

Rowan University

Rowan Digital Works

Theses and Dissertations

5-14-2009

A content analysis of young adult novels featuring mentally and emotionally disabled characters

Lisa L. Ballistreri
Rowan University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd>



Part of the [Library and Information Science Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Ballistreri, Lisa L., "A content analysis of young adult novels featuring mentally and emotionally disabled characters" (2009). *Theses and Dissertations*. 595.
<https://rdw.rowan.edu/etd/595>

This Thesis is brought to you for free and open access by Rowan Digital Works. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Rowan Digital Works. For more information, please contact graduateresearch@rowan.edu.

A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF YOUNG ADULT NOVELS FEATURING
MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DISABLED CHARACTERS

by
Lisa L. Ballistreri

A Thesis

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements of the
Master of Arts Degree
of
The Graduate School
at
Rowan University
May 11, 2009

Approved by _____
Advisor

Date Approved May 14, 2009
©2009 Lisa L. Ballistreri

ABSTRACT

Lisa L. Ballistreri
A CONTENT ANALYSIS OF YOUNG ADULT NOVELS FEATURING
MENTALLY AND EMOTIONALLY DISABLED CHARACTERS
2008/09

Dr. Marilyn Shontz
Master of Arts in School and Public Librarianship

The purpose of this study was to closely examine twenty works of young adult fiction that featured a character with either a mental or emotional disability. Specifically, it addressed the following research questions: 1.) What percentage of the books evaluated portrayed the disabled character as a major character or a supporting character? 2.) What percentage of the books were written from or included the disabled character's point-of-view? 3.) What percentage of the books portrayed the disabled character as a dynamic as opposed to a static character? 4.) Did the character's disability play a major role or a minor role in the story's plot? 5.) Were the symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the featured disability accurate and believable? Conclusions showed that the majority of the novels portrayed the character as both a major and dynamic character and the story was told from the main character's point-of-view. Additionally, the disabilities played a major role in the story's plot in all twenty novels evaluated. Lastly, the researcher found that most of the novels included the symptoms of the disabilities presented but shied away from going into detail their subsequent treatments.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER		PAGE
I.	STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM	
	Introduction and Importance.....	1
	Purpose of Study.....	2
	Research Questions.....	2
	Definitions of Terms.....	2
	Assumptions and Limitations.....	5
	References.....	6
II.	REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE	
	References.....	11
III.	METHODOLOGY	
	References.....	14
IV.	ANALYSIS OF DATA	
	Major vs. Supporting Character.....	15
	Character Point-of-View.....	16
	Character Development.....	17
	Plot Development.....	19
	Accuracy of the Disability Portrayed.....	20
	References.....	23
V.	CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	
	Conclusions.....	24
	Recommendations for Further Study.....	26
	REFERENCE LIST.....	27
	APPENDIX A-NOVEL EVALUATIONS.....	30

CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Introduction and Importance

In the winter of 2003, Mary Anne Prater authored a journal article that examined how children and young adults with learning disabilities are represented in both children's and adolescent literature. During her research process, Prater examined ninety fictional books that included at least one character with a learning disability. Guided by four precise research questions, Prater was able to determine the ways in which juvenile literature portrayed characters with learning disabilities in terms of character importance (main vs. supporting), character development (dynamic vs. supporting), and from whose perspective the story was told.

Additionally, several similar investigative studies and articles have been conducted to examine the portrayal of adolescents afflicted with various physical disabilities. However, very little research has been done in the area of young adult literature featuring characters with mental and emotional disabilities. As noted in a fact sheet authored by The National Mental Health Awareness Campaign (2008), it was revealed that one out of five children and adolescents suffer from mental illness. Additionally, most of the severe mental illnesses start showing symptoms in the teenage years. Since it is estimated that there are approximately two million adolescents currently suffering with some type of mental illness, it is essential that young adult literature

features characters who face the daily struggles and conflicts presented to those suffering from mental illness. It is also imperative that research is done to measure the merit and quality of the literature available to young adult readers.

Purpose of Study

The purpose of this study was to closely examine twenty works of young adult fiction that featured a character with either a mental or emotional disability. Additionally, the chosen works of fiction were evaluated based upon a pre-set list of research questions to judge the treatment of the character(s) featured who suffered from the disability.

Research Questions

1. What percentage of the books evaluated portrayed the disabled character as a major character or a supporting character?
2. What percentage of the books were written from or included the disabled character's point-of-view?
3. What percentage of the books portrayed the disabled character as a dynamic as opposed to a static character?
4. Did the character's disability play a major or minor role in the story's plot?
5. Were the symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the featured disability accurate and believable?

Definition of Terms

Young adult: For the purpose of this study, a young adult refers to an individual between the ages of eleven and eighteen.

Young adult literature: "Literature written for young people age eleven to eighteen and books marketed young adult by a publisher," (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2007, p. 4).

Protagonist: “The main character of the story who will be a fully described, complex individual who possesses both good and bad traits,” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2007, p. 25).

Minor or secondary characters: “These are characters described less fully than the protagonist. The extent of description depends on what the reader needs to know about the character for a full understanding of the story,” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2007, p. 25).

Dynamic characters: “A character that undergoes changes during the course of events in the story,” (Lynch-Brown & Tomlinson, 2007, p. 25).

Static characters: “A character that does not experience basic character changes during the course of the story,” (ReadWriteThink, 2008).

Mental illness: “Any of various disorders characterized chiefly by abnormal behavior or an inability to function socially, including diseases of the mind and personality and certain diseases of the brain,” (*The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*, 2006).

Disability: “A disadvantage or deficiency, especially a physical or mental impairment that interferes with or prevents normal achievement in a particular area,” (*The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*, 2006).

Mental disability: Synonymous with mental illness.

Emotional illness: “A psychological disorder characterized by emotional and uncontrollable fears, persistent anxiety, or extreme hostility,” (*The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*, 2006).

Emotional disability: Synonymous with emotional illness.

Depression: “Depression is a serious medical illness that negatively affects how a person feels, the way they think and how they act. Depression has a variety of symptoms, but the most common are a deep feeling of sadness or a marked loss of interest and pleasure in activities,” (American Psychiatric Association, 2005).

Schizophrenia: “Any of a group of psychotic disorders characterized by withdrawal from reality, illogical patterns of thinking, delusions, and hallucinations, and accompanied in varying degrees by other emotional, behavioral, or intellectual disturbances,” (*The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*, 2006).

Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder: “A psychoneurotic disorder in which the patient is beset with obsessions or compulsions or both and suffers extreme anxiety or depression through failure to think the obsessive thoughts or perform the compelling acts,” (*Merriam-Webster’s Medical Dictionary*, 2002).

Selective Mutism: “A childhood anxiety disorder characterized by a child or adolescent’s inability to speak in one or more social settings,” (Selective Mutism Group, 2008).

Psychiatric hospital: “A hospital for the care and the treatment of patients affected with acute or chronic mental illness,” (*The American Heritage Stedman’s Medical Dictionary*, 2006).

Assumptions and Limitations

There were two major limitations that affected this study. Lacking any professional medical or psychological knowledge, the researcher had to rely on previously published booklists and electronic database searches to compile the books selected for the study. Additionally, the results of the study were limited to the twenty titles selected for study.

References

- American Psychiatric Association. (2005). *Medical Library*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from http://www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZZJDP487C&sub_cat=128
- Disability. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Dictionary*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/disability>
- Emotional illness. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/emotionalillness>
- Mental health myths. (2008). *The National Mental Health Awareness Campaign*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from <http://www.nostigma.org/myths.php?myth=KIDS>
- Mental illness. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mentallillness>
- Lynch-Brown, C., & Tomlinson, C. (2007). *Essentials of young adult literature*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Obsessive-Compulsive disorder. (2002). *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/obsessive-compulsive%20disorder>
- Psychiatric hospital. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=psychiatric%20hospital>
- Prater, M. (2003). Learning disabilities in children's and adolescent literature: How are characters portrayed? *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 26(1), 47-62.
- Schizophrenia. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/schizophrenia>
- Selective Mutism Group. (2008). *What is Selective Mutism?* Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://www.selectivemutism.org/about-smg/what-is-sm>
- Static characters. (2008). *ReadWriteThink*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1050/DynamicStatic.pdf

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Although there has been very little research done on the portrayal of mental and emotional illnesses in young adult literature, other disabilities have been more closely examined. One of the most comprehensive studies was conducted in the winter of 2003 by Mary Anne Prater. The purpose of Prater's study was to examine the portrayal of characters with learning disabilities in young adult literature. Prater examined ninety fictional books written for adolescents that portrayed at least one character with a learning disability. Prater used the following questions to guide her study:

1. What percentage of fiction books written for children and adolescents:
 - a. Portray individuals with learning disabilities as major vs. minor characters;
 - b. Are written from the perspective of the character with the learning disability;
 - c. Use the learning disability as a major or minor role in the plot;
 - d. Portray reading, written expression, math, social skills, oral language, and motor skills as the type of learning disability?
2. How is the role of the diagnosis of the learning disability portrayed in the plot?
3. How is the role of schooling portrayed in the plot?

4. What other issues or topics related to learning disabilities emerge as themes in the plot?

Prater (2003) applied all four of these questions to the ninety books that were chosen for the study. From her results, Prater found that the majority of the characters with learning disabilities were dynamic and underwent significant changes throughout the course of the novel's events. Also, the majority of the stories were told from the point-of-view of the character who was afflicted with the learning disability. Finally, Prater also found that the majority of the learning disabilities featured throughout the novels had a major impact on the story's plot.

The majority of published works in regards to young adult literature and mental and/or emotional illnesses consists of annotated bibliographies and recommended reading lists. In 1983, Pat Azarnoff authored a guide for picking books for children and young adults suffering from a multitude of disabilities including physical, learning, emotional, and mental disabilities. The purpose of the book was to "provide librarians and information specialists, mental health and health science professionals, educators, child development specialists, and parents and children with a guide that describes books on young people's experiences with their bodies and with disabilities, hospitalization, and medical treatments," (p. vii). Approximately 1,000 books are included in the list and each title is accompanied with bibliographic information and a concise summary of the work. The mental and emotional illnesses featured in the collection pertained to autism, depression, and schizophrenia.

In 2002, Marilyn Ward authored a similar piece of work that featured a more current collection of book choices. Similar to Azarnoff's annotated bibliography, the purpose of Ward's work was to:

...help teachers, librarians, special education professionals, reading resource staff, school administrators, healthcare practitioners, and parents select and use children's and young adult fiction that features characters with disabilities and differences. And for young readers looking for good reads featuring characters with disabilities or differences, *Voices from the Margins* may spark a healthy acceptance of self and others... (p. x).

Additionally, Ward discussed two reasons why it was imperative that young adults have access to quality novels featuring a disabled character. First, for young people who are not disabled and who may not know a person with a disability, their only exposure to disabilities may be through books. Second, for young people with disabilities, disabled characters in the books they read may influence how they view themselves. Therefore, Ward concluded that "literature about disabilities and differences can be a powerful tool to heighten the achievement of all students by broadening their attitudes and perceptions of self and others," (p. x).

Ward's listing of recommended reading books (2002) was divided into five sections: annotated bibliography, title index, author index, age-level index, and subject index. Additionally, the book selection was comprised of picture books, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, mysteries, fantasies, and poetry. Some of the mental and emotional illnesses that Ward provided resources for are Autism, depression, selective mutism, emotional problems as a result of trauma, undiagnosed mental illness,

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder and Schizophrenia. Finally, Ward used six criteria to select the 200 books featured in her collection. These six criteria included: accuracy of information, literary quality, realistic and believable portrayal of people, settings that are integral to the action and characters, reasonable story resolution, and age-level and genre appropriateness.

In 2008, Tina Taylor Dyches and Mary Anne Prater collaborated on a list of what they felt were the top 25 children's and young adults' books that portrayed characters with disabilities. To make their selection, the authors used the following guidelines: literary quality, illustrative quality, and appropriate characterization of the characters with disabilities (accurate portrayal of the disability, realistic sibling relationships, appropriate emotional reactions, and accurate explanations of the disability or assistive devices being used). Five of the books on the list received the prestigious Newbery Medal or Honor award and the years of book publication ranged from 1955 to 2006. Some of the disabilities represented on the list were Autism, selective mutism, and Obsessive Compulsive Disorder.

Although there were several annotated bibliographies and recommended reading lists found on the topic of the portrayal of mental and emotional illnesses in young adult literature, there has been very little research done to measure the merit and quality of the literature available on this topic separate from the inclusion of other disabilities. Thus, the focus of this study was to examine how only characters with mental or emotional illnesses were represented in young adult fiction.

References

- Azarnoff, P. (1983). *Health, illness, and disability: A guide to books for children and young adults*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company.
- Dyches, T. & Prater, M. (2008). Books that portray characters with disabilities: A top 25 list for children and young adults. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(4), 32-38.
- Prater, M. (2003). Learning disabilities in children's and adolescent literature: How are characters portrayed? *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 26(1), 47-62.
- Ward, M. (2002). *Voices from the margins: An annotated bibliography of fiction on disabilities and differences for young people*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

The method of research that was chosen for this study was that of an exploratory survey. According to Powell and Connaway (2004), exploratory surveys can:

...increase the researcher's familiarity with the phenomenon in question, it can help to clarify concepts, it can be used to establish priorities for future research, it can identify new problems, and last, but not least, exploratory survey research can be used to gather information with practical applications...(p. 196).

Since the researcher's purpose in conducting this study was to analyze the merit of young adult literature featuring mentally and emotionally disabled characters, an exploratory survey would allow for the researcher to determine, with the aid of precise research questions, just how disabled characters were being represented in young adult novels. Additionally, an exploratory survey would allow the researcher to make suggestions for both possible future studies in this particular field and specific ways on which young adult novels featuring disabled characters can be improved upon in terms of character development and plot.

For the purpose of this study, twenty works of fiction were evaluated in order to understand how characters with disabilities were represented in young adult literature. The researcher selected the books for the study with the assistance of book reviews, annotated bibliographies, and recommended reading lists. All of the books chosen

contained at least one character afflicted with either a mental or emotional disability. For the purpose of this study, the disabilities examined included Depression, Schizophrenia, Selective Mutism, and Obsessive-Compulsion Disorder. Additionally, all of the books have been categorized as young adult literature by the book's publisher or were found in the young adult department of five public libraries located in southern New Jersey.

The following research questions were applied to all twenty books in order to ascertain how mentally or emotionally disabled characters are featured in young adult literature:

1. What percentage of the books evaluated portrayed the disabled character as a major character or as a supporting character?
2. What percentage of the books were written from or included the disabled character's point-of-view?
3. What percentage of the books portrayed the disabled character as a dynamic as opposed to a static character?
4. Did the character's disability play a major or minor role in the story's plot?
5. Were the symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the featured disability accurate and believable?

In order to find the answers to these questions, the researcher completed a one-page chart for each of the books read. Upon completion of all twenty tables, the researcher was able to form conclusions about how mentally and emotionally disabled characters were represented in selected young adult novels.

References

Powell, R., & Connaway, L. (2004). *Basic research methods for librarians*. Westport: Libraries Unlimited.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Upon reading the list of selected titles and completing the corresponding checklists, the following conclusions were drawn about the selected works of young adult fiction that featured mentally or emotionally disabled characters.

Major vs. Supporting Characters

In terms of major vs. supporting characters, the majority of the books featured the disabled character as the main character. More specifically, fourteen of the twenty books evaluated presented a main character who was labeled as disabled based on the definitions offered in Chapter II. The other six novels contained a main character who was dealing with a supporting character's disability. In Sonya Sones's *Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy* (1999), the story's main character had to deal with her older sister's nervous breakdown and subsequent hospitalization at a mental institution. In *The Last April Dancers* by Jean Thesman (1987), sixteen-year-old Catherine St. John dealt with an emotionally unstable father who refused to acknowledge his declining mental health and ultimately committed suicide. In Patricia McCord's *Pictures in the Dark* (2005), sisters Carlie and Sarah were forced to live in constant terror due to their mentally ill mother's tumultuous and sometimes abusive mood swings. In April Young Fritz's *Waiting to Disappear* (2002), 13-year-old Buddy's mother suffered a nervous breakdown and was subsequently hospitalized following the tragic death of

Buddy's older brother. The final two books went outside of the family unit and featured a character dealing with a friend's mental illness. In Sandra Diersch's *Ceiling Stars* (2004), Christine, a senior in high school, was trying to make sense of her best friend's worrisome behavior that included skipping school, running away from home, and displaying drastic mood swings. Finally, in John Neufeld's *Lisa, Bright and Dark* (1969), a group of friends in high school attempt to diagnose and treat their friend Lisa's depression after they realize that the adults in their lives, from their parents to their teachers to the school's guidance counselor, refuse to admit that there was even a problem with Lisa's disturbing behavior. Even though the disabled character was not the main character in these six books, the actual disability played a fundamental role in terms of plot and character development.

Character Point-of-View

In terms of point-of-view, the five previously mentioned books, where the disabled character was a supporting character, were the only ones not to feature the point-of-view of the story's disabled character. All of the other sixteen books evaluated were solely narrated by the disabled character. In Julie Halpern's *Get Well Soon* (2007), the story was narrated by Anna Bloom who was a teenaged girl recently committed to a mental hospital as a result of her uncontrollable depression. The reader viewed everything from Anna's perspective: her entrance into a new and unusual environment where she was forced to sleep on a hospital gurney in the hallway so she can constantly be monitored, her introduction to her fellow patients who left her feeling both amused and nervous, and her tentative first few steps in a process of self-discovery that eventually led to her recovery and subsequent release from the hospital.

In John Marsden's *So Much To Tell You* (1987), the story was completely told through a series of journal entries from the point-of-view of fourteen-year-old Marina. Marina's condition consisted of both depression and selective mutism. Marina, who was recently sent away to a boarding school, was horribly disfigured through some sort of tragic accident. Through her journal entries, the reader learned the truth of what happened to Marina which was that her father doused her face in acid which has left her scarred and afraid to speak. It was not until the end of the novel that Marina was finally able to regain her ability to speak and it happened only when Marina was confronted face-to-face with her father for the first time since he was sent to prison for what he did to her.

All of the remaining books examined also provided a similar access to the disabled character's point-of-view and their respective perspectives to the unique events and situations dictating their lives.

Character Development

In terms of character development, the clear majority of the disabled characters were dynamic. For example, in *Multiple Choice* by Janet Tashjian (1999), the story's protagonist was a fourteen-year-old girl suffering from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. At the beginning of the story, Monica Devon's life was controlled by her perfectionist tendencies and obsessive behavior. As a way to cope with her compulsive habits and as a way to bring some spontaneity into her life, Monica invented a game in which she first poses a question and then creates four possible options. An example of one of Monica's questions was the one that pertained to what she should wear to school that day. She would then create four possible outfit combinations and whichever one she randomly

picked would be the one she had to wear, no exceptions (it ended up being her pajamas). Monica's game began innocently enough but as the story goes on, Monica's behavior becomes increasingly erratic and even begins to border on dangerous. Once her game caused another character to get seriously injured, Monica's family finally realized the extent of Monica's illness and she was finally offered the professional help that she desperately needed. By the story's end, Monica was not completely healed but she was well on the road to recovery and was finally able to start enjoying her life once more.

Another story that featured a dynamic character was Laurie Halse Anderson's *Speak* (1999). This story's main character, Melinda Sordino, was raped at an end-of-summer party. Immediately after her rape, Melinda called the police who came and broke the party up. Unable to verbalize why she called the police, Melinda's friends turn their backs on her and she quickly became the school's social outcast. With no one to talk to, Melinda chose to suffer in silence and for the majority of the book, she bottled up all of her emotions and feelings about what happened to her. It was not until the story's climax, when Melinda was once again confronted by her attacker, that she was finally able to find her voice and was able to speak-up to others about what happened to her.

Not all of the stories were so clear-cut when it comes to character development. John Marsden's *Checkers* (1996) began in a mental institution where the reader was introduced to an unnamed teenaged girl. The story was told in a series of flashbacks where the reader was presented with a series of events that ultimately led to the protagonist's nervous breakdown. Basically, the girl's family was torn apart when it was revealed that her father was involved in a huge governmental financial scam that created a large-scale scandal throughout the country. As the girl's family crumbled under the

pressure of the scandal, her mental health slowly began to unravel. By the story's end, the girl was still a patient at the hospital with no clear signs of leaving anytime soon. *Checkers* was one of the few books evaluated that ended on an uncertain note since the disabled character was unsure if they could recover.

Another novel in which the main character was unable to develop was Terry Trueman's *Inside Out* (2003). What was unusual about this novel was that it took place in a single day whereas the other novels chronicled the lives of the disabled character for months or years. In *Inside Out*, the reader was introduced to Zach Wahhsted who had the misfortune of being in a coffee shop when it was held up by two robbers. Taken as a hostage, Zach was forced to remain with the robbers for hours and the reader discovered that Zach had been waiting for his mother to bring him his medication for Schizophrenia. Forced to go without his medication, Zach began to succumb to the voices inside his head and as the story progresses, it was revealed that Zach had spent a substantial amount of time in a mental hospital after he tried to commit suicide years before. Finally, the hold-up was resolved and Zach was reunited with his mom but the story ends on a sad note when the last page revealed that Zach committed suicide a few weeks after the robbery. Of all of the novels read, only two presented characters who remained static throughout the novel.

Plot Development

In terms of the importance of the disability in relation to the development of the plot, the disability played a major role in all of the twenty novels read. Even in the novels where the story was not told from the disabled character's point-of-view, the disability still dictated the unfolding of the events that enabled the story's progression.

For example, in Fritz's *Waiting to Disappear* (2002), the character of Buddy was dealing with her mother's depression and nervous breakdown following the death of Buddy's older brother in a car accident. Even though Buddy was not the disabled character, the disability still dictated the events of the story. After her mother was hospitalized, Buddy was left to contemplate whether or not her friends would ostracize her for her mother's condition and whether or not her mother's condition was hereditary and she too would suffer from depression someday.

A novel that did feature the point-of-view of the disabled character was Patricia McCormick's *Cut* (2000), where the reader was introduced to the character of Callie who suffered from both selective mutism and self-mutilation. Callie's disability was what causes the whole story to develop and progress because her self-destructive behavior was what caused her to become mute and then subsequently hospitalized. The reasons for why Callie chose to physically harm herself are ultimately revealed and by the novel's end, Callie was finally on the road to recovery.

Accuracy of the Disability Portrayed

When it came to the actual discussion of the symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the presented disabilities, the majority of the novels shied away from going into great detail about the disability's diagnosis and treatment. The novels that went into the greatest detail about the disability were mostly the ones that featured a character who was placed in a mental hospital as a result of their condition. As a result of the character's hospitalization, the reader was given a vivid glimpse into the character's recovery process which usually included both group and individual therapy in addition to prescription medicine. For example, in Susan Shaw's *Black-eyed Suzie* (2002), twelve-year-old Suzie

was placed into a mental hospital by a family member who was worried about her unhealthy behavior that included an inability to eat or sleep. In addition to being depressed, Suzie was also suffering from selective mutism and was initially unable to communicate with anyone why she transformed from a normal, healthy girl to her present condition. At the mental hospital, Suzie's daily routine consisted of both group therapy and meeting with a therapist individually. Suzie was also given pills on a daily basis that were simply referred to as "happy pills" in order to combat her depression. Additionally, Suzie was also given sleeping pills to help with her inability to sleep and she was also given several IVs since she refused to eat. As a result of her daily therapy sessions and various treatment methods, Suzie was able to slowly recover and once she began speaking again, she was able to reveal to her therapist that the cause of all of her mental and physical health problems was the result of her mother's abusive behavior toward her.

Another story that provided many details concerning the recovery process was Ned Vizzini's *It's Kind of a Funny Story* (2006). The disabled character in this story was Craig Gilner who suffered from extreme anxiety and depression. Craig's condition became so severe that he contemplated suicide and ended up calling a suicide prevention hotline. Craig was then placed in a mental hospital for a short time where he was evaluated and treated. With this novel, the reader was privy to several conversations between Craig and his therapist where they discussed different treatment options which included anti-depressant medications like Zoloft. Ultimately, however, Craig was finally able to overcome his anxiety issues and depression when he confronted the issues in his life that caused these unfavorable feelings and then made the necessary changes to make his life bearable once more.

Another novel that provided a good amount of details about the condition but took place outside of a mental hospital was George Harrar's *Not as Crazy as I Seem* (2003). This novel was the story of Devon Brown, a teenaged boy who suffered from Obsessive-Compulsion Disorder. The majority of Devon's "rituals" were harmless enough: only opening his locker in a particular way, eating things in groups of fours, and hanging up his shirts by color and buttoning them from top to bottom. However, toward the end of the novel, one of Devon's meticulous tendencies gets him into big trouble at school. Throughout the course of the novel, Devon attended weekly therapy sessions where he and his therapist spoke openly about Devon's condition and it was through these sessions where Devon was finally given the tools to confront his obsessions and to overcome them.

Overall, the researcher found that the majority of the books selected for the study presented engaging and dynamic characters who were struggling to overcome the difficulties of their various disabilities. Often enough, the stories were told from the point-of-views of the disabled characters which provided readers with the opportunity to understand what living with a disability would be like first-hand. However, the most notable problem with the books selected was that the researcher found them, for the most part, to shy away from discussing the treatment process for the disabilities which will be further discussed in Chapter V.

References

- Anderson, L. H. (1999). *Speak*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Diersch, S. (2004). *Ceiling stars*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Fritz, A.Y. (2002). *Waiting to disappear*. New York: Hyperion Books.
- Greenberg, J. (1964). *I never promised you a rose garden*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston
- Halpern, J. (2007). *Get well soon*. New York: Feiwel and Friends.
- Harrar, G. (2003). *Not as crazy as I seem*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hesser, T.S. (1998). *Kissing doorknobs*. New York: Bantam Doubleday.
- Marsden, J. (1987). *So much to tell you*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Marsden, J. (1996). *Checkers*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- McCord, P. (2004). *Pictures in the dark*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- McCormick, P. (2000). *Cut*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.
- Neufeld, J. (1969). *Lisa, bright and dark*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Oneal, Z. (1987). *The language of goldfish*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Shaw, S. (2002). *Black-eyed Suzie*. Pennsylvania: Boyds Mill Press.
- Sones, S. (1999). *Stop pretending: What happened when my big sister went crazy*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Tashjian, J. (1999). *Multiple choice*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Thesman, J. (1987). *The last of the April dancers*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.
- Trueman, T. (2003). *Inside out*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Vizzini, N. (2006). *It's kind of a funny story*. New York: Miramax Books.
- White, R. (2000). *Memories of summer*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusions

Ultimately, the following conclusions were drawn in terms of young adult literature featuring mentally or emotionally disabled characters from the results of the study:

In terms of major vs. supporting characters, the majority of the books featured the disabled character as the main character. There were only five books that featured a disabled character as a supporting character.

In terms of point-of-view, fifteen of the twenty books featured the point-of-view of the disabled character. The other five books featured the point-of-view of the protagonist who had a relationship with a disabled character in the form of a family member or friend.

In terms of character development, the clear majority of the disabled characters were dynamic. Only two of the books presented static characters who were unable to make any progress with the treatment of their disability and in both of those cases, the novel ended with the character committing suicide.

In terms of the importance of the disability in relation to the development of the plot, the disability played a major role in all of the twenty novels read. Even in the books

where a supporting character was disabled, the disability still played a large role in the novel in terms of plot and character development.

When it came to the actual discussion of the symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the presented disabilities, the majority of the novels shied away from going into great detail about the disability's diagnosis and treatment. The researcher found that the only books that provided specific details about a disability's treatment process were those that took place in a psychiatric hospital and required the disabled character to partake in daily treatments.

From these results, the researcher believes that the quality of young adult literature featuring mentally or emotionally disabled characters is high quality but there are some improvements that can be made. As noted in Chapter I, since it is estimated that there are approximately two million adolescents in the United States currently suffering from some type of mental illness, it is essential that young adult literature features characters who face the daily struggles and conflicts associated with mental illness. In the books that were examined for the purpose of this study, the researcher found a plethora of engaging, dynamic characters who, for the most part, were able to overcome the trials and tribulations that accompanied their respective disorders. Additionally, based on the definitions presented in Chapter II, all of the novels were accurate in presenting the characteristics of the disability discussed. The only major problem found in the literature examined was that more often than not, the novels glossed over the specific details concerning the treatment process of the disabilities. They did, however, do an excellent job of discussing the symptoms associated with the disability and the subsequent diagnosis.

Recommendations for Further Study

Since this study was limited to only twenty novels and was rather broad in scope, the researcher has several recommendations for future studies dealing with this topic. First, the researcher did not place a specific limit on the copyright date of the twenty books chosen for the study so the years of the books examined ranged from 1964-2007. A further study could examine how the treatment of mental or emotional disabilities in young adult literature transformed from the mid-1900s to the present or could focus solely on contemporary young adult literature.

Additionally, the novels chosen featured both male and female protagonists who suffered from several different disorders. Specialists of a particular disorder might find it worthwhile to solely concentrate on the treatment of an individual disability as opposed to the several that were examined for this study. Since the researcher of this study had limited medical knowledge, a specialist might also provide better insight into the treatment of the disability's symptoms, diagnosis and subsequent handling.

Finally, for authors of young adult literature who are interested in writing novels that feature mentally or emotionally disabled characters, the researcher recommends providing more detailed accounts of the necessary treatments of the disabilities presented. Although most of the characters in the novels reviewed were able to find some sort of a happy ending, not enough information was provided on just how they overcame the obstacles of their disabilities in terms of treatments and cures. For a reader who suffers from a disability, the inclusion of a well-researched treatment process in a novel could provide a sense of relief.

REFERENCE LIST

- American Psychiatric Association. (2005). *Medical Library*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from http://www.medem.com/medlb/article_detailb.cfm?article_ID=ZZZZJDP487C&sub_cat=128
- Anderson, L. H. (1999). *Speak*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Azarnoff, P. (1983). *Health, illness, and disability: A guide to books for children and young adults*. New York: R.R. Bowker Company.
- Diersch, S. (2004). *Ceiling stars*. Toronto: James Lorimer & Company Ltd.
- Disability. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Dictionary*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/disability>
- Dyches T. & Prater, M. (2008). Books that portray characters with disabilities: A top 25 list for children and young adults. *Teaching Exceptional Children*, 40(4), 32-38.
- Emotional illness. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/emotionalillness>
- Fritz, A.Y. (2002). *Waiting to disappear*. New York: Hyperion Books.
- Greenberg, J. (1964). *I never promised you a rose garden*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston.
- Halpern, J. (2007). *Get well soon*. New York: Feiwel and Friends.
- Harrar, G. (2003). *Not as crazy as I seem*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- Hesser, T.S. (1998). *Kissing doorknobs*. New York: Bantam Doubleday.
- Lynch-Brown, C., & Tomlinson, C. (2007). *Essentials of young adult literature*. Boston: Pearson Education, Inc.
- Marsden, J. (1987). *So much to tell you*. New York: Ballantine Books.
- Marsden, J. (1996). *Checkers*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company.
- McCord, P. (2004). *Pictures in the dark*. New York: Bloomsbury.
- McCormick, P. (2000). *Cut*. New York: Scholastic, Inc.

- Mental health myths. (2008). *The National Mental Health Awareness Campaign*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from <http://www.nostigma.org/myths.php?myth=KIDS>
- Mental illness. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/mentallillness>
- Neufeld, J. (1969). *Lisa, bright and dark*. New York: Penguin Group.
- Obsessive-Compulsive disorder. (2002). *Merriam-Webster's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/obsessive-compulsive%20disorder>
- Oneal, Z. (1987). *The language of goldfish*. New York: Puffin Books.
- Powell, R., & Connaway, L. (2004). *Basic research methods for librarians*. Westport: Libraries Unlimited.
- Psychiatric hospital. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/search?q=psychiatric%20hospital>
- Prater, M. (2003). Learning disabilities in children's and adolescent literature: How are characters portrayed? *Learning Disability Quarterly*, 26(1), 47-62.
- Schizophrenia. (2006). *The American Heritage Stedman's Medical Dictionary*. Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/schizophrenia>
- Selective Mutism Group. (2008). *What is Selective Mutism?* Retrieved October 10, 2008 from <http://www.selectivemutism.org/about-smg/what-is-sm>
- Shaw, S. (2002). *Black-eyed Suzie*. Pennsylvania: Boyds Mill Press.
- Sones, S. (1999). *Stop pretending: What happened when my big sister went crazy*. New York: HarperCollins.
- Static characters. (2008). *ReadWriteThink*. Retrieved October 16, 2008 from http://www.readwritethink.org/lesson_images/lesson1050/DynamicStatic.pdf
- Tashjian, J. (1999). *Multiple choice*. New York: Henry Holt and Company.
- Thesman, J. (1987). *The last of the April dancers*. New York: Houghton Mifflin.

- Trueman, T. (2003). *Inside out*. New York: HarperCollins Publishers.
- Vizzini, N. (2006). *It's kind of a funny story*. New York: Miramax Books.
- Ward, M. (2002). *Voices from the margins: An annotated bibliography of fiction on disabilities and differences for young people*. Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press.
- White, R. (2000). *Memories of summer*. New York: Farrar, Straus & Giroux.

APPENDIX A
NOVEL EVALUATIONS

Book Information

Title: Kissing Doorknobs	Author: Terry Spencer Hesser	Publication Year: 1998
--------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Tara Sullivan, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder</i>
Character Biography: <i>Middle-schooler Tara Sullivan's life centers around her OCD and the numerous effects it had on both her actions and thoughts. Her condition first presented itself when she was 11 and she heard the expression, "Step on a crack, break your mother's back!" As a result, Tara began to count every sidewalk crack on the way to and from school. In the following months, Tara began to develop several other unusual "rituals" that she is forced to perform despite her ability to recognize the absurdity of her own actions.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Tara was the main character of the story. The supporting characters included her parents, her sister, her three closest friends, a series of therapists that she was sent to, a concerned friend of the family who noticed Tara's strange behavior and approached her parents about it, and a fellow teenager with Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder named Sam.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told completely from Tara's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Tara was a dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, Tara was a slave to her uncontrollable actions and rituals. By the end of the story when her condition was accurately diagnosed, Tara was finally on the road to recovery and had developed a new, positive outlook on her life and her future.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in the story because the unusualness of Tara's rituals (counting sidewalk cracks, incessantly praying, lining up all of her food before eating it), caused her to become alienated from her family and friends.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>All of Tara's rituals and her inability to control her actions were described in detail. Also, Tara was sent to several therapists who repeatedly misdiagnosed her condition until one finally recognized her condition for what it truly was. Finally, several treatment options were discussed for Tara when she was put in contact with another teenager with OCD.</i>

Book Information

Title: The Last April Dancers	Author: Jean Thesman	Publication Year: 1987
-------------------------------	----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Catherine St. John, Unspecified mental illness</i>
Character Biography: <i>Catherine St. John is your typical sixteen year-old-girl except for the fact that her father is suffering from some sort of a mental illness that causes him to talk to imaginary people and succumb to several random emotional outbursts. Although Catherine is able to recognize her father's behavior as worrisome, Catherine's mother refuses to acknowledge the situation and attributes the father's behavior to stress. Toward the end of the story, Catherine's father commits suicide and Catherine is left feeling like she is to blame for her inability to help her father during his downward spiral.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Catherine is the main character of the story but her father (and mother) also play large roles.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told completely from Catherine's point-of-view and everything we learn about her father and his behavior is from Catherine's perspective.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Catherine is a dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, she is confused and frightened by her father's behavior. However, by the end of the story, Catherine is introduced to a distant relative who was able to shed light on the situation and inform Catherine that her father was sick for many, many years and that the illness was not new (like Catherine thought). With this information, Catherine's guilt about her father's illness and subsequent suicide begins to dissolve.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The mental illness plays a large role in terms of plot development because Catherine is constantly trying to make sense of her father's disturbing behavior. It was revealed at one point that Catherine's father was prescribed medication for his condition but he refused to take it.</i>

Book Information

Title: Stop Pretending: What Happened When My Big Sister Went Crazy	Author: Sonya Sones	Publication Year: 1999
---	---------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Younger Sister, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>The main character in this story has no name and is only called "Younger Sister." The story is a series of the Younger Sister's reactions to her older sister's emotional breakdown and subsequent hospitalization. Once the sister is hospitalized and news of her condition begins to spread, Little Sister's friends turn their backs on her and she is left with no friends and a broken family.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Although Little Sister is the story's main character, her sister plays a large role in the story's plot. The two sisters were extremely close and once her sister is hospitalized, Little Sister feels like she has been abandoned by her sister.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told completely from Little Sister's point-of-view and everything that we learn about her sister's breakdown is from her perspective.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Little Sister is a dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, she is both confused and angry about her sister's breakdown and the damaging effects it has on her family. However, by the end of the story, Little Sister is able to internally forgive her sister for leaving her.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in the story because Little Sister was unable to fully understand her sister's condition and subsequent hospitalization. Also, a lot of the story takes place in a mental institution when Little Sister visits her older sister.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Little Sister describes some of her sister's unusual behavior which includes incoherent screaming fits, refusal to sleep for days at a time, and buying large quantities of useless stuff for no reason (for example, fish bowls and ping-pong balls). Finally, on Christmas Eve, the sister's wild and erratic behavior erupts in the form of a nervous breakdown. Not a lot of information is revealed about the sister's treatments except for the fact that she is sent to a mental institution where she receives electric shocks at one point.</i>

Book Information

Title: Multiple Choice	Author: Janet Tashjian	Publication Year: 1999
------------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name: <i>Monica Devon, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder</i>
Character Biography: <i>For as long as she can remember, Monica Devon has been a perfectionist at all aspects of her life. Now at fourteen, Monica's obsessive behavior has begun to spiral out of control. As a way to cope, Monica creates a game called Multiple Choice and she hopes that the game will bring more spontaneity into her life. The game consists of posing a question (Ex: What should I wear to school today?), creating four options, and randomly picking one of the options. The game starts off innocently enough but then begins to have negative consequences for Monica. However, the game becomes Monica's new obsession and she is unable to stop playing.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Monica is the main character of the story.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told solely from Monica's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Monica is a dynamic character because she underwent several changes throughout the story that included her ability to begin discussing her condition with her family and a therapist and she is placed on the road to recovery.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in the story because it controlled all of Monica's actions and thoughts on a daily basis.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Monica is obsessed with everything from her schoolwork to her appearance. In addition to her obsessions, Monica is constantly worrying about her family's happiness but to a point where she becomes paralyzed with fear. It is not until Monica's game starts to become out-of-control that her dangerously obsessive behavior is revealed to those around her. As a result, Monica begins meeting with a therapist who helps her start to take control of her behavior.</i>

Book Information

Title: Speak	Author: Laurie Halse Anderson	Publication Year: 1999
--------------	-------------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Melinda Sordino, Selective Mutism & Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>During an end-of-summer party, freshman Melinda Sordino was raped by an upperclassmen at her school. Shortly after she was raped, Melinda called the police who quickly came and broke up the party. Unable to verbalize why she called the police, Melinda's friends turn their backs on her and she becomes a social outcast at school. With no one to talk to, Melinda suffers in silence and bottles up all of her feelings and emotions about what happened to her.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Melinda is the main character of the story. The supporting characters include her parents, a couple of classmates, a history teacher that constantly terrorizes Melinda, and an encouraging art teacher who tries to get Melinda to open up.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is completely told from the perspective of Melinda.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Melinda is definitely a dynamic character. At the story's beginning, since she is unable speak about her rape, Melinda simply chooses not to speak at all. However, in the story's climax, Melinda is once again attacked by her rapist and she is finally able to find her voice.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>Melinda's selective mutism plays a large role in the story because it causes conflict between her parents and herself in addition to the fact that it causes her to become the school's social outcast.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Melinda is never officially diagnosed or treated for her condition. Although her parents are confused by her inability to speak, her depressive behavior, and slipping grades, Melinda is never offered any help beyond the level of the school guidance counselor. The reason she is finally able to recover from her attack and her subsequent mutism is that she is forced into a situation where she needs to use her voice. Once she got away from her attacker for the second time, Melinda is finally able to open up to others about what happened to her.</i>

Book Information

Title: Cut	Author: Patricia McCormick	Publication Year: 2000
------------	----------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Callie, Selective Mutism & Self-Mutilation.</i>
Character Biography: <i>When the reader is first introduced to Callie, we learn that she has been placed in a mental institution for cutting herself and for choosing not to speak. The reader then follows Callie during her time at the institution which includes her interactions with the other patients and her daily meetings with her therapist where we begin to uncover the reasons for Callie's self-destructive behavior.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Callie is the main character of the story and some of the supporting characters include her parents, her little brother, her fellow patients, and the staff of the hospital where she resides.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told solely from Callie's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Callie is a dynamic character because, through her therapy, she finally gains the ability to open up about her condition and what caused it. Callie reveals that she blamed herself for the time that her little brother, who has a heart condition, had to be hospitalized when Callie was once baby-sitting him. Callie's subsequent cutting was a reaction to her powerlessness and guilt over the situation. By opening up to her therapist about the incident and relationship with her family, Callie soon learns how to cope with her feelings and starts down the road of recovery.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>Callie's condition plays a major role in the story because it is her inability to speak and cutting that has her sent to a mental institution for treatment.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Since the story takes place inside a mental institution, a lot is told about Callie's treatments including group therapy, meeting individually with a therapist each day, and what medications she is on.</i>

Book Information

Title: Checkers	Author: John Marsden	Publication Year: 1996
-----------------	----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Portrayed: <i>Unnamed Character & Unspecified mental illness.</i>
Character Biography: <i>This story begins in a mental hospital where the reader is introduced to an Australian teenage girl who is never named. The story is told in a series of flashbacks where the reader is presented with a series of events that leads to the protagonist's ultimate nervous breakdown. Basically, the girl's family is torn apart when it is revealed that her father was involved in a huge governmental money scam that creates a large-scale scandal that echoes throughout the country. As the girl's family crumbles under the pressure of the scandal, so does her mental health.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>The girl is the main character of the story. Some of the supporting characters include her parents, her younger brother, her father's business associates, and her beloved dog Checkers who becomes the girl's only confidante during the rocky events of the story.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The point-of-view is that of the unnamed girl.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>It is hard to determine if the girl is a dynamic or static character. The story begins and ends with the girl in the mental hospital. Although she seems hopeful at the end of the story, it is hard to say if she is on the road to recovery.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability did not play a huge role in the story. Although the character is in a mental hospital, the majority of the story takes place before her breakdown when she was still mentally healthy.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Even though the main character is now in a mental hospital, she was mentally healthy for the majority of the story so little is discussed in terms of symptoms and treatments.</i>

Book Information

Title: Get Well Soon	Author: Julie Halpern	Publication Year: 2007
----------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Portrayed: <i>Anna Bloom, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>In this book, the reader follows the story of Anna Bloom who currently resides at a mental institution for teenagers. Anna was placed there by her parents as a result of her depression. The story is told through a series of Anna's journal entries. It is through these entries that the reader first sees Anna's anxiety in being in a new and unusual place but then witnesses Anna befriending her fellow patients and even falling for one of them. Though it all, Anna is able to hold on to her sense of humor as she begins down a road of self-discovery.</i>
Is the character a major or supporting character? <i>Anna is the story's main character and the story's other important characters were primarily her fellow patients in the hospital.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told completely from Anna's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Anna is a dynamic character. She begins the story in a mental hospital where she is constantly overwhelmed by her depression and low self-esteem. However, by the story's end, Anna returns home and the story ends on a positive note with Anna looking forward to the rest of her life.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>Anna's depression played a major role in the story's plot because it is what caused Anna to be hospitalized and dictated her interactions with the other patients of the hospital.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>The story goes into Anna's successful group therapies in addition to discussing her not so successful individual meetings with an assigned therapist. Anna also takes antidepressants for her condition.</i>

Book Information

Title: Ceiling Stars	Author: Sandra Diersch	Publication Year: 2004
----------------------	------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Christine, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>This is the story of two life-long friends: Danielle and Christine. The girls are in their senior year of high school and it is then when Danielle begins to exhibit worrisome behavior that includes skipping school, disappearing for days, and having powerful mood changes that can be amazingly high or dangerously low. Christine is worried about her friend and her mental health and tries her best to come to Danielle's rescue.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Christine is the main character of this story but Danielle plays a very large role.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is completely told from Christine's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Christine is a dynamic character. In the novel's epilogue, Danielle receives a letter from Christine in which she states that her condition was finally diagnosed and that she has been medicated for her depression. However, she does not reveal where she is writing from and it is not known if she and Danielle are reunited.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a very large role in the plot because Christine's erratic behavior begins to create a wedge into her friendship with Danielle. Danielle spends much of the novel trying to make meaning of Danielle's actions and helping her friend through this tumultuous time.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Christine's wild mood swings and reckless behavior are some of the symptoms of her depression. However, it is not until the end of the novel, when she dangerously attempts to go bungee-jumping without the aid of a professional, that she is finally given help. The story is not very clear on how Christine is treated but she does send Danielle a letter telling her that she is on the mend.</i>

Book Information

Title: Pictures in the Dark	Author: Patricia McCord	Publication Year: 2005
-----------------------------	-------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Sarah, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Twelve-year-old Sarah and her older sister Carlie have been dealing with their mother's angry outbursts and tumultuous temper for years. However, it was only recently that their mother's behavior has become violent toward the girls and they are constantly living in fear. Despite the mother's obvious depression, their father remains oblivious to her condition.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Their mother is a supporting character.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told solely from Sarah's point-of-view but Carlie plays a very large role as well.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>The mother is a dynamic character. In the beginning of the story, she is abusive and terrible to her daughters but after her treatment of the girls is brought to the father's attention, the mother is hospitalized and is apologetic of her behavior when she is reunited with her daughters.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability plays a major role because it is what causes Sarah and Carlie to live in fear of their mother and it is what causes Carlie to runaway from home for a period of time.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>The mother has violent outburst toward her daughters. Very little is said about her time in a mental hospital and what sorts of treatments she underwent.</i>

Book Information

Title: So Much to Tell You	Author: John Marsden	Publication Year: 1987
----------------------------	----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Marina, Selective Mutism & Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>The story began with fourteen-year-old Marina arriving to a boarding school following time spent at a mental institution. It was revealed that Marina's face was horribly disfigured after her father doused her in acid. Since that tragedy, Marina has not spoken a word despite the many attempts of the story's supporting characters to open her up.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Marina was the story's main character. Supporting characters include her classmates at her boarding school and the school's guidance counselor, Mrs. Ransome.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Marina's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Marina is a dynamic character. At the beginning of the story, she refuses to speak as a result of the terrible things that happened to her. By meeting weekly with the school's counselor, Marina learned to stop hiding from the pain of what happened to her and confront the actions of her father. At the end of the story, Marina confronted her father in prison and for the first time in years, Marina spoke of the events that took place on the night of her attack.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role because it was what brought Marina to the boarding school and introduced her to the story's supporting characters.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>In addition to not speaking, Marina also suffered from depression as a result of her mother's abandonment and her father's imprisonment. The only treatment discussed was Marina's weekly visits to the school's guidance counselor.</i>

Book Information

Title: Inside Out	Author: Terry Trueman	Publication Year: 2003
-------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Zach Wahhsted, Schizophrenia.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Zach Wahhsted was sitting in a coffee shop one afternoon when a robbery began. The robbery went wrong and Zach and the other coffee shop customers were taken hostage. As the story progressed, it became known that Zach had been waiting for his mother to bring him his medication for Schizophrenia. Zach had to go several hours without his medication until the police finally intervened and the robbery attempt came to an end.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Zach was the main character. Some of the supporting characters included his mother, his doctor, and the robbers.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Zach's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Zach was a static character. Throughout the novel, he struggled with the symptoms of his disability and it was revealed in the epilogue that Zach committed suicide.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role because Zach's symptoms became more and more serious as the story progressed because he was forced to go without his medication. Without it, Zach's actions became bizarre and they had an affect on the outcome of the robbery.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Each chapter began with a snippet of one of Zach's meetings with his therapist so quite a lot was gleaned about his condition including the medications he took and how he attempted to commit suicide at one point. Additionally, since he was forced to go without his medication, Zach started to hear voices inside his head that caused him to believe that he was being attacked. Although Zach was medicated and in therapy, his inability to live with his condition caused him to commit suicide.</i>

Book Information

Title: Not as Crazy as I Seem	Author: George Harrar	Publication Year: 2003
-------------------------------	-----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Devon Brown, Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Devon Brown suffered from Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder. Some of his typical obsessive behavior was staying away from anywhere that had an abundance of germs (like the school cafeteria), eating things in groups of four, and hanging up all of his shirts by color and with the buttons buttoned from top to bottom. For most of the novel, Devon attempted to make sense of his own behavior which he acknowledged as strange.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Devon was the main character of the story. Some of the important supporting characters included his mom and dad, his therapist, and one of his classmates, Tanya, who was willing to befriend Devon despite his alienating behavior.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Devon's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Devon was a dynamic character because throughout the story, he learned about his condition and was able to make sense of his obsessive behavior with the help of his therapist. By the story's conclusion, Devon was able to begin to eliminate his obsessive rituals.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role because it Devon's obsessive behavior results in him getting into a lot of trouble at school and alienates his family.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Devon attended weekly therapy sessions where he tried to make sense of his behavior. He and his therapist discussed various medications at one point but it was not revealed if Devon would start taking any. A lot of information about Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder was included in the form of an Internet search conducted by Devon when he tried to make sense of his behavior.</i>

Book Information

Title: Black-eyed Suzie	Author: Susan Shaw	Publication Year: 2002
-------------------------	--------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Suzie, Depression and selective mutism.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Twelve-year-old Suzie suffered from both depression and selective mutism. Suzie's family ignored her condition until an uncle stepped in and took her to a psychiatric hospital. At the hospital, Suzie attempted to make sense of the actions and events that led to her condition and subsequent hospitalization.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Suzie is the story's main character. Important supporting characters included her parents, her older sister, her therapist at the hospital, and her fellow hospital patients.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told completely from Suzie's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Suzie was a dynamic character because by the story's end, she was able to understand what caused her condition and she was able to regain her voice. She was also released from the hospital into her uncle's care after she was finally able to reveal to her therapist that her mother was abusing her.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in the plot's development because Suzie's condition was what brought her to the psychiatric hospital where she was assigned to a therapist and where she met her fellow patients.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Suzie was hospitalized for her inability to speak but through her therapy, it was revealed that Suzie was also suffering from depression. At the beginning of the story, Suzie was also unable to eat or sleep so once she arrived at the hospital, she was given an IV and sleeping pills. Suzie attended daily group therapy and one-on-one therapy and she was encouraged to participate in expressive outlets like art. Suzie also had a habit of pretending that she was on a cloud and had the ability to float away from any situation. Through her therapy, she realized that this was a result of her childhood abuse from her mom and her desire to leave any tough situation. By revealing her mother's treatment of her, Suzie was able to overcome her depression and mutism.</i>

Book Information

Title: Lisa, Bright and Dark	Author: John Neufeld	Publication Year: 1969
------------------------------	----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Lisa Shilling, Schizophrenia.</i>
Character Biography: <i>To the world, Lisa appeared to be a typical sixteen-year-old girl but her friends were able to recognize that, in reality, she was suffering from depression and they made several attempts to help her since all of their parents and teachers ignored all of Lisa's cries for help.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Lisa is one of the major characters of the story. The other major characters are her friends Mary Nell, Betsy, and Elizabeth.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story is told from Betsy's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>At the end of the novel, Lisa was finally sent to a psychiatric hospital to receive help. The story ended without really revealing if Lisa would get better or not so it is hard to characterize her as a dynamic character based on this uncertainty.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>Lisa's condition played a large role in the story's plot. Since Lisa's parents refused to acknowledge her illness, her friends decided it was up to them to help her. Much of the story revolved around their attempts to research Lisa's condition and come up with ways to help her.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Lisa's illness greatly affected her behavior- she physically attacked her friend Elizabeth and purposely ran through a plate glass window. Lisa also had problems sleeping, problems with her temper, and she would talk in strange voices. Her friends attempted to research her condition and concluded that she had paranoid Schizophrenia. The girls provide group therapy sessions for Lisa that were unsuccessful. At the end of the novel, Lisa was finally sent to a psychiatric hospital but the story ended before Lisa's future was revealed.</i>

Book Information

Title: Waiting to Disappear	Author: April Young Fritz	Publication Year: 2002
-----------------------------	---------------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Buddy, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>In the summer before she entered high school, Buddy's life fell apart after her mother was hospitalized for Depression. The mother's Depression was a result of the tragic death of Buddy's older brother in a car accident and the novel focuses on Buddy's attempt to come to terms with her mother's condition.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Buddy was the story's main character and the disabled character, her mother, was a supporting character.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Buddy's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Both Buddy and her mother were dynamic characters. Buddy was able to overcome her feelings of anger and resentment for her mother while her mom was able to take the first steps in overcoming her Depression.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in the story's plot because Buddy was constantly trying to understand why her mother had to leave their home to go into a hospital. For most of the story, Buddy thought her mother's Depression was her fault because she was not able to make her mother as happy and proud as her brother was. Buddy was finally able to learn the truth about her mother's Depression and feelings for Buddy during the story's climax.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>The mother's Depression caused an episode in the beginning of the story where she had an uncontrollable crying fit and then locked herself in her car all-night. Shortly after, she admitted herself into a psychiatric hospital where she requested that Buddy and her father leave her alone for a period of time. There was very little mention of how Buddy's mother was being treated in the hospital.</i>

Book Information

Title: It's Kind of a Funny Story	Author: Ned Vizzini	Publication Year: 2006
-----------------------------------	---------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Craig Gilner, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Fifteen-year-old Craig suffered from severe Depression as a result of feeling overwhelmed by his attendance of a prestigious Manhattan high school. The stress of attending the school and trying to keep up with the coursework caused Craig to contemplate suicide. After his suicidal episode, Craig was admitted to a psychiatric hospital where he tried to learn how to better handle his issues.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Craig was the main character of the story.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Craig's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Craig was a dynamic character. Through his time at the psychiatric hospital, Craig was able to confront his issues and when he was released, he had the tools to make changes in his life that would lessen his Depression. These changes included transferring out of his high school to an art school where he would be happier and to stay away from certain friends that had a negative influence on his life.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in terms of plot because Craig's Depression and his suicide attempt were what led him to the psychiatric hospital where he was finally able to get help for his condition.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Craig's suicide attempt was the biggest symptom of his Depression. When he was at the hospital, he began to attend individualized therapy and he was started on a medication regime to control his anxiety levels. Both the therapy and medication played a large role in Craig's recovery. The novel also went into great detail about daily life in a psychiatric hospital and the activities and procedures that patients would encounter.</i>

Book Information

Title: The Language of Goldfish	Author: Zibby Oneal	Publication Year: 1980
---------------------------------	---------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Carrie Stokes, Depression.</i>
Character Biography: <i>The family of thirteen-year-old Carrie believed that her dizzy spells and daydreams were a result of her happiness with their recent move. However, Carrie's subsequent attempt to commit suicide revealed her deep unhappiness with her life and her fear of having to grow up.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Carrie was the main character. Important supporting characters included her parents, brother, sister, an art teacher that took an interest in her well-being, and her therapist.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Carrie's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Carrie was a dynamic character because from her therapy, she was able to realize that growing up was an inevitable part of life and there was nothing she could do to fight it. By having this revelation, Carrie was able to let go of several aspects of her childhood that she was refusing to let go of.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>Carrie's Depression played a large role in the story because her breakdown caused her to attempt suicide and then attempt to recover with the assistance of a therapist.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>At the beginning of the novel, Carrie suffered from dizzy spells and daydreamed constantly. She tried talking about her condition to her family but they just dismissed her behavior as that of a child refusing to grow up which led Carrie to overdose on sleeping pills. After she attempted to commit suicide, she was sent to a therapist who she met with everyday after school. With the therapist's assistance, Carrie was able to confront her issues of having to grow up and letting go of her childhood fantasies and by the story's completion, Carrie was finally at peace with herself.</i>

Book Information

Title: I Never Promised You a Rose Garden	Author: Hannah Green	Publication Year: 1964
---	----------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: <i>Deborah, Schizophrenia.</i>
Character Biography: <i>Sixteen-year-old Deborah was placed into a psychiatric hospital following a suicide attempt. The novel followed Deborah during her time at the hospital and featured her daily meetings with her therapist. Deborah's biggest problem was that she lived in a fantasy world ruled by gods and goddesses who dictated Deborah's actions and thoughts.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Deborah was the main character of the story. Some of the important supporting characters included her therapist and fellow patients at the psychiatric hospital.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Deborah's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Deborah was a dynamic character because, after spending three years in the psychiatric hospital, she was finally able to leave and return to high school. Deborah made a lot of progress with her condition in that she learned how to turn her back on the fantasy world she sometimes slipped into and how to stay in reality.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role in terms of plot development because Deborah's habits of self-mutilation and hallucinations caused her to be hospitalized by her parents.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Deborah's symptoms included hallucinations and self-mutilation. She also was convinced that she was living in a fantasy world where she conversed with make-believe Gods and Goddesses in a secret language. Her treatments included daily visits with a therapist and being placed into seclusion when she tried to hurt herself.</i>

Book Information

Title: Memories of Summer	Author: Ruth White	Publication Year: 2000
---------------------------	--------------------	------------------------

Character Information

Character Name & Disability Featured: Lyric, Schizophrenia.
Character Biography: <i>Upon moving to the city from the country with her father and sister, thirteen-year-old Lyric began to notice a change in her sister's behavior. Her older sister, Summer, began to exhibit signs of mental illness that eventually led to her placement in a psychiatric hospital.</i>
Is the disabled character a major or supporting character? <i>Lyric was the novel's main character and her sister Summer was a supporting character.</i>
Whose point-of-view is the story told from? <i>The story was told completely from Lyric's point-of-view.</i>
Is the character dynamic or static? <i>Summer was a dynamic character. Although she was mentally ill for most of the novel, her hospitalization at the end and subsequent treatment allowed her to feel better mentally. Although she was still hospitalized at the novel's completion, her doctor assured Lyric and her father that she was making progress.</i>
Did the disability play a major or minor role in terms of plot development? <i>The disability played a major role because Summer's behavior constantly had Lyric worried and, at times, embarrassed when Summer had her breakdowns in public. During the story's climax, Summer physically attacked Lyric which was when their father made the decision to hospitalize Summer.</i>
What symptoms, treatments, and side effects of the disability were featured? <i>Summer's symptoms included hallucinations, paranoia, and violent outbursts where she caused harm to both herself and others. She was placed on several medications that ultimately did little to help her condition. Finally, she was placed in a psychiatric hospital where she underwent extensive therapy and electric shock therapy.</i>

