ways for teachers to become familiar with good books is to read to them! And what better way than by forming a TAR group in your school. Teachers As Readers are book groups that meet, on a social basis, to read and discuss Young Adult (YA) novels.

As a writer, I loved joining my book group because it made me a much more critical reader. Now I have to analyze why I like a story or what I didn't like about a character. Gayla Clark is an educator who has been instrumental in starting up TAR groups for 16 years. "I like to stretch my mind," she says, "to read books I would never have chosen on my own and hearing diverse interpretations of them. The social aspect is also rewarding."

A TAR group can meet in any comfortable setting: your local children's book store, a library meeting room, a member's home, even a restaurant or a quiet corner in a cozy pub. Start by inviting teachers in your school or from across your district. Invite a public librarian, parents, a local bookseller. Having up to ten or twelve members is great since not all of them will make it to each meeting.

Alexa Parker teaches children's literature and belongs to a TAR group. "I like the range of people in the group," she says. "Some are teachers, some are retired, some are librarians but all of us love to read YA novels." Belonging to a TAR group has affected her reading in a positive manner. "I pay more attention to style and plot. I mark sections I want to discuss during our meetings."

Set a meeting day and time that best suits most

people. This can be shortly after school or during the evening. Most TAR groups meet once a month. Next, decide on titles to read. You will need access to 10 or 12 copies of the same book so select titles that are readily available in libraries or can be ordered in paperback. Ask teacher/librarians for recommended titles. These can come from Best Books for Kids & Teens catalogue (Canadian Children's Book Centre), Red Cedar lists and other award winning lists such as ALA and Newbery. Select six to ten titles—one for each of the next six to ten months.

TAR group members agree that they are better equipped to recommend books to their students. Reading and discussing YA novels gives teachers an understanding of what is out there and helps them discover titles and authors that their students will be interested in.

Sharing the joy of a book is contagious. And once your students are hooked on good books, the sky is the limit!

### Starting a TAR Group

- Invite about 10 others, including teachers, librarians, parents, any booklovers.
- Select a comfortable meeting place.
- Set a monthly meeting day and time.
- Decide mutually on titles to read for the next several months.
- Set guidelines for listening and discussion skills.
- Read and enjoy!

### Resources

Teachers As Readers starter kit with video, IRA (<http://marketplace.reading.org>)

### Find Recommended Titles Here

[www.bookcentre.ca/publications/best\\_books\\_for\\_kids\\_and\\_teens/2009](http://www.bookcentre.ca/publications/best_books_for_kids_and_teens/2009)

[www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklist-sawards/bestbooksya/09bbya.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/booklist-sawards/bestbooksya/09bbya.cfm)

[www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newberyhonors/newberymedal.cfm](http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/newberymedal/newberyhonors/newberymedal.cfm)

### RECOMMENDED YA NOVELS

*After River* by Donna Milner  
*Alphabet of Dreams* by Susan Fletcher  
*Amazing Grace* by Megan Shull  
*Among the Hidden* by Margaret Peterson  
*Another Kind of Cowboy* by Susan Juby  
*Cages* by Peg Kehret  
*Chanda's Wars* by Allan Stratton  
*Corps of the Bare-Boned Plane* by Polly Horvath  
*Daughter of War* by Marsha Skrypuch  
*Dooley Takes The Fall* by Norah McClintock  
*Flood* by James Heneghan.  
*Gotcha* by Shelley Hrdlitschka  
*Gravity Journal* by Gail Sidonie Sobat  
*Grist* by Heather Waldorf Haddix  
*Hubcaps and Puppies* by Rosemary Nelson  
*I Heard the Owl Call My Name* by Margaret Craven  
*Island of the Aunts* by Eva Ibbotson  
*Jesse's Star* by Ellen Schwartz  
*Keturah & Lord Death* by Martine Leavitt  
*Little Brother* by Corey Doctorow  
*Log Jam* by Monica Hughes  
*Mountain Girl/River Girl* by Ting-Xing Ye  
*No Fixed Address* by Maureen Bayless  
*Peter and the Starcatchers* by Dave Barry and Ridley Pearson  
*Surviving The Applewhites* by Stephanie S. Tolan  
*The Baby Project* by Sarah Ellis  
*The Blue Helmet* by William Bell  
*The Breadwinner* by Deborah Ellis  
*The Devil's Arithmetic* by Jane Yolen  
*The Droughtlanders: Book One in Triskelia Series* by Carrie Mac  
*The End of the World as We Know It* by Lesley Choyce  
*The Freedom of Jenny* by Julie Burtinshaw  
*The Smell of Paint* by Sheryl McFarlane  
*The Song of Kahunsha* by Anosh Irani  
*The Space Between* by Don Aker  
*The Story of My Life* by Farah Ahmed  
*The Warrior's Daughter* by Holly Bennett  
*Throwaway Daughter* by Ting-Xing Ye and William Bell  
*Torn Away* by James Heneghan  
*Tweaked* by Kathryn Holubitsky  
*Voices* by Eric Walters & Deborah Ellis  
*What's a Serious Detective Like Me Doing in Such a Silly Movie?* by Linda Bailey  
*Witch's Fang* by Heather Kellerhals-Stewart  
*Ysabel* by Guy Gavriel Kay

