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BookTube

And the Formation of the Young Adult Canon

By: Melina Hughes

RESEARCH QUESTION

How do social media influencers in the Young Adult genre, particularly BookTube stars, act as tastemakers, affect book sales, and take part in establishing what is effectively a Young Adult canon?

ABSTRACT

BookTube is a self-identified subsection of YouTube, where content creators, known as BookTubers, create videos with book-related content. Most BookTube channels are focused on Young Adult titles. Through researching YA BookTube channels and interviewing YA BookTubers, key trends in BookTube functionality have been identified. These trends include the characteristics of the books that are discussed, the influential role of the BookTuber, and the possible formation of a YA canon.

BOOKTUBE

BookTube has become an immensely popular book-related social media platform in recent years; the rise of the Young Adult genre and of social media have been dramatic, and it has created "a perfect storm of influences that included the expansion of social media and an audience of young (and some not-so-young) readers hungry for story-driven books" (Burnett). There are hundreds of BookTube channels, most focused on the Young Adult genre. Many of these channels have thousands of followers, and there a number of channels with hundreds of thousands of followers. A BookTuber is a grassroots intermediary—"an unofficial party who shapes the flow of messages through their community and may become strong advocates for

brands or franchises" (Jenkins 7). BookTube is a community where readers and viewers come together to discuss, recommend, and celebrate something they love—books.

The values of BookTubers, the promotion and discussion of books they love, easily aligns with a publisher's goal of having their books sell, creating an environment ripe for publishers and BookTubers to collaborate. Through BookTube, publishers can reach "previously untapped communities of readers, create new readers, and access influential communicators . . . that spread information about books" (Nelson). When a title is discussed on BookTube, it provides the publisher with no- or low-cost word-of-mouth advertising aimed at an audience that is the publisher's target demographic, and these readers place their trust in the opinions of the BookTuber. In a BookTube video, the mention of a particular book bestows symbolic capital upon that title—the book is worthy of being owned, purchased, and displayed upon a reader's shelf. Not only do some books deserve to be showcased on a bookshelf, but some titles also deserve to have multiple copies displayed. These multiple copies or multiple editions that BookTubers often own of their favorite books or series, reinforce the importance of owning a copy (or multiple copies) of that title. The clear "symbiotic relationship between video and print is strong. And with YouTube's audience watching more than six billion hours of content per month, the opportunities for collaboration are vast" (Burling).

Due to this ripe overlap of social media and YA, many publishers have working relationships with BookTubers and "have long been using the social media platform to publicize their frontlists and reignite interest in backlist titles" (Burling). Some tactics of working with BookTubers include sending advanced reader copies (ARCs), collaborating on videos, setting up

author interviews, or having paid promotions on the BookTuber's channel. For example, with the highly anticipated release of *Lady Midnight*, written by Cassandra Clare, Simon & Schuster:

turned to the unboxing video, where bloggers open packages then gush about — or skewer—the contents. The *Lady Midnight* cartons were destined for influential book bloggers and packed not only with the standard advance reading copy, but also special goodies, like a map, a key, and a message from the author, Cassandra Clare" (Daspin).

As Simon & Schuster hoped, the unboxing videos generated hundreds of thousands of views and certainly created a buzz around the upcoming release of *Lady Midnight*. Collaboration between publishers and BookTubers is not always so flashy, but having a BookTuber discussing a title is an effective way to reach a specific community of readers.

TEEN READING AND SOCIAL MEDIA USAGE

PEW Research Center identified YouTube as the second-largest social networking site (behind Facebook). YouTube is most popular among younger adults; of 18-29 year-olds, PEW found that 82% of the age group uses YouTube. (Anderson). In a survey conducted about reading habits of young adults in America, PEW identified 88% of teens aged 16-17 and 87% of 18-24 year-olds have read a book, in any form, in the past year (Zickuhr and Rainie). In fact, "young adults are more likely than their elders to read books in various digital formats, but are also more likely to read print books as well" (Perrin). The correlation between these studies suggests that YouTube is a powerful platform to promote Young Adult titles, because a large portion of the target demographic of these books is already active on YouTube. Readers 16-24 years old form a "highly-engaged audience [that] is eager for great stories and content, wants to

participate in events, and wants to share the things they love with the world . . . [they] are not ashamed of the things they like and there is a fandom for every topic, genre, and fascination. Publishers simply need to tap into these fandoms" (Cox). And many publishers have, resulting in a rise of sponsored or promoted material on BookTube.

IS THERE A YA CANON?

The term "literary canon" refers to a curated body of texts that are considered the most important and influential of a particular place or time period. Kelly Jensen of *BookRiot* argues that currently there is no such thing as a YA canon, but there should be, "because YA is such a young category and a distinction that is in and of itself up for grabs . . . there's not a clear canon of essential reads. There are, of course, bestsellers and books that made a huge impact, but you can't point to something and call it YA Canon" (Jensen). The flood of YA listicles, like *Buzzfeed's* "11 Books All Harry Potter Fans Must Read" or "Best New Releases of 2017" often focus only on new and popular books and ignore older YA titles. While in the early 2000s, "thanks to books like *Twilight*, and *Harry Potter*, YA as a category began to grow exponentially. It wasn't that YA got a start here, but rather that this is where YA became a place where money and energy was really being devoted in publishing, and subsequently, in the wider reading arena" (Jensen). As a category, YA began to emerge in the '50s and '60s, because that was when culturally, 'teen' became a unique and defined age group. The issue with these "best of" listicles is that they are myopic and fail to provide a thoughtful discussion about the YA category as a whole—from its beginnings to now, from what is popular to what is culturally impactful. This issue of popularity versus what is considered culturally important is key; "would a book like

Twilight or a series like *The Hunger Games* merit a place in the YA canon? Are they 'literary' enough or should they be included because of what they did to change the landscape of YA publishing and reading, setting off a tipping point?" (Jensen). These are some of the difficult questions that must be sorted through in a more scholarly, serious manner that attempts to grasp what YA means as a distinct and important category of literature. Currently, it appears there is no YA canon, but that there is possibility for the formation of one.

METHODOLOGY

For this research, surveys were conducted with a number of BookTubers. The interview questions were sent to fifty BookTubers and eight responses were received. BookTubers were selected for the survey based on their channel's activity—posting a video at least once a week—and their channel's content—primarily YA focused. At the time of the survey, the list of BookTubers had a subscriber count ranging from 2,232 to 348,494 subscribers. The range of subscribers from the channels that responded is 2,851 (WolfsWhistle) to 46,389 (EmmaBooks). Of eight responding BookTubers, only one is male (12.5%). Overall, BookTube is a female dominated form of social media.

For the eight BookTubers that responded, the titles featured in their "2016 Favorites" videos were collected; these are videos where BookTubers list and discuss their favorite books they read in the past year—note that this does not mean their favorite books published in 2016. For each of the favorite books identified, information was collected on the author, publisher, pub date, publisher size (Big Five, large independent, small independent, or self-published), and whether the book was a *New York Times* bestseller.

Data was also collected in the same way for prominent and influential BookTubers identified by *TeenVogue*. In 2015, *TeenVogue* identified the Top Seven most influential Young Adult booktubers as Abookutopia (335,997 subscribers); Benjaminsoftomes (53,604); Jessethereader (201,343); Katytastic (233,913); PeruseProject (192,798); theBookTuber (42,707) and PolandbananasBOOKS (348,494) (Tejeda). For each of these BookTubers, data was collected in the same way based their "favorite books of 2016" videos. TheBookTuber no longer exclusively posts videos about books and did not have a 2016 favorites video, titles were collected from the books he positively reviewed on his channel.

For the eight responses received and the Top Seven BookTubes identified by *TeenVogue*, the percentage of YA versus Adult titles featured in the 2016 favorites videos was identified—then, based only on YA titles, the following statistics were calculated:

- The percentage of books that are *New York Times* bestsellers
- The percentage of books that were published in 2016, 2015, and earlier
- The percentage of books published by the Big Five, large independent publisher, small independent publishers, and self-published titles
- The percentage of books that had sales less than 5,000, 20,000, 50,000, 100,000, and over 100,000

After these statistics were compiled for both the BookTubers who responded to the survey and the Top Seven BookTubers listed in *TeenVogue*, the two categories were compared and an average of the two was calculated to give a more comprehensive view of BookTube's content.

RESULTS

The figures resulting from the data analysis, as well as insights gleaned from interviews with the participating BookTubers, have highlighted a number of key characteristics about how BookTube functions as a social influencer. The results of the data analysis can be seen below in Table 1.

Table 1:

	BookTubers who Responded	Top 7 BookTubers	Average
% YA Titles	65.67%	95.24%	80.45%
% Adult Titles	34.33%	4.76%	18.05%
% Published 2016	58.82%	63.33%	61.08%
% Published 2015	21.57%	16.67%	19.12%
% Published Earlier	19.61%	20.00%	19.80%
% NYT Bestseller	64.71%	71.67%	68.19%
% Published by Big Five	84.31%	80.00%	82.16%
% Published by Large Independent	11.76%	10.00%	10.88%
% Published by Small Independent	1.96%	6.67%	4.31%
% Self Published	3.92%	6.67%	5.29%
RTD Sales Under 5,000	10.20%	18.60%	14.40%
RTD Sales Over 5,000	36.70%	36.70%	36.70%
RTD Sales Over 20,000	38.80%	44.10%	41.45%
RTD Sales Over 100,000	14.30%	18.60%	16.45%

Publisher Relations and Size

It is not uncommon for BookTubers, especially those with large followings, to work closely with publishers. Larger BookTube channels with have paid promotions or collaborations with publishers, while even smaller BookTubers, including those interviewed, often receive from them ARCs and review copies. In her interview, Lala, of BooksandLala, stated:

I have a working relationship with three publishers who I regularly get physical books sent to me by. They are big publishing houses, but I also accept ebooks from smaller publishers to help get the word out about their upcoming releases. I occasionally do paid sponsorships but more often it is just books provided that I can choose to read and review if I want.

While many BookTubers will often work with publishing houses, primarily large ones who can afford to mail out many review copies, they nevertheless focus on keeping reviews honest in order to cultivate trust with viewers. Dishonest reviews would undermine the ethos of BookTube—to have real discussions about books with fellow book-lovers.

The results from the responding BookTubers and the *TeenVogue's* Top Seven were incredibly similar. Over 80% of books were published by the Big Five, and over 90% from the the Big Five and large independent presses. Furthermore, the titles discussed that were published by large independent presses (Scholastic, Bloomsbury, and Candlewick) were all *New York Times* bestsellers. Interestingly, self-published titles were reviewed more than titles from small independent presses,s perhaps due to a larger number of YA titles being self-published compared to YA titles from small independent presses. It needs to be noted that, for the Top Seven, results were skewed by one BookTuber—BenjaminOfTomes—who started his own independent

publishing company and often works with previously self-published authors. Besides BenjaminOfTomes, only one Top Seven BookTuber reported a self-published titles in their 2016 favorites. More about BenjaminOfTomes and his publishing company will be discussed further on in this paper.

Genre and Publishing Year of Books

Between the responding BookTubers and the Top Seven, there is a difference in the ratio between YA and Adult titles discussed on their channels. BookTubers who responded to the survey discuss 66% YA titles and 34% Adult titles while the *TeenVogue's* Top Seven discusses YA titles 95% of the time and adult titles only 5% of the time. The more popular BookTubers tend to focus much more highly—almost exclusively—on YA titles, perhaps because their audience is highly dedicated to the YA genre. Additionally, having a more focused subject can allow viewers to more readily access the content they desire.

In terms of when the books discussed were published, there is a greater similarity between the responding BookTubers and the Top Seven. About 60% of the books were published in the previous year (2016), 20% published in the previous two years (2015), and 20% published in earlier years. Having 80% of titles discussed published in the previous two years suggests that YA readers do not have a long cultural memory. This could in part be a result of the young reader demographic of YA and in part be because the genre, with the rise of books like *Harry Potter*, *Twilight*, and *The Hunger Games*, became much more culturally prominent in the past fifteen years. However, the heavy focus on recent titles on BookTuber's channels suggests BookTubers and their audience lack a sense of history in terms of the evolution of YA and would be unlikely to select older titles for inclusion in a YA canon.

What Books are Being Talked About

Over 85% of books sold 5,000-20,00 (RTD) copies, over 41% of books sold 20,000-100,000 copies, and 16% sold over 100,000 copies. The average number of books with under 5,000 copies sold was 14%; the Top Seven was higher (19%) again skewed by BenjaminOfTomes. These sales figures indicate that nearly all of the books discussed could be deemed either successful or highly successful titles.

Through simple observation, it seemed most YA BookTubers often discussed the same titles. In interviews with a number of BookTubers, most agreed the same books are mentioned over and over again. Some BookTubers see it as good, some see it as bad, but many see it as a result of working with publishers.

Those who appreciate the commonality of titles featured in BookTube see this as a natural product of the platform and focus on the strong sense of community it brings; "I think it's natural for BookTubers to have some books in common as we watch each other see books we like and then pick them up and discuss and it's a chain reaction" (Elena of ElenaReadsBooks). Nicole, of Woolfswhistle, agrees with this sentiment, "BookTube is a society . . . Naturally these groups gravitate towards the same genres and after the friendships are made they recommend the books to each other, so it's not unusual for them to read the same books" (Nicole of Woolfswhistle).

Discussing the same books, many believe, is a the natural result of BookTube's ethos, as Emma of EmmaBooks says, "I think we're a very close-knit community because we share a lot of the same interests, so of course we'd often read the same books!" She also believes though, that BookTube is not solely homogenous; "every channel brings in some underrated books for

everyone to be excited about." And while some believe that BookTubers do discuss many of the same books, "if you have spent enough time and effort on BookTube you know that it is a hugely diverse community and not everyone is talking about the same titles" (Lala of BooksAndLala). It seems these BookTubers believe that yes, many of them do discuss the same books because they are part of a like-minded community, but each BookTuber's individuality and diverse tastes shine through.

However, some BookTubers disagree, they see the repeated discussion as a negative aspect that narrows views and diverse voices; "I think every branch of BookTube suffers from over-saturation. We get recommendations from like-minded people and then start a cycle of promoting the same books" (Susie of ReadSusieRead). It can be seen as a sort of trap in which one book becomes popular and then other BookTubers pile onto the discussion of the book for fear of not being part of the conversation. Additionally, "marketing almost always proves that the more money put into a book, the more press it gets—the more more popular it gets. You're obviously going to see BookTubers consistently talk about the most popular books" (Lala of BooksAndLala). One of the issues raised by a BookTuber was not only the homogeneity of the books being discussed, but also that "the most popular BookTubers talk about a lot of the same books, because white/cisgender/heteronormative/young authors/books get more opportunity and hype, as do BookTubers who fit that demographic" (Lala of BooksAndLala). This question of diversity in publishing indeed needs to be addressed, but it is beyond the scope of this paper. Although it should be noted some BookTubers are aware of this issue and are striving to correct it through such actions as diverse reading challenges and "diversity bingo" featured on their channels.

One very common opinion identified in the interviews is that publishers play a large role in why the same books are often discussed on so many channels. Elena of ElenaReadsBooks states that "if a publisher is doing a big push on a particular book we are all going to receive it at the same time and try to review before publication." Yet in order for a publisher to be able to send out multiple copies to multiple influential BookTubers, they have to have a large enough marketing budget to do so, meaning Big Five and large independent presses can do this much more readily than small presses and self-published authors. If the "publishers do their job promoting books well and getting them in the hands of influential people" it affects the actions of smaller, less influential channels; "this creates an environment where less popular channels feel the need to seek out these books to contribute and stay relevant within the community. There are many BookTuber who do not read the typical 'BookTube' books, but it is far easier to find BookTubers who do" (Connor of Connor O'Brien). In this sense, publishers generate an atmosphere of popularity where BookTubers feel it important to be in the discussion about these books because "everyone is talking about it" and they do not want to miss out; sometimes "it's not even the issue of popularity of certain books, rather than a genuine interest and desire to be in the loop with people we like to discuss thing with on BookTube" (Nicole of Woolfswistle). Either because of the fear of missing out or the desire to be part of the discussion, a book's popularity on BookTube begets more popularity on BookTube.

In addition to strong sales figures and being a popular title on BookTube, the majority of the titles discussed are *New York Times* bestsellers. The Top Seven discuss bestsellers (72%) slightly more than the responding BookTubers (65%). The issue of popularity on BookTube mirrors how bestselling titles function—"Bestseller lists have a self-reinforcing quality to them.

Becoming a bestseller increases sales—it often makes makes a text even more of a bestseller" (Miller qtd. In Laquintano 108). There is a cyclical quality to popularity and sales, and with that inherent self-fulfilling prophecy, it is probable that BookTubers talk about books that would be popular regardless, but this does not mean talking about those books serves no purpose or has no influence on their viewers? Definitely not. Though they discuss books that may be popular or bestsellers anyway, BookTubers share their thoughts and feelings with their community and their friends, and there is still social and symbolic capital being generated through these reviews.

BookTuber Influence

Most of the BookTubers interviewed, including those with only small followings, believed they had an influence on what books become popular, though perhaps only within their community or friend group. One BookTuber sees that "people who regularly review have an impact on book sales . . . as you get seen on social media making regular reviews, the more people come to notice and follow you, and therefore the bigger impact you have on what other people buy. That being said, I think the book community definitely overestimates their impact on the publishing world. . . . [BookTube] is such a small drop in the bucket when talking about publishing as a whole" (Lala of BooksAndLala). This is a realistic view of BookTube's impact on the publishing world at large, but the BookTubers interviewed expressed no concern about impacting sales, but rather great pride and excitement about having an influence on their followers. Some BookTubers reported followers commenting about how they picked up a book mentioned, send pictures of buying the book or their copies of the book that they already own and love. Emma of EmmaBooks, when asked if she believes she has any influence, replied, "It's weird to think so, but possibly! . . . I see a bunch of people picking [books] up specifically because

I talked about them. I don't think I have an influence on the "majorly" popular series with huge, already present followings." So even if their influence only extends as far as the BookTube community, BookTubers do have a platform to impact book popularity and to decided what books could be worthy of inclusion in a YA canon.

BookTube and Canonicity

In the case of a literary canon, BookTubers seem to be unsure if there is a YA canon, but many of them mentioned books that they would consider important enough to include in one. Titles and series mentioned include *Harry Potter*, *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, *The Fault in Our Stars*, *Fangirl*, *We Were Liars*, *Speak*, *An Ember in the Ashes*, *The Grisha Trilogy*, *The Raven Boys*, and *Witchland*. With the exception *Speak*, by Laurie Halse Anderson, and the J.K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* series, all books mentioned were published in or after the late 2000s—most of them within the past five years. Titles put forth by BookTubers demonstrates a short cultural memory; their selection is based more on current popularity and personal choice than significance in the history of YA literature. A number of BookTubers were resistant to having a YA canon, believing that it represented a "must-read" type of list that narrowed the vast expanse of the genre. Emma of EmmaBooks believes "enforcing certain books as 'required' causes pressure and can take away from one's enjoyment of reading, but I'd be lying if I said I didn't think everyone on earth should read *Harry Potter*," and Sanne of BooksAndQuills said "I'm not sure there's is a must-read list as much as there's a list of books that you need to at least know the general premise and the community's general thoughts on." This concept of not enforcing a "must-read" list is prevalent, but seems to always be accompanied by some caveat,—except *Harry Potter*, but there are some books you should read, well you don't have to but these books

are really important. Whether or not they agree if one exists, BookTubers do hold enough influence to contribute to a conversation about a YA canon, and especially so within the BookTube community.

TWO UNIQUE CASES

As BookTube has evolved, there have been an increasing number of unique cases where BookTubers step out from behind the camera and venture into new facets of the book industry. Recently, BookTubers have become authors, are working more closely with publishers, and have even become publishers themselves. This shift away from working independently on BookTube to function in the larger publishing realm has blurred the lines between being a tastemaker and being a producer of literary works, thus situating these new types of BookTubers at a powerful junction from which it can influence a potential the popularity and success of YA titles.

Anthology by Bestselling Authors and BookTubers

In July 2017, Bloomsbury is publishing a short story anthology, *Because You Love to Hate Me*, where thirteen influential BookTubers are paired with thirteen bestselling authors. For each of the thirteen author-BookTuber pairs, "each booktuber will provide a writing prompt for a YA author to create a story from the point of view of a famous villain. Each booktuber has a short essay, too, about how they feel about good and evil" (Maughan). The featured authors are all bestsellers and include Renée Ahdieh, Ameriie, Soman Chainani, Susan Dennard, Sarah Enni, Marissa Meyer, Cindy Pon, Victoria Schwab, Samantha Shannon, Adam Silvera, Andrew Smith, April Genevieve Tucholke, and Nicola Yoon. he BookTubers, all considered highly influential

and with a large audience base, are Benjamin Alderson (Benjaminoftomes), Sasha Alsberg (abookutopia), Whitney Atkinson (WhittyNovels), Tina Burke (ChristinaReadsYA blog and TheLushables), Catriona Feeney (LittleBookOwl), Jesse George (JesstheReader), Zoë Herdt (readbyzoe), Samantha Lane (Thoughts on Tomes), Sophia Lee (thebookbasement), Raeleen Lemay (padfootandprongs07), Regan Perusse (PeruseProject), Christine Riccio (polandbananasBOOKS), and Steph Sinclair & Kat Kennedy (Cuddlebuggery blog and channel).

Because You Love to Hate Me has been highly visible on YouTube during each main phase of production: when the collaboration was announced, when author and BookTuber were paired up, when the cover was revealed, and there is sure to be more buzz in the months leading up to the release. What Bloomsbury is doing with *Because You Love to Hate Me* is blurring the lines between reader, tastemaker, and author. Each BookTuber contributes an essay and dictates the topic on which their paired author will write, essentially expanding their position as a tastemaker to directly influence the content written by bestselling authors. Could *Because You Love to Hate Me* be a candidate for a YA canon if one came to exist? If the authors featured are current bestsellers, and the BookTubers featured are currently considered influential, *Because You Love to Hate Me* can be seen as a microcosm of current tastes and trends in YA literature, and in that sense could be seen as a contender for inclusion in a YA canon.

BookTuber Turned Publisher

A second special case is that of the Benjamin Alderson, a UK-based BookTuber (BenjaminOfTomes), who has founded his own publishing company, OfTomes Publishing, in December of 2015. OfTomes is a micropublisher of genre fiction: "OfTomes aims to produce high quality Young Adult and New Adult fiction. Stories with a message, words that carry

feeling." Founder and CEO Benjamin, said he created OfTomes Publishing because of the opportunity to be self-employed, "working in a small team and creating a family" and his love of publishing (Scheuerer). One note, because OfTomes is a UK-based publishing house, works with previous self-published authors, and sells ebook versions of all their titles, sales figures are nearly impossible to track in the U.S. That being said, OfTomes currently has sixteen authors and roughly thirty titles for sale; some of these books are new and some are previously self-published titles—as stated in their submission guidelines, "OfTomes enjoys a good revamp. So if you are a self-published author already or looking for a new and fresh company, we are open to look at previously published work." Additionally the OfTomes website states: "OfTomes Publishing is run by Benjamin Alderson; alternatively known as Benjaminoftomes who is a well known UK booktuber" and that "rather than focusing on the routes traditional publishers use, we focus social media and online marketing to spread the word of our titles to readers, new and old." The emphasis on social media marketing, specifically the mention of Benjamin's BookTube channel, show OfTome's marketing capabilities and reach. At the same time, though, these social media pushes led by BenjaminOfTomes have cannibalized some of the original, pre-OfTomes, content featured on his BookTube channel as well as its affiliated social media accounts (Instagram and Twitter). OfTomes promoting its books on its CEO's BookTube channel calls into question the authenticity of the book reviews and poses a threat to the gift economy existing between Benjamin and BookTube followers. Benjamin promotes books published by his company on his BookTube platform that became popular before he founded OfTomes. The addition of this self-promotional content could be seen as disingenuous to viewers who had been following him beforehand. Yet at the same time, it could be argued that the same level of

authenticity exists, as OfTomes publishes books it believes in; then sharing that content on BenjaminOfTomes is staying true to Benjamin's personal tastes, the reason he gained YouTube followers in the first place. There is no identifiable change in subscriber numbers apparent from before and after OfTomes was created, so it is difficult to assess the reaction of the larger BookTube community was to one of its own becoming a publisher. Nevertheless, this BookTube-Publisher hybrid places BenjaminOfTomes/OfTomes in a unique position to influence viewers and readers, and to contribute to the formation of a YA canon.

CONCLUSIONS

At this point in time, it could be said that there is no true YA canon, but BookTube, with its influence on titles, can definitely play a part in the formation of one. Because BookTubers recognize YA as a distinct cultural phenomenon, read a vast number of YA titles, and participate in frequent discussions of these books, they could, to a degree, be considered experts in the YA field. With the prevalence of BookTube and YA book reviewers throughout social media, YA canonicity is clearly linked with bestseller status, as it is clearly an important characteristic of the genre. This is vastly different from traditional forms of literary canons. There is currently a lack of scholarly research surrounding YA literature as a whole, and there are many facets of the evolving genre that need to be studied. Having a literary canon, such as the Western Literary Canon, "makes sense to us because it's something we can point to culturally and make meaning of, even if that meaning is full of problems and challenges" (Jensen). Because we have not studied YA literature in its entirety, it is difficult to "make meaning" of it and actually establish a canon. As Jensen says, "We should be excited about the growth of a real canon, and we should

be having discussions about the merits of some books over others in ways that elevate them into a great public sphere." Further research should be conducted on YA as a literary genre, YA as a cultural phenomenon, and on the audience that surrounds and loves YA books.

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