

YOUNG ADULT F.A.Q.

Q: So what exactly is YA?

YA stands for Young Adult. It's also frequently called 'Teen' fiction, and it's one of fiction's most diverse areas! YA contains many different genres- fantasy, romance, mystery, and historical fiction, just to name a few. It also addresses current topics such as LGBTQ+, mental health, and bullying. There really is something for everyone.

Q: Okay, but... I'm not a teen. Why would I read books in this section?

YA may stand for Young Adult, but its age range is incredibly broad. People often think YA books can't be as complex or engaging as traditional 'adult' fiction, but this just isn't true. Fantasy YAs offer beautiful, rich world building, action thrillers race at the same break-neck speed, and romances tug at the heartstrings the same way adult fiction does. With more options than ever for a teenager to do with their time, YA fiction *has* to be well written to continue engaging readers.

YA also offers a refreshing new perspective on topics you've read through many times. Remember- just because it's marketed at teens doesn't mean you can't enjoy it. You wouldn't assume thrillers are only read by detectives and secret agents!

Q: What makes YA so special?

For one thing, it gives teens stories that they can relate to. Older adults can read YA and still relate to the younger protagonist, because they were teenagers at one point too. But a teenager can't pick up a book with an older protagonist and have the same experience.

YA also offers a huge range of subject matter- nothing is off limits. It provides a safe way for readers to connect and learn about hard topics, and often gives a different viewpoint on them from the traditional perspective found in adult fiction. Just as teens continue to push social norms, teen literature pushes what is written about.

Q: What is the 'dystopian' genre I keep hearing about?

Dystopian is a relatively new genre similar to Utopian fiction, and it's found a big footing in YA fiction. It focuses on a society that is oppressed in some form, and takes place in a dark or "bad" world. It's often thought to be post-apocalyptic, but this is not always the case. Typically, society itself becomes the antagonist. Examples include *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent*, and *Shatter Me*.

Q: My child wants to start reading in the YA section. When should I let them?

This is one of the most common questions about YA, and the toughest to answer. There's no set age to mark when a child is ready to start reading at a more advanced level. One of the first things to think

about is your child's reading level. Can they comprehend books that are more word-dense than they've been reading? Are they able to stay focused on a longer novel? Is their vocabulary large enough to understand the text?

Then, of course, you have to decide as a parent what you are comfortable with your child reading. YA does contain more mature subject matter than junior fiction. In our library, books that we know contain overly mature subject matter are marked on the cover. There are plenty of books suitable for new YA readers though! Come in to the library and our staff will be more than happy to give you some recommendations.