

**Fall Executive Committee Meeting  
October 21-22, 2011, Chicago**

**Topic:** Survey Results from Awards and Lists Evaluation Taskforce

**Background:** At the 2011 Midwinter Meeting the Board voted to establish a taskforce that would evaluate the changes made in 2010 to the BBYA, Alex and Nonfiction list and awards. The overall goals of the evaluation effort are to 1) as best as possible given the newness of the resources, determine how useful the new BFYA list, expanded Alex list and Nonfiction award nominees are as collection development and readers' advisory tools; and 2) decide if the BFYA committee is structured in the best possible way to ensure a high quality product. The taskforce has provided a preliminary report below.

**Action Required:** Discussion

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## **TASKFORCE PRELIMINARY REPORT**

Charge: Create a set of evaluation tools then use them to measure the overall success and impact of the following changes: 1) narrowing the BBYA list to fiction; 2) increasing the number of recommended adult titles through publication of the official nominees from the Alex Award Committee and 3) establishment of the Nonfiction Award and publication of its list of official nominees. The evaluation will include feedback from current and previous members of the BFYA, Alex and Nonfiction Committees, an analysis of the appropriate 2010 and 2011 lists and awards (BBYA, BFYA, Alex, Nonfiction) as well as feedback from the library community about the degree to which these resources are effective readers' advisory and collection development tools. The taskforce chair will submit quarterly updates and a final report which discusses findings to be submitted by December 15, 2011 for consideration at the Board's January 2012 meeting.

### **Accomplishments:**

1. Survey developed and information sent to all members who served, or are serving, on the 2009, 2010, 2011, and 2012 committees.
  - a. 19 members responded to the BFYA survey, 18 to the Alex survey and 22 to the Nonfiction survey. Overlapping terms make it difficult to know the percentage of respondents for each committee as BFYA served for three, and now two, years; Alex for two and Nonfiction for one.
2. While the survey results were being tabulated, the TF members also completed an analysis of the award and selection lists of their individual committees. See Attachment A
3. Analysis of the survey results can be found at Attachment B.

Questions for the Executive Board

1. Do you want us to follow up the survey results with a survey for all YALSA members?  
This will involve writing a new survey to eliminate those questions that were specific only for committee members and is something we are prepared to do.
2. Do you want a more complete analysis of the vetted lists for Alex and Nonfiction?
3. Because the task force was subdivided into three subgroups who were each responsible for one of the award/selection lists, the method of reporting the results varied. Do you want me to make the report of each subgroup follow a similar pattern, or are you able to obtain the needed information from what you're receiving at Fall Exec? I do intend to ask each subgroup to offer a set of recommendations, but what you're receiving now is just an preliminary report.
4. Each subgroup has made recommendations, but it would be helpful to let us know if you have additional questions, or if you want the report in a different format.

## COMMITTEE SURVEY RESULTS

### Alex Survey Evaluation – Survey Results

1. Overall there was good response from committee members, although it is difficult to judge the percentage who responded because of overlapping terms.
2. 88.9% of respondents feel the vetted list provides librarians with enough adult titles of interest and/or usefulness to teens.
  - a. Concerns expressed about length of vetted list that might diminish significance of award; on the other hand, one commented on helpfulness of many choices due to subjectivity in selection process and varied reading tastes.
  - b. Committee should not pick books based on getting a popular author to conference
  - c. Does committee know what a vetted list means? [Committee and chair training]
3. Committee members use the list for reader's advisory [88.9%], followed by 72.2% who use it for booktalking and displays; 61.1% order materials from the list, 50% use it for book club, 27.8% for curriculum support, 16.7% use it for training and one person [5.6%] does not use the list.
  - a. Comments stressed use of list for book groups [both teen and adult]
  - b. One mentioned the list as "not boring" suggestions for adults
4. YALSA members are more familiar with Alex Award [61.1%] than nonmember librarians [11.1%]. [questions 4 and 5 on survey].
  - a. Announce Alex Awards with rest of YA and children's awards instead of "afterthought introductory piece."
  - b. High school librarians tend to be members of AASL, not YALSA, and don't know about Alex Award.
  - c. Librarians outside of YALSA don't know what Alex is, although they do know about Caldecott, Newbery & Printz.

5. 50% of respondents felt that no types or genres of books were overlooked, while 16.7% felt there were some overlooked and 33.3% weren't sure. Overlooked types/genres are below:
  - a. Poetry [3 comments], Non-memoir Nonfiction [3 comments], Multicultural [2 comments], and one comment each about GN, short stories, science fiction, romance, and historical fiction [although list analysis indicates otherwise – could be varying definitions of historical fiction]
  - b. Other comments included members suggesting titles they wanted to read themselves or to have a copy for their library [waste of reading time for other members]; another mentioned being encouraged not to consider a balance of genres or formats but to select best books of the year.
  - c. Suggestion that committee members be reminded about what makes an Alex title worthy at beginning of their term [and then often throughout their term – editorial comment]
  - d. Mention made that final list depends on make-up of committee and what titles are published.
6. 83.3% [15] respondents felt Alex should continue as an Award while 16.7% [3] it should be a selection list. Comments stressed the prestige and recognition by professionals that is given to an award list rather than a selection list.
7. Respondents were pretty evenly split between librarians [66.7%] and teens [61.1%] as the primary users of the list, while teachers were envisioned as only 16.7% of the users.
8. All respondents felt the reading load was what they expected. One comment was that too much literary fiction and nonfiction suitable for Notable Books was suggested which placed an unnecessary reading burden on committee members. [Ed. note – I was aware of this problem when one member continually nominated titles until their list approached 200 nominated titles which was many more than were appropriate when looking for only 10 award winners. The chair might need to counsel that type of a member].
9. 16 of the respondents felt service on this committee enhanced their ability to discuss and select adult books for teens, while two felt they were already pretty good at this task. One person commented: I have found that very few teens in high school read from the Alex list even when they are booktalked. If they enjoy adult books, they are usually by certain authors or a series that they are familiar with. Sometimes they are really YA books that are mismarketed].
10. Interacting with peers who are passionate about teens and reading was cited by every member as being a benefit of serving on Alex. This was followed by honing book evaluation and selection skills [94.4%], receiving boxes of free books [83.3%], aiding the association [77.8%], recognition as expert in the field [66.7%] and having new opportunities become available [55.6%]

- a. Concern expressed about some members who used their BBYA/BFYA and other past experiences to bully others. “A chair needs to have excellent sense of quality in addition to team building skills, not just one or the other for a worthy list to be made.” [Ed. note – Bullying may need to be addressed in chair orientation.]
  - b. Most replies cited amazing experience; lifelong friendships; working effectively on and communicating with a professional committee.
11. Suggestions for what YALSA can do to support the committee or individuals include [Executive Committee should read all responses to question 12]:
- a. Two comments about need for an Alex Award sticker [one mentioned ugly one she’d seen]; also make bookmarks more readily available
  - b. Announce Alex Awards in body of Media Awards not at beginning [2<sup>nd</sup> time mentioned]
  - c. Request for clearer criteria rather than just “focus on teen appeal.” Said criteria had been changed [?]
  - d. Needed more support and guidance for Alex program at Annual as there wasn’t even a computer to show powerpoint [was this a chair problem?]
  - e. State time commitment up front in letters to potential appointees.
  - f. Individual code of ethics so requests for titles not a “book grab”
  - g. Raise awareness of award
  - h. Ensure that Chair has previous Alex experience
12. Other comments about Alex Award [suggest that Exec Committee read all the replies to #13]
- a. Another mention of change from “well-written, readable, and of genres with possible appeal to young adults” or something like that to “...selected for their demonstrated or probably appeal to the personal reading tastes of young adults.”
  - b. Other comments ranged from wonderful award, unique experience, Alex list a stepchild to other awards and fills an “odd niche,” used Alex list as selection tool, etc.

Suggestions for Executive Committee to consider:

1. Review criteria for Alex award to ensure it is consistent with original intent of award, which was accepted by ALA Awards Committee
2. Provide Chair orientation, or chair guide; also select chair who has previous Alex committee experience
3. Make Alex Award be part of main Media Awards program rather than intro piece
4. Figure out other marketing techniques for Alex Award to increase its awareness and usefulness by both teen and high school librarians
5. Although half the respondents felt that there were no genres overlooked, preliminary analysis of the Alex list would indicate otherwise. Is there a feeling that some guidelines need to be given or should each list reflect the individual committee/publishing year?
6. Consensus that Alex continue as Award list with vetted titles. Definition of a vetted list needs to be given to committee.
7. Some disconnect between everyone saying the reading load was what they expected and a comment that time commitment for committee needed to be given ahead of time.

8. Alex Committee experience does what YALSA wants it to do for members: training for book discussions, interaction with other committee members, opens doors for some, etc.
9. Check into the “bullying” piece.
10. Review what respondents said about how YALSA can assist the committee/individuals.

### **Survey Analysis of BBYA/BFYA – Survey Results**

1. Term limits were the biggest issue. Many felt that 2 years did not give members enough time to be in the "groove" and that a third year should be reinstated however it was stated by several members that by year three some burnout was experienced.
2. The prevalence of certain genres and the numbers of titles geared at a certain demographic of the list should not be a factor; what the committee decides is what the list will reflect. Although it was agreed there were not have nearly as many titles for the younger age range [12 and 13-year-olds], the only suggestion made was that perhaps age ranges should be included.
3. There should be no limit on numbers of titles on the list as this will put unneeded pressure on the membership. The current vote of nine yeases shall stay the only determining factor of what titles make the list and what ones do not.
4. Consensus that BBYA and BFYA are two different animals and one was not better than the other. They are just different and members need to get used to the changes.
5. The members were satisfied with this being a YA lit only list as Alex does a fine job of honoring adult books with appeal to this age group.
6. The omission of non-fiction was missed by some and at least one member fears that some years there may not be enough titles to merit a nonfiction award; the addition of nonfiction titles was best served on the old BBYA list.
7. Being a member of BBYA or BFYA requires a lot of work. Many members mentioned budget constraints for attending two conferences. The amount of time required for service on the committee was also mentioned as something that needed to be given to anyone interested in serving on the committee. This comment followed concern that some members were not as prepared as they should have been.

### **Nonfiction Survey Results**

Background: The Selected List & Awards Changes Evaluation task force was charged with measuring the success and impact of several changes to YALSA 's list and Award portfolio. For the purposes of this subcommittee, we will be analyzing the establishment of the Excellence in Nonfiction Award and publication of its list of official nominees. The first step in this process (examined below), was to garner feedback from previous members of the Nonfiction Committee. To do this we created questions for and sent out surveys to current and former members. In the future, we will also be soliciting and analyzing feedback from the library community at large.

Findings of Nonfiction Committee member surveys:

The first question asked in what year did the committee members' term take place. Of the 22 participants, the majority of respondents were from the 2009 and 2012 committees, making up 40.9% and 31.8% respectively. There were slightly fewer participants from the 2011 committee (22.7%) and only 1 from the 2010 committee.

Considering that the debut year for this award was 2010, it's possible that there was some confusion between reporting the year that committee service began and the year that the award was given. The latter is probably the case as the Nonfiction Committee is comprised of eight regular members and one chair each year, so it's safe to assume that we received a healthy participation from 22 out of a possible 27 regular members.

The second question asked whether the Nonfiction Committee members felt that previous winners, honor books, and selected nominated titles adequately reflected the 12-18 year old demographic. The majority of respondents (95.2%) felt that selected titles did reflect this age group, 1 person did not, and 1 commented that he/she felt that it was more "slanted toward younger end of age range than older range."

The third question asked how participants use/used the Excellence in Nonfiction Award list. Reader's advisory, ordering, booktalking, and displays all received an over fifty percent response rate. Curriculum support followed with 40.9%, training with 22.7%, book clubs with 13.6%, and "do not use" with 1 response. One participant who selected "Other" said that the list is "not particularly useful for ordering; it is not a broad list and the books are frequently not available" and that BBYA was more useful for those purposes. No other explanation of other possible uses for the list were explained.

The fourth question asked how committee members use the short list (the 5 titles released in December, not the vetted nomination list). Answers tended to mirror question 3, with 66.7% citing that they use it for ordering and reader's advisory and 42.9% citing book talking and displays. Curriculum support received 19% this time, "do not use" 2 responses, and mock elections, 1 response.

Number five asked participants if they find that other YALSA members are familiar with the award. The response was fairly divided with 11 feeling that most are familiar and 10 that they are not. One comment suggested that "we need to do a lot more to raise awareness for this award" and another that "as more titles come forward- there is increasing awareness."

Number six asked participants whether the timeline (consideration of titles published from November 1-October 31) has been effective. Although two people skipped the question, response was again mixed with 11 saying that it is effective and 9 saying that it is not. Not surprisingly, this was the first question to obtain profuse comments (10 total). Three members thought that the timeline was confusing to publishers, another three that the award should run in a calendar year, and one that it should be uniform with other YALSA awards. One member felt that since so many titles are published around the last week of October and first week of November, that the cut-off should be shifted to November 15th. Another felt that the

timing didn't relate well to the in-person meeting schedule and that there was not enough time to discuss titles in person. And finally, one felt that it is too soon to tell whether this timeline is the most effective or not.

Number seven asked whether the announcement of the shortlist creates an awareness of the award. 13 felt that it did create an awareness and 7, that it did not. Again, 2 did not answer the question. Two participants felt that an increase in publicity and marketing would help create buzz, two clashes or "takes away from the drama of" the Youth Media Awards, and 2 that they were not sure or that it is too soon to tell.

Question eight asked whether the publication of a vetted list (in addition to award and honor titles) provides enough titles to librarians and the teens they serve. Over half (12) said that they did, and 9 said that they did not. Comments regarding this issue were passionate and opposed. Those that were most in favor of the vetted list regarded it as a valuable collection development tool, one stated that they would like to see even more titles listed there. There were also several yeas with caveats. One stated that clearer guidelines for committee members would be helpful and help to streamline results. Another stated that yes they are helpful, but that then this should be a list and not an award which are "at cross purposes with each other." The negative comments on the subject reflected a similar sentiment, that the vetted list "decreases the authority" of the award and that if committee members nominate titles with a vetted list in mind they are "acting outside the charge" of the award. According to one participant, "it's no different than how the Printz list of nominations is different than the BBFA list."

When asked whether Excellence in Nonfiction should remain an award (as opposed to a list) in question nine, an overwhelming majority (16 respondents) believed that it should and positive comments on the importance of more widespread attention to nonfiction reflected that. Several of those that commented here seemed to lean on the idea that an awards list and a selection list could exist independently and others, that it was too soon to tell.

To most participants in question ten, the reading load was about what he/she expected (14 responses). Four thought it was less than expected and none, that it was more. Most respondents (fifteen) also felt that serving on the committee had been very helpful in increasing reader's advisory skills. Four felt that they were already adept at selecting nonfiction for teens.

When asked to describe in what ways serving on the committee has been beneficial, the top two answers (at 18 respondents each) were that they valued the opportunity to lend time and talents to YALSA and that they appreciated the opportunity to interact with passionate peers. Other top answers were that they were able to hone book evaluation skills (17), followed by increased visibility in the library community and free books (11 each).

Question thirteen asked what YALSA can do to support the committee or its individual members more effectively. Five comments were centered on the reception. Two requested a change to the annual meeting and the other's reflected a feeling that is seemed "haphazard and inconsistent."

Two participants felt that increased marketing and PR would help ease Excellence in Nonfiction into the limelight.

Several additional comments had specific suggestions on committee processes and function. These included changing eligibility standards to the calendar year, deleting the vetted nomination list, creating specific nonfiction selection criteria for committee members to follow (including citations, bibliographies, etc), improving publisher relationships, and lengthening committee members' term length. Only one impassioned participant requested a return to the inclusion of nonfiction in BBYA.

When asked for final comments, several participants mentioned nuts and bolts changes again: that perhaps selection lists could be changed to virtual committees, that there needs to be clarification in selecting titles for the vetted list, and that “nonfiction and the award need the respect that other ALA awards are given.” It's unclear what specifically this comment is referring to. The majority of those that left comments here were very positive: that Excellence is an important committee, that they were “blessed” with a wonderful Chair, that it was gratifying to see nonfiction getting the recognition that it deserves, that this is a great award that will grow, and that “the combination of discussion and evaluation ...with my fellow committee members has enhanced my abilities as a librarian”

### **Conclusion:**

Based on the feedback that was received, committee members feel strongly that the Excellence in Nonfiction Award is not only a valuable award for the profession, but that the experience of serving on the committee was a positive and sometimes empowering one. The list has been successful in targeting titles for its selected age group and both the honorees and the vetted nomination list are being used in libraries for multiple reasons.

Issues that did receive repeat criticism included issues with the timeline, the vetted list, and the reception. Though these may need to be addressed, it is worth mentioning a few idiosyncrasies. Although the timeline was sometimes felt to be problematic, more than half of the participants felt that the “buzz” created by the release of the December short list was positive. And though the vetted list was seen as problematic, again more than half said that it was useful for collection development and booktalking (among other uses). From several of the comments on the vetted list, it is clear that committee members feel that additional procedures on the creation of the vetted list may be beneficial.

And finally, as with many non-profit endeavors, a current did run through many of these responses that pointed to the need for increased marketing. It was felt that increased marketing may help in some way to assuage confusion with the reception, to streamline timeline issues, to improve publisher relationships, and to elevate this new award to the level of other, more established awards.

*--Respectfully submitted by Shannon Peterson and Alicia Blowers, Selected List and Award Evaluation Taskforce subcommittee on Nonfiction*

## ANALYSIS OF LISTS

Analysis of Alex, BFYA, and Nonfiction Award/Selection Lists [These analyses were completed before the TF members saw the survey results]

**Alex Award** – Diane Colson and Pam Spencer Holley

1. Breakdown by fiction/nonfiction
  - a. 2009 – 9 fiction and 1 nonfiction [90% vs 10%]
  - b. 2010 – 6 fiction and 4 nonfiction [60% vs 40%]
  - c. 2011 – 9 fiction and 1 nonfiction [90% vs 10%]

Comment: Over a three-year period, 24 fiction titles [80%] were selected and 6 nonfiction [20%] selected.

2. Breakdown by specific genre
  - a. 2009 – Fiction
    - i. Historical – 4
    - ii. Horror - 2
    - iii. Fantasy [Steampunk] – 1
    - iv. Mystery – 1
    - v. Satire – 1
  - b. 2009 – Nonfiction – Photography/Short bios
  - c. 2010 – Fiction
    - i. Historical – 2
    - ii. Science fiction/alternate history – 1
    - iii. Fantasy – 1
    - iv. Realistic – 1
    - v. Short stories – 1
  - d. 2010 - Nonfiction
    - i. Memoir – 2
    - ii. War – 1
    - iii. Engineering – 1
  - e. 2011 – Fiction
    - i. Horror – 2
    - ii. Mystery – 2
    - iii. Realistic – 2
    - iv. Realistic/Coming of Age – 1
    - v. Fantasy/Magical Realism – 1
    - vi. Suspense – 1
  - f. 2011 – Nonfiction – Memoir

## Summary

Because the fiction to nonfiction ratios were somewhat skewed, a more complete analysis will be made to determine if a preponderance of fiction has been the case since the award originated in 1998.

Because we were trying to be more specific with the genres we became aware of how difficult this task is as not even reviewers agree as to whether a title is a romance, a zombie horror title, or historical and feel that multi-genre is often a better term.

Fiction: 25% of the fiction was historical fiction, followed by horror and realistic fiction at 16.6% each, then fantasy and mystery at 12.5% and single titles in suspense, short stories, satire and science fiction.

Nonfiction: Although only three years of nonfiction are included, it seems that memoir is the popular nonfiction title. The closest to a science title is the one listed as engineering in 2010 and that title is *The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind: Creating Currents of Electricity and Hope* and takes place in Malawi as a young boy brings electricity to his village. There were no accounts of history and only one of contemporary history involving the soldier in the war in Iraq.

When the titles on the nominations list are reviewed, no history titles appear. The only ones in the 900s are ones contemporary in nature, involving the aftermath of Katrina, or a memoir-type story of survival. There are a few science ones, including *The Immortal Life of Henrietta Lacks* and the *Pluto Files*, but memoirs reign supreme.

A more complete listing of all award and nominated titles will be provided with the final report.

**BBYA/BFYA** [Best Books for Young Adults/Best Fiction for Young Adults] – Terri Snethen and Shari Fesko

1. Realistic fiction was the most prevalent genre over the three years with about 50% of the titles falling in this category.
2. Fantasy was second [15 to 20%] with dystopian and paranormal close behind.
3. Historical fiction was well represented [10-18%] which was not expected by the TF members
4. There was little horror or comedy which probably reflects the publishing industry.
5. The lists trended older and edgy
6. There was very little for the lowest end of the age range [not sure how to prevent this, perhaps just making the committee aware will help]. Perhaps having annotations give age ranges could be useful for librarians and teen readers.
7. The lists were similar in makeup in 2009, 2010, and 2011.
8. There were 90+ titles in 2010 and 2011, even with the change to YA fiction only, compared to 86 in 2009, 85 in 2008, and 82 in 2007. The number seems to be creeping up. Does this increase reflect more YA books being published and/or the quality of YA lit being published?
9. Perhaps the voting needs to be changed to make this number lower [10 votes instead of 9]. This would require very good readership.

[Note: There was difficulty in analyzing these lists as the 2009 and 2010 lists had nonfiction, GNs and adult titles which made comparison difficult. The numbers for realistic, fantasy and historical fiction are not hard numbers as executive decisions were made about where titles fit and further scrutiny could place a title in a similar, but different, genre. Realistic, fantasy, and

historical fiction were the three big genres that made up the majority of all three lists and showed no major increase or decrease over these three years.]

**Nonfiction** – Alicia Blowers and Shannon Peterson  
2010

*Charles and Emma* by Heigelman: 8th grade and up, 12 and up, 8-12th grade

*Almost Astronauts* by Stone: 5-8th grade, 10 and up, 5th-7th grade, 10 and up

*Claudette Colvin* by Hoose: 12 and up, 6th grade and up, 7th to 12th grade

*The Great and Only Barnum* by Fleming: grades 4-8, ages 10-14, ages 8-12, grade 6 and up

*Written in Bone* by Walker: grades 6-9, grades 7-11, ages 12-15

Review sources used: Booklist, Kirkus, and School Library Journal. As is often the case, the grade levels cited by the journals were not always consistent.

1. Only *Charles and Emma* is recommended by most of the journals for high school age readers.
2. *Written in Bone* is recommended for grades 7-11 by Booklist only, while others cite a middle school/junior high age range.
3. *Claudette Colvin* is a possible "read up" title with one review from Booklist recommending it to 7-12th grade readers. The others, (SLJ and Kirkus) push towards 6th grade and up.
4. *Almost Astronauts* and *The Great and Only Barnum* are listed squarely as titles for tweens 5th grade and up (*Astronauts*) and 4th grade and up (*Barnum*).

It seems to be the case that in the 2010 list, the Nonfiction award was weighted toward the middle school and "tween age" reader. Although several of the titles could be read "up" to higher grades, the highest use and appeal would probably be toward the lower end of the spectrum, the 7th/8th grader in the "7th grade and up." It's also possible that the review sources would have affected purchasing decisions by libraries, with high school libraries/collections hesitating to purchase a title that doesn't specifically mention their grade/age range, i.e. neglecting the "and up" statement of "grade 6 and up."

The 2010 award list is also composed primarily of biographical titles, although they do greatly vary in the type of character and era that they discuss. From the nineteenth century scientific zeitgeist to civil rights in the American South, the dark side of 1800's entrepreneurship and entertainment to the stirrings of the women's movement and how it found its way into NASA, these titles represent a broad range of ideas, disciplines, and eras. And although *Written in Bone* is the only non-biographical title as an investigation of a modern archaeological dig, it will still appeal to readers on a personal level as it explores the probable lives and deaths of the uncovered skeletons.

The 2010 list also seems balanced in its appeal to both male and female readers with a broad range of disciplines as well as historical figures of both genders.

2011

*Janis Joplin: Rise Up Singing* by Ann Angel, published by Amulet/Abrams  
*They Called Themselves the KKK: The Birth of an American Terrorist Group* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti, published by Houghton Mifflin Harcourt  
*Spies of Mississippi: The True Story of the Spy Network that Tried to Destroy the Civil Rights Movement* by Rick Bowers, published by National Geographic Society  
*The Dark Game: True Spy Stories* by Paul Janeczko, published by Candlewick Press  
*Every Bone Tells a Story: Hominin Discoveries, Deductions, and Debates* by Jill Rubalcaba and Peter Robertshaw, published by Charlesbridge

The diverse array of the 2011 list of finalists includes one musician biography, two books about civil rights, two books about spies (one of them also being about civil rights), and one book about archaeology. Notably absent are works of poetry and books about sports, two popular topics in nonfiction for teens.

Review sources used: Booklist, Kirkus, and School Library Journal. As was the case with 2010 titles, the grade levels cited by the journals were not always consistent.

1. **Rise Up Singing** and **Every Bone Tells a Story** are both recommended for high school audiences, Grades 8/9-12, ages 14+.
2. **They Called Themselves the KKK** and **The Dark Game** are recommended for ages 12+ or Grades 7-10/7+.
3. On the younger end of the spectrum, **Spies of Mississippi** was recommended for readers as early as grades 5 and 6, or ages 11+.

In terms of appeal to males and females, the titles on this list strike a good balance. *Rise Up Singing* is about female singer/songwriter Janis Joplin, but her gritty rock n' roll story appeals to both males and females alike. The other titles on list have no specific appeal, and are likely to be read equally by males and females.