



Assembly on Literature for Adolescents of the NCTE

ALAN Online News

Educators know the value of reflection. What's going well? Upon what could we improve? How is our work affecting those around us. Those involved with ALAN, from the Board and our members to the authors to the publishers, are no different. It is with excitement, therefore, that we share with you a few changes that have been made to the ALAN pre-workshop reception as well as those to the workshop itself.

The ALAN Reception

Are you making your plans to attend the ALAN workshop? Here's some great news!

While last year we found it necessary to invite only the new members to the ALAN reception, this year, everyone will be invited. We are thankful to the publishers and authors who are working with us to make this happen. The reception will be held on Sunday before the workshop and details are as follows:

5:30 Doors Open

5:30-7:00 Open bar with no tickets

5:30-7:00 Snacks and mingling. So much mingling!

5:30-7:00 Authors will be signing book plates. No books will signed. The publishers will have the book plates available. Publishers are working to have as many authors present as possible; we know how busy our authors are and are so pleased they are taking time to hang-out and network with the fabulous members of ALAN!

7:00 Reception Ends. No exceptions.

Workshop Book Signings

I am inspired every time I attend an ALAN workshop. The day and a half of listening to the authors share why they wrote their book, who they are hoping to reach, what trends they are seeing (or not seeing), the research it took to write their or someone else's story, the collaboration...I leave wanting to share everything I've learned with fellow educators and students. I leave wanting to thank the authors for doing what I don't-entertaining, informing, inspiring through words that can be visited over and over by millions.

You will no longer have to decide if you are going to listen to our incredible

panels on the stage in front of you. No more wishing you could see what everyone in the audience is laughing about while you silently wait in line for an author signature. Additionally, our debut authors will no longer feel less valued because their lines are shorter or because the audience size decreased by half as people rushed to be first in line for a more well-known author's signature.

Author signings will not occur during this year's ALAN workshop. Signed book plates from many of our authors will be available at Sunday's reception. This is a time of transition; we know-because you are educators-that you are flexible and will support the changes the executive committee makes in order to provide the best workshop experience for all involved.

Let Us Share Your Work!

Do you have a professional text that was recently published or will be published soon? Please share it with us at <https://goo.gl/forms/93dNX3dvPDJb4nCF2> to allow us the opportunity to share it on the ALAN social media pages.

Call for Manuscripts: The ALAN Review

Exploring Adolescent Neurodiversity and Mental Health in YA Literature

Manuscripts due 11/1/2019

Approximately one third of adolescents nationwide show symptoms of depression, and one of five adolescents has a diagnosable mental health disorder. Suicide is the third leading cause of death in 15- to 24-year-olds, and the majority of adolescents who attempt suicide have a significant mental health disorder, usually depression. Yet teen depression, anxiety, and other mental health illnesses may go unrecognized, misunderstood, or ignored by teachers and other adults, and an ongoing stigma regarding mental health illnesses inhibits some adolescents and their families from seeking help. As YA author A.S. King shared at the 2018 ALAN Breakfast, her teenage daughter's depression was often written off by teachers and other adults as "drama and a need for attention." Fortunately, authors of young adult literature have begun to explore issues associated with mental health in the genre, confronting the stigma of mental illness head-on while presenting narratives of inclusion, validation, hope, agency, and empowerment for adolescent readers. For this call, we are interested in hearing from you about the YA literature depicting adolescent mental health and neurodiversity you are reading, teaching, and using in your research. We invite correspondence about ideas for articles, and submission of completed manuscripts. Here's a partial list of topics, meant only to suggest the range of our interests for this issue:

- How can young adult literature help us navigate conversations in our classrooms and communities about what it means to see and experience the world in different ways? How can young adult literature help us think about the idea that neurological differences (e.g., ADHD, depression, anxiety, autism) should be recognized and respected as any other human variation? What does it mean to be a "normal" human being? What does it mean to be abnormal, disordered, or sick?
- Neuroscience increasingly identifies the complexity of human brains, and is beginning to shift cultural perceptions of mental health. Some psychologists explore and celebrate mental differences under the rubric of *neurodiversity*. The

term encompasses those with Attention Deficit/Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD), autism, schizophrenia, depression, dyslexia, and other disorders affecting the mind and brain. The proponents of neurodiversity argue that there are positive aspects to having brains that function differently. But others, including many parents of affected youth, focus on the difficulties and suffering brought on by these conditions. What experiences of adolescent mental health and neurodiversity--and discursive constructions of neurodiverse youth--are presented in young adult literature?

- Whose stories are being told, and by whom? Whose stories are missing?
- Do YA books stigmatize, romanticize, and/or normalize adolescent mental health and neurodiversity? What are the dangers of these representations?
- How can young adult literature help us examine and better understand the intersectional identities (e.g., race, class, [dis]ability, gender, religion, age, geography, sexual orientation) of neurodiverse adolescents?
- How do TV and movie adaptations of YA novels depicting adolescent mental health and neurodiversity (e.g., the Netflix series “Thirteen Reasons Why”) affect readers’ understandings of adolescent mental health? What intertextual connections about adolescent mental health can be drawn from multiple representations of the same story?
- Popular YA author John Green admits to writing his own mental illness into his latest novel, *Turtles All the Way Down*, explaining that “having OCD is an ongoing part of my life.” Similarly, in Jessica Burkhart’s edited collection *Life Inside My Mind: 31 Authors Share Their Personal Struggles*, YA author Sara Zarr describes her ongoing struggles with depression (“Sometime between getting out of bed and standing in front of the coffeepot, I feel the cloud...Maybe more like quicksand than a cloud....I feel fear and worthlessness, or fear that I’m worthless” [p. 260]). In the same collection, YA author Francisco X. Stork describes his own suicide attempt and experiences with bipolar disorder (“When I talk about bipolar disorder, I use words like ‘loneliness’ and ‘uncontrollable longing’ rather than words like ‘depression’ and ‘mania’ because the former are more descriptive of what I actually feel, even though depression is a bundle of feelings and thoughts more complicated than loneliness, and mania is more than irrepressible longing” [p. 284]). We wonder: When YA authors disclose their own struggles with mental health, how does this impact teen readers?

Mini Book Reviews

Please share your one paragraph book reviews of books published in the past two years (and have not been featured in [ALAN Picks](#)). We know you're reading the books-or passing them on to your students, so we'd love to pass your recommendations onward to other ALAN members. A simple paragraph from you or your students to grab a new reader's attention supports the purchase of these wonderful books. Please email to [Helene Halstead](#).

Where's MY ALAN Review?

Don't miss a single issue of The ALAN Review or any ALAN communications. Keep us updated with your most current (and preferred) email and mailing addresses. Want to know your expiration date? Look at your mailing label. Your expiration date is printed there.

If you attended the 2018 ALAN Workshop, your membership is included in the registration and has been extended a year. We use the mailing address from your registration for The ALAN Review. Please contact Suzanne Metcalfe at alanya.membership@gmail.com with any changes or questions.

Time to Renew?



Would you ever spend \$5 for \$3 worth of merchandise or services? That doesn't seem like a sound investment – and ALAN doesn't think so either. For that reason, ALAN will no longer accept credit card payments with **mail in** memberships.

Credit card processing companies charge a monthly fee for the privilege of enabling credit card payments whether the service is used or not. In addition, each transaction triggers an additional fee. In the last 6 months, only a few credit card payments were processed. The fees take a big chunk out of the funds collected that make offering mail in credit card payment not very cost effective, especially since credit card payments are accepted online. So, from this point on, credit card payments that are mailed in will no longer be processed.

Credit cards can still be used, as always, for online membership. You can find that link at <http://www.alan-ya.org/join/>

-Daria Plumb- ALAN Treasurer

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Get three issues of *The ALAN Review* and bimonthly emailed newsletters that provide resources, insights, and information about young adult literature in the classroom and beyond.

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