

YA Café Podcast
Episode 38: 2018 Recommendation Round-Up Part 1
20 December 2018

- Danielle: 00:00 Welcome to the YA Cafe, where we share conversations about books for teachers, readers, and caffeine addicts everywhere. On today's episode, we will be joined by friends of the podcast to give you part one of our 2018 recommendation roundup. Grab a mug of your favorite beverage friends and let's talk books.
- Ad: 00:21 Have you tried the Radio Public app? It's a great app where you can find all of your favorite podcasts like this one. You'll experience the same great content for free and we'll receive a small kickback every time you listen there. This is a great way to support any podcasts you enjoy. Come find us over on Radio Public. *Music
- Amanda: 00:43 Welcome y'all. Today's episode will be a little different. We've called up some of our writer, reader, and teacher friends to make some recommendations of books. We didn't cover this here on the podcast. I'm Amanda Thrasher,
- Danielle: 00:54 I'm Danielle Hall, an 8th and 9th grade English teacher, and I blog at teachnouvelle.com. We've got a great mix of recommendations ahead, so hold on tight! You can find links to these titles and more information about our guests in our show notes. And, as always, if you're a teacher or librarian, we've got ideas for using these books in the classroom.
- Danielle: 01:13 Our first recommendation comes from H.D. Hunter. He is the author of the novella *Torment*, which follows a young man in one weekend of his life at his brother's funeral hi H.D.
- H.D.: 01:25 Hey, how are you?
- Danielle: 01:27 I know we covered this before we started recording, but you actually prefer Hugh. Do you want to tell our listeners why.
- Amanda: 01:35 Should we do that?
- Danielle: 01:35 I don't know *Laughter

H.D.: 01:38 I can definitely share it. So, I was looking into publishing for the first time a few years back and I got the advice that I should search myself on the Internet and just sort of see what pops up when I Google my name as I'm choosing, you know, the name that I want to publish under and I didn't really think anything of it until I did the Internet search and realize that there's a really popular adult film star that actually shares a name with me. So in order to stay out of their way and have the people who are looking to follow me, be able to access me, I chose to publish under the name H.D.

Danielle: 02:11 I love it. I think that's really great advice.

Amanda: 02:14 At least he's popular, right? *Laughter

H.D.: 02:15 Right! For sure. *Laughter

Danielle: 02:19 I think about that sometimes. What happens if in 10 years there's a young Suzanne Collins that wants to publish,

H.D.: 02:27 Yeah.

Danielle: 02:27 Like what if she just wants to be a famous writer, but she can't use her own name. Got to have a pen name.

Amanda: 02:33 Got to have a pen name.

Danielle: 02:34 And Hugh? I read that you also went to Wake in our hometown.

H.D.: 02:41 Yes! Yes! I went there for Grad school. Yeah, the school of business is great. I've met a lot of really cool people there and learned a lot of the stuff that I use now everyday just in trying to navigate the writing world and how to make connections with people. And so I'm definitely thankful for, Wake and the university and everything I learned I was there.

- Danielle: 02:59 That's really cool. So you wrote Torment, a novella and I saw on Instagram you've been going into a lot of schools. How has that been going?
- H.D.: 03:09 It's been really awesome. Uh, I think a little bit slow to start. I work in education as well and so I'm familiar with the idea that the school has its curriculum. The school has its schedule and educators are really protective of students and protective of the time that they have with them, you know, which is all completely understandable. But I've had the good fortune to have some friends and some associates to say we think that what you've written is relevant culturally and from a content standpoint to the students that we serve and we would love if you could come and speak to them face to face about it. So a little slow to start, but the schools that I have is that it's gone really well. I've met some brilliant students that have great questions and sort of like a great ability to analyze the work and I'm excited to get to do more of their stuff soon.
- Danielle: 03:54 Yeah, I absolutely agree. You know, I've been in environments where we didn't have that time to spare, but at the same time like your presence is such an opportunity and Torment is really accessible to students. It's short, it's like relatable to a lot of people I think and I just, I really enjoyed reading it and I really hope more teachers that are able to incorporate it.
- H.D.: 04:19 Thank you. I appreciate it. Yeah, I hope so too.
- Amanda: 04:22 So, in addition to having your own book that we really enjoyed, you also have a recommendation for us.
- H.D.: 04:28 Yes, Yes, I do. I want to recommend the short story. Anthology Meet Cute by HMH Publishing company has 14 different stories in it by you know, 14 different authors.
- Danielle: 04:40 Cool. So, we haven't read it, but tell us about your favorite story in there.
- H.D.: 04:46 Sure. So, I think anytime you have an anthology or a collection, there's always stories that stick with you more than others. And I have a little bit of a bias leaning towards Sci-Fi, like fantasy elements of stories. So there is a story by Nicola Yoon called the Department of Dead Love

Danielle: 05:07 Funny that you say this because as soon as you said I have a bias for Sci-Fi, I thought of Nicola Yoon short story in Fresh Ink. Did you read that?

H.D.: 05:18 Yes! Yes! So, she definitely did it again *Laughter in this, in this anthology, the story is called the Department of Dead Love and it almost reminds me of Eternal Sunshine of the Spotless Mind if you've ever seen that before.

Danielle: 05:32 I love that movie.

Amanda: 05:33 Such a good movie.

H.D.: 05:35 Right?! Right! So you have this, uh, sort of speculative, contemporary environment where there are relationships sort of excavators and autopsy people who can look into the reasons why the relationships ended and they can also help counsel the people who are a part of the relationships into having you know, better closure with what happens.

Danielle: 05:57 That sounds really cool. I really Love Eternal Sunshine, so I definitely have to check out this anthology and check out that short story. Are there some other authors you want to name drop here that are in that anthology?

H.D.: 06:11 Absolutely. Dhonielle Clayton, has a, probably my second favorite story. Meredith Russo, Emery Lord and Nina LaCour all just did amazing work and I really, really enjoy reading all of their stories.

Danielle: 06:21 That is Meet Cute, a short story anthology.

Amanda: 06:25 Hugh, thank you so much for coming to join us and bringing us your recommendation and talking to us a little bit about what it's like in your life as a published author now.

H.D.: 06:33 Thank you for having me. I really appreciate it and I hope a hope folks get a chance to check out. Meet Cute, It really is a great anthology.

Amanda: 06:40 Definitely, and I also hope folks get a chance to check out Torment and that's under H.D. Hunter not Hugh Hunter. *Laughter *Music

Danielle: 06:57 Our next recommendation comes from Maura Milan, who wrote Ignite the Stars. I love this book about a fierce pilot and I'll let Maura tell you more about this book and the recommendation she's brought us.

Maura: 07:09 Hi, my name is Maura Milan. I am the author of the YA Sci-Fi called Ignite the Stars. Ignite the stars is about an notorious space, outlaw who gets captured by the same government who destroys her planet and she's forced to work for them. It's for fans of Star Wars, especially Rogue One and Han Solo and also for fans of Battlestar Galactica. I really wanted to recommend This Mortal Coil by Emily's Suvada. It came out last year and she has a sequel that also came out this year. It's called This Cruel Design. It's set in the near future where everyone is able to modify their genetic code by hacking into it. At the same time the world is overtaken by this fatal disease that causes people to explode and it's something that's like an anomaly within people's DNA. The main character is this girl named Catarina who's an amazing gene hacker and she's kind of been living off grid out in the forest for a couple of years, just trying to survive and all that kind of changes.

Maura: 08:14 In a fateful meeting, she meets a soldier who's come looking for her and he has kind of bad news. He tells her that her father is dead. Her father, who's this amazing geneticists, he's been working on a vaccine that will possibly cure this disease, and she is the only one capable of finishing his work. So, that's kind of the setup of this whole entire book. The reason I wanted to recommend it for libraries and classrooms is that it talks about a lot of technology that is kind of making breakthroughs right now, especially when it comes to crisper technology and gene editing. The technology is kind of expanding at such an alarming rate that are having to make really ethical decisions about how to use it. And this book kind of like is a really great introduction to this realm of science and how all of this could go terribly wrong if it's not used responsibly. There's some trigger warnings for it. There's violence, there's some body horror and there's a lot of backstabbing, *Laughter but, it's a great pick, but I think it can provoke some really enriching conversations when it comes to the ethical use of technology.

Amanda: 09:30 Thanks Maura. You can find more about what Maura has been up to on mauramilan.com . *music

Danielle: 09:43 Our next recommendation is from my teacher friend Staci. She's a 5th grade teacher from California and her Instagram is such a wealth of ideas and resources.

Staci: 09:52 Hey everyone! This is Staci from donutlovinteacher and I am so excited to be here in the YA Cafe Podcast to share a book with you that came out this past year. As a reader I've fallen in love with a lot of different great stories and that includes *The Wild Robot* and *The Wild Robot Escapes*. I started reading *The Wild Robot* with my students as a read aloud and we were in the middle of the book when they were just so intrigued by this story. They were asking me if there was a sequel and if this was a part of a series and if we were going to read it and if we could read it, if there was one, so Peter Brown, the author was on it and we actually did count down the days until *The Wild Robot Escapes* came out. When we got our hands on a copy, we fell in love again.

Staci: 10:36 Peter Brown didn't disappoint. If you're not familiar with *The Wild Robot*, then you might as well add both of these books to your must read list immediately because they're written in these really quick chapters with adorable graphics throughout the whole novel and it keeps the reader truly hooked. The characters are captivating, they're just so lovable. And so, spoiler alert because I am going to share a little bit about what happens in *The Wild Robot Escapes*, which means I have to share what happens, kind of at the end of *The Wild Robot*, so spoiler alert. In the first book, Roz, which is our main character robot, she becomes a mother to a young gosling named Brightbill. Since Roz isn't meant to be in the wild, she gets captured by these other robots called RICOs who are there to take her back to the factory she was made in. Although she's badly damaged, she is taken from the island and Roz and Brightbill had this very, very strong connection to each other.

Staci: 11:37 So, in *The Wild Robot Escapes*, you'll continue to root for Roz and Brightbill. This time there quest is to find one another and to reunite. Unlike the first book setting, which takes place in the wild. This time Roz and Brightbill are trying to find each other in a big city, so in the second book you'll take a trip with the characters and Roz actually has to blend in among other robots in the city. While of course making new friends too. You should add this book to your shelves. Now it has themes of friendship, love, belonging, humanity, and of course overcoming obstacles, whether read independently with a small group or a class. Your kids will surely line up to read this book. I read it with my fifth grade students, but I have taught grades five through eight and can imagine this book being of high interest among the entire grade span. My students were really invested in these characters and the story line and I would highly recommend this book series being a part of every young adult library. So I hope you guys have a chance to check it out.

Amanda: 12:42 Great recommendation! Thank Stacey! Be sure to find @donutlovinteacher. *Music

Amanda: 12:55 Up Next, our friend Courtney, she's been on the podcast several times and most recently on our book vs movie episode for *The Hate You Give*.

- Courtney: 13:02 Hi, this is cocoa from @cocoachingadventures . My recommendation for the years, roundup is a lighthearted young adult romance Emergency Contact by Mary Choi. The story follows Penny as she journeys through her freshman year at college to become a writer. She meets Sam, a to cool baker at a cafe and they began a digital friendship that has both comforting and oddly satisfying. My favorite quote from the book is one where her professor tells her, of the responsibility of being a writer. It's a privilege and a part of acknowledging that privilege is doing it honorably. Create diverse characters because you can, especially ones that aren't easy to write a character that scares you is worth exploring. Yet, if you breathe life into a character and it comes to you to easily say you're writing from the viewpoint of a black man in America and you're not one think hard about where your inspiration is coming from. Are you writing stereotypes? Tropes? Are You fetishizing the otherness? Whose ideas are you spreading? Really consider how you transmit certain optics over others. Think about how much power that is.
- Courtney: 14:11 Mary Choi, the author is hilarious. She uses sarcasm and quick witted humor to provide a strong voice for Penny the main character. The romance is sweet and not Corny, relatable in many ways as we all encounter the digital age of dating. She discusses complex relationships between mother and daughter and those of living in dealing in spaces that you don't belong to. Specifically those problems of being Asian in a mostly white town. This book is well worth the read. Well road, the romance and well worth your time. Emergency Contact by Mary Choi.
- Amanda: 14:48 This is definitely going on my TBR. Thanks Courtney! *Music
- Danielle: 14:59 Up next we have special guest, Emily Skrutskie. Hi Emily!
- Emily: 15:03 Hi!
- Danielle: 15:04 It's nice to have you back. You joined us on our episode about Seafire by Natalie C. Parker and probably more impressive, you wrote a book Hullmetal Girls and we discussed it in episode something of our podcast.
- Amanda: 15:20 Episode something, that's the professionalism that you've come to expect from the YA cafe Podcast. *Laughter
- Danielle: 15:25 So, Emily, what have you been up to since last we spoke?

Emily: 15:32 Well, since last we spoke, I actually have really exciting new news, which is that I just sold a trilogy, a science fiction space, opera trilogy to Dalton Books. For publication in spring 2020 is what we're slated for right now.

Danielle: 15:45 Wow. That is excellent.

Amanda: 15:46 That is great news.

Danielle: 15:48 Congratulations!

Emily: 15:48 Thank you.

Danielle: 15:49 Yay! Can we expect pirates?

Emily: 15:52 There is actually a minor character who's an ex-pirate.

Danielle: 15:55 Woohoo!

Amanda: 15:55 You are a woman obsessed.

Emily: 15:57 That will have to hold you over. *Laughter

Danielle: 15:58 I love space pirates.

Amanda: 16:00 There a good kind of pirate.

- Danielle: 16:01 Well Emily, you have a book to recommend to us today and it takes place in space.
- Emily: 16:06 It does, though not actually so much in space, but that's kind of the cool thing I liked about it. The book is *Mirage* by Somaiya Daud my adult and it's like it is a space empire book. There's a colonial space empire, but it's very, very accessible for fantasy readers. It takes place a lot of the times in palaces and in large estates that I feel like are maybe less alienating for readers who are a little bit confused by a lot of space terminology, a lot of spaceships going around flying everywhere and I really, really liked this one. It also has this really lovely poetic voice which comes from Somaiya's interest in classical Moroccan poetry, which comes through very strongly in the text and it's just a delight to read.
- Danielle: 16:51 I'm also obsessed with this book and when we went to the Portland Book Fest, we got to hear her speak and she's a total nerd. I love it. And you know, you can tell that in the book she wanted more like Amidala and like government and empires and like political machinations. I love it.
- Amanda: 17:13 Unapologetically Star Wars nerd. I think she said specifically in the panel, enough firefly. I'm tired of dirty people on cargo ships. *laughter I want Galactic Senate scenes. *Laughter
- Danielle: 17:24 That being said, Emily, I am not tired of dirty people on cargo ships, so you keep writing them.
- Emily: 17:31 I will have some dirty people. I will have some clean people. I actually, so the books I just sold, I swore that they were going to be like, you know, political machinations and pretty clothing. And like my Pinterest board was like all fashion high tech fashion and stuff. And like literally 100 pages in the characters are sitting in a dumpster there. *Laughter I kind of put my head in my hands at that point and was like, we've lost the thread here.
- Amanda: 17:55 The heart wants what the heart wants. *Laughter
- Danielle: 17:58 I love it. So that's *Mirage* by Somaiya Daud.
- Amanda: 18:02 And does your trilogy have a title yet or is that still in the works?

Emily: 18:06 Uh, right now we're calling it The Blood Right Trilogy. Um, and the first book is called Bonds of Brass. So we'll, we'll see if those stick over the next couple of years. But I'm very excited for it.

Danielle: 18:17 Well, thank you so much for joining us, Emily, and giving us your recommendation.

Amanda: 18:21 Thank you.

Danielle: 18:21 And we look forward to reading your trilogy or at least the first one in 2020. *Music

Danielle: 18:36 Up next is another one of my teacher friends Matt who's on Instagram @classicsandcomposition . Matt is a high school English teacher from Atlanta and he's one of our podcast cheerleaders. We're so happy to have him on.

Matt: 18:47 Hey, Danielle and Amanda. My go to recommendation lately has been Jane Unlimited by Kristin Cashore. The novel follows the protagonist Jane as she receives an invitation to attend the annual gala Tu Reviens by her friend and former tutor, Kiran Thrash. Jane's recently deceased grandmother made her promise that she was ever invited Tu Reviens, which is Karen's families, mansion that she would go. So, having accepted the invitation, Jane quickly finds herself thrown into multiple converging story lines that for shadow each other. Eventually the novel structure breaks down into a sort of choose your own adventure style narrative. Depending on Jane's choices, she finds herself part of a heist, a Gotham fantasy, a space opera, and even a thriller. When one storyline ends, readers will find themselves thrust back into the moment when Jane must decide which route she is going to take. From a teacher's perspective, this novel would be an awesome selection or discussing tech structure.

Matt: 19:50 Though book technically resets when you reach the end of one of the plot lines. There are some remnants of each story that make their way into the next as the novel progresses. So, because of these fragments, we do really get to know and honestly the love each character by the time we reach those final pages of the book. For instance, Jane makes her own clothing choices each day based on what sea creature the items make her look like, her grandmother was an underwater photographer. And then her passion is to make umbrellas using odd one of a kind designs, so I'd really recommend Jane Unlimited to your students who might complain about the fact that there are many tropes in YA that are a little bit predictable and tend to get repetitive. The reviews of Jane Unlimited our little bit mixed, but if you're in the mood for something different, this is honestly the first place.

- Amanda: 20:46 Thanks Matt! Kristin Cashore also wrote the Graceling series, which I really enjoy. It's just standard fantasy and thought it was great.
- Danielle: 20:54 Me too! Really good. *Music
- Danielle: 21:04 Our next recommendation comes from Carissa Peck . . Carissa is a high school English elective teacher in San Diego who misses teaching literature, but not grading essays. She's on Instagram @meltingteacher.
- Carissa: 21:07 There's a phrase I learned when I lived in the Netherlands. I'm loosely translated into English, it's he who is silent consents. And while I think it's a generalization, it's important to note that so much of our society is built around the power of a voice and what our words say matter and if we don't agree with something, we have to speak and make things right. All Rights Reserved by Gregory Scott Katsoulis is the opposite. It takes place in a society where words, gestures, any expression of yourself, haircuts, clothing costs, money, and you have to pay the shareholders. You have to pay the rights holders in order to say certain words in order to make certain gestures and so in this world, all teenagers and children are exempt because they cannot legally enter a contract, but on their 15th birthday they become legal and are part of this whole ceremony.
- Carissa: 22:15 Now our protagonist at that point stops speaking and it is through her silence that an unintentional rebellion is formed against this dystopia that she is living in. The world building is fantastic. The analysis of copyright and kind of what happens when the rights holders are reined Premiere is fascinating and as a teacher, I love the fact that it gets students thinking about digital law. It gets students thinking about why we have copyright and why artists should be compensated, but on the other hand, how great it is to have creative commons and public domain. So even if you're not a copyright nerd, I strongly encourage All Rights Reserved as a book that really didn't get the fanfare I thought it should have.
- Amanda: 23:09 Thanks for the recommendation Carissa! We are all about giving extra fanfare here, so this recommendation is perfect. *Music
- Danielle: 23:23 I wanted to finish off with one of my own recommendations. Our first episode of the New Year, will be In An Absent Dream by Seanan Mcguire, which is a companion novella to her Wayward Children series. So we've found Seanan while we were nerding out on filk music and we talked about

her song, Wicked Girls Saving Ourselves on the show before. Specifically, Amanda promised she would never again mentioned it on the show.

Amanda: 23:46 I didn't know I was a liar at the time. *Laughter I only later have discovered that I was a liar.

Danielle: 23:53 So, I wanted to catch up a bit on the Wayward Children series before reviewing the new novella, so I read the first book Every Harder Doorway. In this novel, Nancy goes to a special school her parents hope will cure her of what they believe are delusions. According to Nancy, she walked through a door to another world and has only recently returned to ours. At the school Nancy find students with similar stories to hers that they've all found doorways to other worlds and they each world felt more like home to them than ours. Nancy beliefs that the students and staff will finally have some insight into how she can make her way back, but when something sinister starts happening at the school, people begin to suspect her. Can she figure out what's going on before she loses the only people who believe in her?

Danielle: 24:36 I love to this novel. It made me laugh, cry and long for Hogwarts and the Tardis and Daemons like in all the right places. Seanan Mcguire has things to say about stories. She understands stories, and she loves stories and I love this book. This is a must read for anyone who's ever escaped into a good book. I know that's a broad brush, but like I believe it.

Amanda: 25:01 That's it for today, folks. Join us next week for part two of our recommendation roundup, and in the meantime, leave us a review. We would love to hear from you. Happy reading! *Music