

THIRD EDITION

Young Adult
LITERATURE

FROM ROMANCE TO REALISM

MICHAEL CART

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Preface

WELCOME TO THE THIRD EDITION OF *YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE: FROM Romance to Realism*. You'll find it has been completely revised, updated, and expanded to reflect the many dynamic changes and trends that have visited the field of young adult literature since the publication of the second edition in 2010.

Among the many trends you'll find addressed in this new edition are the following:

For starters, we are seeing a continuing increase in the sheer number of YA titles being published. Twenty-five years ago, when I first became involved with the field, we considered it a good year for YA if 250 titles appeared. Today the number is more like 7,000!

The explosion of titles being published is, in part, a reason that YA has become the tail that wags the dog of publishing, but in larger part it is the related fact that sales of the literature continue to escalate; for example: sales of books for young readers were up 22.4 percent in 2014, while adult sales took a nosedive, down 3.3 percent. Admittedly, sales of young readers' books were down about 3 percent in 2015, but continued to far outstrip the field, demonstrating that young adult literature is the most dynamic, lively area of contemporary publishing.

Speaking of sales, one of the most dramatic new trends in the field is the role of adults as buyers of YA books. Though estimates vary, it is safe to say

that adults are now responsible for an astonishing 65 to 70 percent of all sales of young adult books. Why is this? The answer can be found in five little words: Rowling, Meyer, Collins, Roth, and Green—J. K. Rowling, Stephanie Meyer, Suzanne Collins, Veronica Roth, and John Green, that is. I think it is their tantalizing celebrity—thanks to their books *and* the movies that are being made from them—that is a major reason for this market phenomenon. It has driven sales of their books into the stratosphere and, accordingly, has landed the five on the *Forbes* 2015 list of the sixteen top-earning authors of the year. I should add another reason being offered for the new adult interest in YA is that a hallmark of the form is *story*. Unlike too many adult novels, YA books are simply enjoyable to read.

It's worth noting that the crossover readership we've been discussing has led to a growing sophistication of YA books in both subject and style, as evidenced by the increasing number of titles I see being published for grades 10 and up. The "up" now includes a special category of adults, those who are being called "The New Adult," that is, readers nineteen to twenty-five years of age. Publishers are increasingly targeting this category of crossover reader.

Another continuing trend that's related to crossover is the migration of adult authors to young adult literature. Publishers encourage this, of course, because it is presumed that these authors will bring their established readership to their forays into YA. As for the authors themselves, one reason for their interest in our genre is the opportunity to do something new and creatively different.

Unfortunately, there is not enough new to report about multicultural literature, which remains the most underpublished segment of YA. There are many reasons for this—there aren't enough editors of color for one thing—fully 90 percent of them self-identified as white on a recent *Publishers Weekly* survey. There aren't enough authors and illustrators of color either; sales of multicultural books remain modest; teens seem reluctant to read them (there are scarcely any multicultural titles on the various Teen Top Ten lists); and on and on. That said, we are finally seeing a modest rise in the number of multicultural books being published. According to the Cooperative Children's Book Center at the University of Wisconsin—Madison, which tracks diversity in books for young readers, the number of books with significant African-American content nearly doubled between 2013 and 2014 from 93 titles in 2013 to 179 in 2014. During the same period there was also a significant increase in Asian books, from 69 to 112. Unfortunately publishing

for Native Americans (34 to 36) and Latinos (57 to 66) remained virtually flat. We obviously have a long way to go, but the modest increases hold out some hope for a more diverse field. K. T. Horning, Director of the CCBC, points to a new organization, We Need Diverse Books, as “really keeping diversity front and center.” If you’re not familiar with WNDB, check out its website at www.weneeddiversebooks.org.

Speaking of diversity: I’m happy to report that there has been a dramatic increase in the number of LGBTQI (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex) books; a new record of sixty-four titles with such content were published in 2015. This is twenty-four more than were published during the entire decade of the 1980s and only eleven less than were published in the 1990s. The field is broadening, too. The year 2015 saw the publication of two books with intersex characters; there were also three books about bisexuals, three about transgenders, and one each about gender fluid and genderqueer kids.

Finally, YA is returning to its roots. After a decade of obsessively focusing on speculative fiction, we are finally returning to a renaissance of realistic fiction—thanks in large part to two authors, the teen whisperer John Green and Rainbow Rowell.

In addition to these general trends, here are some of the specific features you’ll also find in this new edition:

1. New and expanded treatment of genre fiction, including dystopian literature and steampunk.
2. A new, detailed examination of the retail market for young adults, including such dramatic new trends and features as the appearance of the New Adult audience, the adult consumer, and the significant impact on the market of such best sellers as John Green, Suzanne Collins, Veronica Roth, and Rainbow Rowell.
3. Interviews with leaders in the field.
4. Updated and expanded coverage of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex fiction.
5. New chapters focusing on teen demographics, multicultural literature, and teen literacy, including multiple literacies.
6. Coverage of the renaissance of realistic fiction.
7. Coverage of new trends in graphic novels.
8. Revised treatment of the burgeoning audiobook field.

9. Discussion of the future of print.
10. Attention to the importance to the field of motion pictures being made from young adult novels.
11. Expanded attention given to narrative and creative nonfiction.

And much more. My hope is that the reading of this new edition may give you as much pleasure as the writing of it has given to me.

—*Michael Cart*



PART ONE
THAT WAS THEN

From Sue Barton to the Sixties

What's in a Name? And Other Uncertainties

THERE IS READY AND WELL-NIGH UNIVERSAL AGREEMENT AMONG EXPERTS that something called “young adult literature” is—like the Broadway musical, jazz, and the foot-long hot dog—an American gift to the world. But the happy concurrence ends when you then ask these experts to explain precisely what this *thing* called young adult literature is, because that act is about as easy as nailing Jell-O to a wall. Why? Because the term, like the gelatin, is inherently slippery and amorphous. Oh, the “literature” part is straightforward enough. Who can argue with the British literary critic John Rowe Townsend (1980, 26) who defines it as “all works of imagination which are transmitted primarily by means of the written word or spoken narrative—that is, in the main, novels, stories, and poetry.” No, the amorphous part is the target audience for the literature: the young adults themselves. For it’s anybody’s guess who—or what—*they* are! Indeed, until World War II, the term *young adult*—like its ostensible synonym *teenager*—was scarcely used at all. For a while it was acknowledged that there were human beings who occupied an ill-defined developmental space somewhere between childhood and adulthood, the *idea*, the *concept*, the *notion* that this space comprised a separate and distinct part of the evolution from childhood to adulthood was still foreign in a society accustomed to seeing children become adults virtually overnight as a result of their entering the full-time

workforce, often as early as age ten. Who, then, had the discursive leisure to grow up, to establish a culture of youth, to experience a *young* adulthood when there was so much adult work to be done? Indeed, as late as 1900 only 6.4 percent of American seventeen-year-olds postponed adult responsibilities long enough to earn high-school diplomas (Kett 1977); in fact, no more than 11.4 percent of the entire fourteen- to seventeen-year-old population was even enrolled in school, and those that were received—on average—only five years of education (Mondale and Patton 2001). Simply put, until 1900 we were a society with only two categories of citizens: children and adults.

This situation was about to change, however—and in only four years, at that. The agent of impending change was G. Stanley Hall, the first American to hold a doctorate in psychology and the first president of the American Psychological Association. It was in 1904 that he “invented” a whole new category of human being with the publication of his seminal work *Adolescence: Its Psychology and Its Relations to Physiology, Anthropology, Sociology, Sex, Crime, Religion and Education*. As the length of its title suggests, this was a massive, multidisciplinary, two-volume tome that Joseph F. Kett (1977, 26) has described as “a feverish, recondite, and at times incomprehensible book, the flawed achievement of eccentric genius.”

It was flawed, because much of what Hall posited about this new stage of life that he called “adolescence” has been discredited, especially his notion of recapitulation (i.e., child development mirrors that of the “race”). Nevertheless, his theories were enormously influential in their time, particularly among educators and a growing population of youth workers. The latter embraced Hall’s view of adolescence as a time of storm and stress (a phrase that invoked the German Sturm und Drang school and visions of Goethe’s sorrowful young Werther), along with inner turmoil, awkwardness, and vulnerability, all phenomena that invited, even required, adult intervention and supervision in such controlled environments as schools and a growing number of youth organizations like the Boy Scouts and the YMCA. Neither Hall nor his disciples used the term *young adult*, of course, but their definitions of adolescence generally embraced our modern sense of young adults as somewhere between twelve and nineteen years of age. Indeed, Hall was prepared to extend his definition’s reach as far as the early twenties, but educators generally stopped at nineteen and youth workers at sixteen. In addition to these two groups, Hall inspired two other sets of influential devotees: members of the vocational guidance movement (Hall believed in teaching

adolescents practical life and job skills) and the authors of “parents’ manuals,” which sought to guide the management of teenagers in middle-class and upper-middle-class homes (Kett 1977, 221). Michael V. O’Shea, one of the most prolific writers of these manuals, was also among the first to capitalize on the potential economic importance of adolescents, so much so that Kett (1977, 224) has dubbed him “the first entrepreneur of adolescence.” As we will see, there have been many others.

As a result of this new focus on the perceived needs of adolescents, the percentage of young people in school gradually began to grow. By 1910, 15.4 percent were enrolled (Rollin 1999) and the old model of the six-year high school was beginning to change, too, as over the next decade, more and more junior high schools were created. “By 1920,” Lucy Rollin (1999, 8) noted, “the pattern of the four-year high school was well established,” and by 1930 almost half the adolescent population was enrolled there. This was the good news for advocates of education, but the bad news was that slightly more than half of America’s adolescents were still not in school but in the workforce, where they continued to be regarded as adults. But this, too, was about to change. Indeed, it had already begun as the workplace was employing increasingly sophisticated technology that required additional education, as—more forcefully—had a spate of compulsory education laws.

It took the economic devastation of the 1930s, however, to effect truly seismic change. As Grace Palladino (1996, 5) has written, “The Great Depression finally pushed teenage youth out of the workplace and into the classroom.” Lucy Rollin (1999, 85) concurred: “The Thirties were a fulcrum for this shift.” The numbers alone, are telling: by 1939, 75 percent of fourteen- to seventeen-year-olds were high-school students, and by 1940 nearly 51 percent of seventeen-year-olds were earning diplomas (50.8 percent according to Kett [1977]).

The Emergence of Youth Culture

This influx of students into high school was an important step in advancing universal education, but what was even more important—in terms of the later emergence of young adult literature—is that putting young people into each other’s company every day led to the emergence of a youth culture centered on high-school social life, especially in the newly popular sororities and fraternities, which provided the context for a newish wrinkle in courtship rit-

uals: dances and dating. Quick to recognize this was the already entrenched *Scholastic* magazine, which had been founded in 1922 by M. R. “Robbie” Robinson, another of the early entrepreneurs of adolescence. In 1936, *Scholastic* introduced a new column to its pages. Titled “Boy Dates Girl,” it was written by Gay Head (the pseudonym for Margaret L. Hauser), whose columns would provide the fodder for a number of later books, including *First Love; Hi There, High School!* and *Etiquette for Young Moderns*. As the last title suggests, the column focused more on manners than on advice to the lovelorn. Among the topics Hauser addressed, according to Grace Palladino (1996), were how to make proper introductions, which fork to use at a dinner party, and whether or not to wait for a boy to open a car door. Although boys took pride of place in the column’s title, its intended readers were clearly girls, who were admonished not to correct their dates, because boys did not appreciate “brainy” girls. In the early days of youth culture, it was obvious that it was already a male-centered one. This was a reflection of the then-prevailing cultural attitudes, of course, as was Hall’s almost single-minded focus on male adolescents in his own work. He had written so little about girls, in fact, that H. W. Gibson, an early disciple and social worker with the YMCA, dubbed adolescent psychology of the time “boyology” (Kett 1977, 224).

Although boys may have been the objects of lavish attention, the stereotypical image of the male adolescent that emerged in popular culture was an unflattering one: the socially awkward, blushing, stammering, accident-prone figure of fun typified by William Sylvanus Thaxter, the protagonist of Booth Tarkington’s best-selling 1916 novel *Seventeen*, (the inspiration for Carl Ed’s long-running comic strip *Harold Teen*, which first appeared in 1919. Twenty years later this image was still the rage, this time informing the spirit of radio’s Henry Aldrich and the movies’ Andy Hardy. (*The Aldrich Family* debuted on NBC in July 1939, while the first Andy Hardy movie, *A Family Affair*—starring Mickey Rooney—was released in 1937.) With the first appearance in 1941 of another soon-to-be youth icon, the comics’ Archie Andrews (in *Pep Comics No. 22*, on December 22, 1941), it became clear that Hall’s “adolescent” was fast morphing into a new kind of youth, the teenager. In fact, the first use in print of the term *teenager* occurred in the September 1941 issue of *Popular Science Monthly* (Hine 1999; see also Palladino 1996), and the term became commonplace in the decade that followed, though it wasn’t until 1956 and Gale Storm’s hit record *Teenage Prayer* that the term passed into currency in the world of popular music (the same year saw the debut of the singing group Frankie Lyman and the Teenagers).

The co-opting of the adolescent—now teenager—by popular culture did not mean that psychologists and other serious thinkers had abandoned the subject. Far from it. Two of the most significant works in the academic literature would appear less than a decade later: Robert James Havighurst's *Developmental Tasks and Education* and Erik Erikson's *Childhood and Society* both appeared in 1950, and both broke new ground in the field of psychology, especially as it pertains to stages of human development. Each writer defined specific stages of this development; Havighurst identified six stages and Erikson, eight. For both, two of these stages were “adolescence” and “young adulthood,” which they identified—respectively—as thirteen through eighteen and nineteen through thirty (Havighurst), and twelve through eighteen and nineteen through forty (Erikson). In short order other significant work followed, most notably Jean Piaget's *The Growth of Logical Thinking from Childhood to Adolescence* (1958) on cognitive development, and Lawrence Kohlberg's on moral development (published intermittently throughout the 1970s).

All of this work—like that of Hall's—would have significant influence on therapists, youth workers, and especially educators, who found an equivalence between the tasks that Havighurst associated with each developmental stage and books for teens that dramatized the undertaking and accomplishing of these tasks. It's worth noting that the introduction of the term *young adulthood* into these various professional vocabularies may have been instrumental in the American Library Association's decision to form, in 1957, the Young Adult Services Division (YASD). This was a long overdue professional acknowledgment not only of a now au courant term, but also of the singular life needs of those we might as well now call young adults. Why “young adult” and not “adolescent,” though? Well, there is no definitive answer. However, the term *young adult* was not altogether foreign to the library world. The youth services librarian Margaret Scoggin had first used it in the professional literature as early as 1944 (Jenkins 1999) and Kenneth R. Shaffer, then director of the School of Library Science at Simmons College, recalled in 1963 “our excitement of nearly a quarter of a century ago when we made the professional discovery of the adolescent—the ‘young adult’—as a special kind of library client” (Shaffer 1963, 9). Also, one might presume that *adolescent* smacks a bit too much of the clinical, and some might even regard it as sounding faintly patronizing, though young adult might not be much better. As we will see, such uncertainty as to precisely what to call such youths has continued to invite much heated discussion and debate even to

this day, though in 1991 YASD did finally decree, in concert with the National Center for Education Statistics, that young adults “are those individuals from twelve to eighteen years old” (Carter 1994).

A Literature for Young Adults

What impact did all of these developing attitudes and theories have on the writing and publishing of books targeted at such young people (however they might have been labeled and categorized at any given moment)? The short answer is “not much.”

Because adolescents, teenagers, or young adults were—at least until the late 1930s—still widely regarded as children (even if the boys had mustaches and the girls, breasts!), there was no separate category of literature specifically targeted at them. However, as—over the course of the first four decades of the twentieth century—opinions began coalescing around the viability of recognizing a new category of human being with its own distinct life needs, books aimed at these “new” humans began to emerge. This happened very gradually, though, and may have had its roots in the long-ago publishing world of the immediate post-Civil War years when, as Nilsen and Donelson (2009, 42) have asserted, “Louisa May Alcott and Horatio Alger, Jr. were the first writers for young adults to gain national attention.” The two authors’ respective novels *Little Women* and *Ragged Dick* both appeared in 1868, and gave impetus to an era—already under way—of series fiction: dime adventure novels for boys and wholesome domestic stories like the Elsie Dinsmore books for girls. Then, as now, it was firmly believed there were girl books and boy books and never the twain would meet.¹ The always opinionated G. Stanley Hall had much to say about this, too. In a 1908 *Library Journal* article, he allowed: Boys loved adventure. Girls sentiment. Books dealing with domestic life and with young children in them, girls have almost entirely to themselves. Boys, on the other hand, excel in love of humor, rollicking fun, abandon, rough horse-play, and tales of wild escapade (Nilsen and Donelson 2009, 52).

Series books for both sexes hit their stride with the formation of the Stratemeyer Syndicate in 1900. Edward Stratemeyer, who had worked as a ghost writer for Alger, had the bright idea of hiring other ghosts to develop his own cascade of story ideas into novels. The result became what Carol Billman (1986) has called The Million Dollar Fiction Factory. Working pseudony-

mously, these otherwise-anonymous writers churned out hundreds of titles in endless series, most of them now forgotten, though a few—The Rover Boys, Tom Swift, the Bobbsey Twins, and Ruth Fielding—are still remembered with a twinge of pleasurable nostalgia.² Arguably the most successful of the Stratemeyer series—and the ones that come closest to our modern conception of young adult fiction—didn’t appear until well after World War I. The Hardy Boys solved their first case (*The Tower Treasure*) in 1927, and Nancy Drew hers (*The Secret of the Old Clock*) in 1930.

Coincidentally 1930 is the year the ALA formed its Young People’s Reading Roundtable, whose annual list of best books for “young readers” (think “young adults” here) contained a mixture of children’s and adult books. The first list, for example, ran the gamut from Will James’s *Lone Cowboy* (1929) to Edna Ferber’s adult novel *Cimarron* (1930).

This situation endured until 1948 when librarians—realizing the new but still amorphous group of older “younger readers” no longer had any interest in children’s books—changed the name and content of their list to Adult Books for Young People (Cart 1996).

Meanwhile, prescient publishers, taking notice of the emerging youth culture of the 1930s, began cautiously publishing—or at least remarketing—what they regarded as a new type of book. One of the first of these was Rose Wilder Lane’s adult novel *Let the Hurricane Roar*. Published in 1933, this story of two teenage pioneers by the daughter of the Little House books’ author offered intrinsic appeal to contemporary teens. Recognizing this, its publisher, Longmans Green, quickly began promoting it as the first in its promised new series Junior Books, a frankly patronizing phrase that lingered in publishing like a bad odor in the refrigerator for nearly a decade. Nevertheless, it may have set the stage for another book that would be published by Little, Brown in 1936.

This one caught the eye of the pioneering young adult librarian Margaret Alexander Edwards of the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. Writing some years later in the *Saturday Review*, she reported Little, Brown’s editorial bemusement when the publisher received a manuscript from the writer Helen Boylston. “While it was not a piece of literature, it was an entertaining story which did not fit into any category. It was too mature for children and too uncomplicated for adults. In the end Little, Brown took a chance and published the story under the title ‘Sue Barton Student Nurse’ and the dawn of the modern teen-age story came up like thunder” (Edwards 1954, 88, emphasis added).

The thunder was, presumably, the sound of fervent adolescent applause, as *Sue Barton* (for reasons that seem elusive to modern readers struggling through its turgid pages) quickly became one of the most popular books in the history of young adult literature. In 1947—eleven years after its publication—a survey of librarians in Illinois, Ohio, and New York chose it as “the most consistently popular book” among teenage readers, and it remained in print for years thereafter, along with its six sequels, which saw young Sue finish her training, serve in a variety of professional capacities (visiting nurse, superintendent of nurses, neighborhood nurse, staff nurse), and finally marry the young doctor she had met in book number one (Cart 1996, 41).

The popularity of the series may have derived in large part from its verisimilitude. Boylston was a professional nurse herself and there’s truth in the details of her settings, but there are also stereotypes in her characters and clichés in the dramatic situations in which they find themselves embroiled. Told in an omniscient third-person voice, the books betray their author’s often too-smug, patronizing attitude toward her material and her characters—not only Sue, but also, and especially, the “quaint” immigrants who are the chief patients at the big-city hospital where Sue receives her training.

Nevertheless, because of its careful accuracy regarding the quotidian details of the nurse’s professional life, *Sue Barton* was the prototype of the career story, an enormously popular subgenre among the earliest young adult books.

Rivaling Sue for the affection of later nurse-story lovers was Helen Wells’s own fledgling professional *Cherry Ames*, who debuted in 1943 (*Cherry Ames, Student Nurse*), and whose subsequent adventures filled twenty volumes. Wells also gave eager girl readers stories about plucky flight attendant Vicki Barr. Still another writer who re-created occupational worlds that she was personally familiar with was the remarkable Helen Hull Jacobs, whose many books about the world of championship tennis and military intelligence reflected her own life as the number-one world tennis player and a commander in the Office of Naval Intelligence during the World War II.

As for boys, they had been reading vocational stories since Horatio Alger offered his paeans to the rewards of hard work (and marrying the boss’s daughter). More contemporary writers like Montgomery Atwater, Stephen W. Meader, and Henry Gregor Felsen offered fictions about such real-life jobs as avalanche patrolling, earth-moving, and automobile mechanics. In the years to come other less talented writers would report on virtually every other conceivable career—in often drearily didactic detail.

A decade before Boylston's initial publication another influential and wildly popular author for adolescents debuted: it was 1926 when Howard Pease published his first book, *The Tattooed Man*. A better writer than Boylston, Pease would soon rival her in popularity. In fact, a 1939 survey of 1,500 California students found that Pease—not Boylston—was their favorite author (Hutchinson 1973).

Like Boylston, Pease specialized in a literary subgenre: in his case, it was the boy's adventure story set—usually—at sea. And again, like Boylston, Pease knew his material from firsthand experience. For him, this was service in the United States Merchant Marine during World War I.

In 1938 still another important early writer, who also specialized in genre fiction based on personal experience, made his auspicious debut: John R. Tunis, the “inventor” of the modern sports story, published the first of his many novels, *The Iron Duke*. Tunis had played tennis and run track as a student at Harvard and, following service in World War I, had become a sports-writer for the *New York Post*. What set his work apart from that of earlier sportswriters was that he focused less on play-by-play accounts of the big game than on closely observed considerations of character, social issues, and challenges—not to his characters' hand-eye coordination but, instead, their personal integrity and maturation.

The First Young Adult Novel?

In retrospect any of these writers (though especially Pease, Boylston, and Tunis) could be reasonably identified as the first writer for young adults, but most observers (myself included) would opt to join the redoubtable Edwards (1954, 88) in declaring (on second thought in her case) that “it was in 1942 that the new field of writing for teen-agers became established.”

The signal occasion was the publication of Maureen Daly's (1942) first, and for forty-four years *only* novel, *Seventeenth Summer*.

Amazingly, the author was only twenty-one when her history-making book appeared, though how old she was when she actually wrote the book is irrelevant. Ms. Daly herself claimed she was a teenager, but *The New York Times* reported that only fifty pages of the book had been written before the author turned twenty (Van Gelder 1942). Daly herself was quick to point out, though, that her novel was not published as a young adult book. “I would like, at this late date,” she wrote in 1994, “to explain that ‘Seventeenth Sum-

mer,' in my intention and at the time of publication, was considered a full adult novel and published and reviewed as such" (Berger 1994, 216).

John R. Tunis was similarly—and unpleasantly—surprised to learn from his publisher Alfred Harcourt that *The Iron Duke* was a book for young readers. He was still fuming thirty years later when he wrote, "That odious term juvenile is the product of a merchandising age" (Tunis 1977, 25).

The merchandising of and to "the juvenile" had begun in the late 1930s, coincident with the emergence of the new youth culture. The movement picked up steam in the 1940s as marketers realized these kids—whom they dubbed, variously, "teens," "teensters," and finally (in 1941) "teenagers"—were "an attractive new market in the making" (Palladino 1996, 52). That market wouldn't fully ripen until post-World War II prosperity put money into the kids' own pockets, money that had previously gone to support the entire family. The wild success of *Seventeenth Summer* was, however, an early indicator to publishers of an emerging market for a literature that spoke with immediacy and relevance to teenagers. In the case of Daly's novel these factors were not only due to her own youth and the autobiographical nature of her material ("What I've tried to do, you see," she told an interviewer, "is just write about the things that happened to me and that I knew about—that meant a lot to me." [Van Gelder 1942, 20]) but also to the fact that she chose to tell her story of sweet summer love in the first person voice of her protagonist, seventeen-year-old Angie Morrow. For its time, the book was also fairly bold and thus further reader-enticing because of its inclusion of scenes showing teenagers unapologetically smoking and drinking. And yet to modern readers Angie seems hopelessly naïve and much younger than her years. Her language now sounds quaintly old-fashioned and the pacing of her story is glacially slow, bogging down in far too many rhapsodic passages describing the flora and fauna of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin (the book's setting). If Angie's diction is now dated, so—more painfully—are her attitudes. Humiliated, for example, by the bad table manners of her new boyfriend, the otherwise desirable (and always very clean) Jack Duluth, Angie frets, "His family probably didn't even own a butter knife! No girl has to stand for that!" (Daly 1942, 147). Clearly Jack and his deprived family had never read Gay Head's column or her books!

Despite all this, *Seventeenth Summer* has remained tremendously popular; it's sold well over a million-and-a-half copies since its publication, and it's still in print in a smartly redesigned paperback edition.



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