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My Ten Favorite Books

Raphael Johstoneaux

When accepting the assignment to list my ten favorite young adult novels, I figured a few minutes at the computer would suffice. After interminably staring at the screen and only growing frustrated by the flashing cursor, I again realized the dilemma of choice.

First of all, I wrestled with the idea that the novel must be acceptable to both the young and the adult. It certainly must rise above the insipid Harlequin series and yet not soar to the heights of *A Passage to India*. Somewhere on this spectrum I looked for a believable plot, plausible characters, ideas or a theme worth reading about, symbolic depth, a lucid style; in other words, I wanted a good novel to challenge, not overwhelm, young readers.

Suddenly I realized I was acting like an English teacher, one to whom the key of all wisdom and most understanding had somehow been entrusted. A favorite is a favorite, I finally told myself, and I need no other justification than I LIKE IT. Thus I submit the following list, with no order of preference:

Souder
Dandelion Wine
The Chocolate War
 and *Beyond the Chocolate War*
I Am the Cheese
I Never Promised You a Rose Garden
The Summer of My German Soldier
House of Dies Drear
A Separate Peace
A Day No Pigs Would Die
Where the Red Fern Grows

William H. Armstrong
Ray Bradbury

Robert Cormier
Robert Cormier
Hannah Green
Bette Greene
Virginia Hamilton
John Knowles
Robert Newton Peck
Wilson Rawls