

No More *The Catcher in the Rye*, either

CANADIAN BOOKS FOR HIGH SCHOOL NOVEL STUDIES | BY GILLIAN O'REILLY

It's remarkable how many people want to see *Lord of the Flies* replaced in our schools! In our "No More *Lord of the Flies!*" article in the Summer 2010 issue of *Canadian Children's Book News*, we offered a number of Canadian alternatives for novel study to replace the old chestnuts like *Sarah, Plain and Tall* and *Bridge to Terabithia* which are still being taught in elementary and middle schools. The response we got was enthusiastically supportive of more Canadian books in the classroom, and curiously eager to get rid of *Lord of the Flies*. (It seems a great many readers — and their kids — hated that book.) We were also delighted when the Raise-a-Reader program reprinted the piece in their national Raise-a-Reader Day insert appearing in 27 newspapers across Canada on September 29.

"No More *Lord of the Flies!*" looked at books that could be used for elementary and middle schools. In this issue, we offer some exciting alternatives for the high school curriculum. In high school, we know students are getting some Canadian reading from the adult realm — probably *The Apprenticeship of Duddy Kravitz* if my own kids' experience is anything to go by. They get the occasional YA books or books that are now seen as YA — hello, *The Outsiders*, *A Separate Peace* and *The Catcher in the Rye*. Of course, many get books that are also on the middle grade curricula: *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *Lord of the Flies*, and so on.

Many of these books were offered as books that spoke to contemporary teens — that is, contemporary teens when the books first appeared 40 years ago (*The Outsiders*) or 60 years ago (*The Catcher in the Rye*). As an alternative, however, here is a short list from among the many great Canadian books for today's young adults that offer powerful stories to engage them with characters and issues that are contemporary and often thought-provoking. Some of these stories are set in Canada; others take readers to far parts of the world and bring important issues home to them. Where teachers' guides are available, the relevant website is listed.

WHY NOT SUBSTITUTE...? FOR GRADES 9 TO 12

Replace *A Separate Peace*, *The Outsiders* or other books that have occupied reading lists for years with any of the following.

Don Aker's *The First Stone* explores violence and forgiveness. Used by Lindsay Collegiate and Vocational Institute in Lindsay, Ontario, the novel and an eerily similar true story inspired the students to purchase copies of the book for a nearby home for young offenders.

Jamie Bastedo's *On Thin Ice* (www.onthinice.ca) gives a remarkable picture of a contemporary half-Inuit girl and her discovery of her shaman heritage amid a world of climate change.

Now a motion picture entitled *Life, Above All* (South Africa's entry for the Academy Awards), *Chanda's Secrets* by Allan Stratton is a stunning look at HIV/AIDS. Stephen Lewis, UN Special Envoy for HIV/AIDS in Africa, says of the book: "*Chanda's Secrets* is a novel with the lilt of Africa in its language and the urgency of adolescent struggle in every paragraph."

William Bell's *The Blue Helmet* (www.orillia.org/williambell) was a Governor General's Literary Award-winner. It examines the very contemporary topic of post-traumatic stress disorder among Canada's peacekeepers. Also found at this website are the books of Ting-xing Ye, whose *Throwaway Daughter* provides young readers with an intriguing look at a girl born in China and adopted by Canadians and her discovery of her past.

Also look at Paul Yee's *What Happened This Summer* which offers intriguing stories of contemporary teens who are recent immigrants to Canada and dealing with issues like parental expectations, society's expectation and their discoveries about themselves. *Piece by Piece*, edited by Teresa Toten, assembles essays from many fine Canadian writers talking about their experiences as immigrants to Canada trying to fit in (www.puffinbooks.ca).

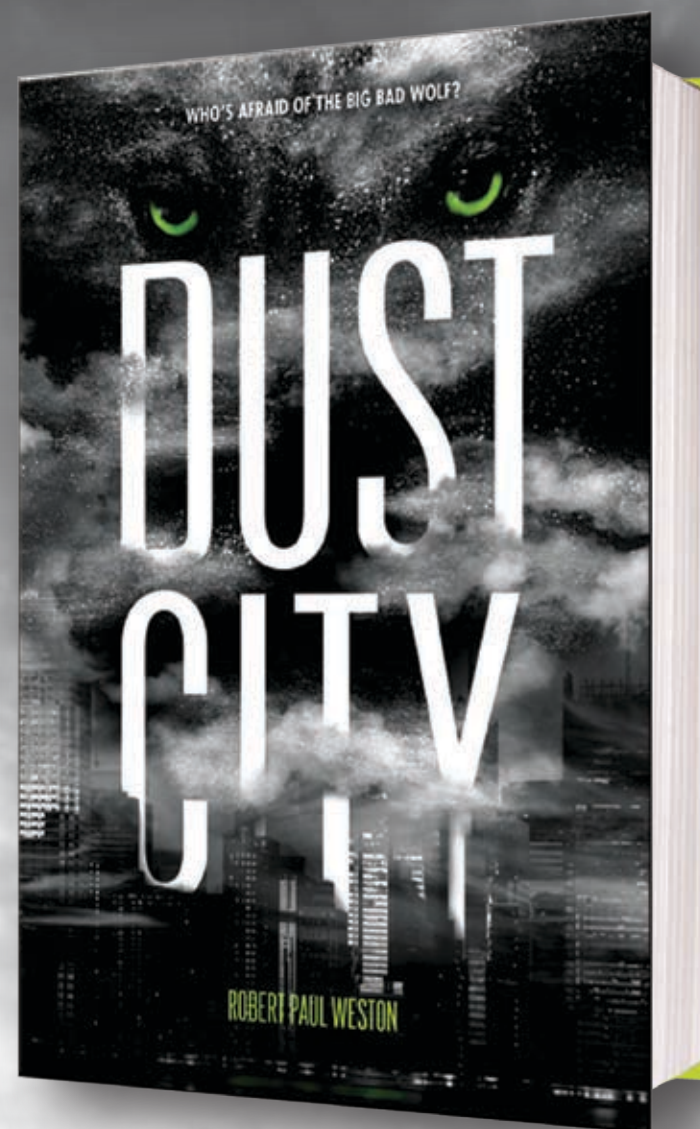
For teachers working with reluctant readers, Orca Book Publishers has an *Orca Soundings Resource Guide* and several teachers' guides to accompany their large list of excellent high-interest, low-vocabulary books for teens (www.orcabook.com).

These books and more can refresh and enliven your classroom literature studies and engage your students. Write to us (gillian@bookcentre.ca) with your suggestions for new, contemporary titles for elementary, middle or high school classrooms. ☺

Gillian O'Reilly is editor of *Canadian Children's Book News*.

IN A CITY AS MEAN AS THIS, EVEN A BIG BAD WOLF SHOULD BE AFRAID.

AND HENRY WHELP IS THAT BIG BAD WOLF. OR WILL BE, SOMEDAY.



Teen wolf Henry Whelp has kept a low profile in the Home for Wayward Wolves ... until the untimely murder of his psychiatrist leads Henry to believe his father may have been framed for the murder of Little Red Riding Hood. Henry escapes from the Home and eventually comes face to snout with legendary mobster Skinner and his Water Nixie henchmen. In the end, Henry unearths the horrifying secret behind fairydust ... and what it truly means to be a wolf in Dust City.

Read more at DUSTCITYBOOK.COM

CANADIAN BOOKS FOR CANADIAN STUDENTS



MORE FROM ROBERT PAUL WESTON

"A natural descendant of the works of **Dr. Seuss** and **Roald Dahl** while hewing close to the droll atmospherics of **Edward Gorey** and **Lemony Snicket**."

—*Booklist* (starred; top ten debut of 2008)

