



Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature

Roberta Seelinger Trites

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The Young Adult novel is ordinarily characterized as a coming-of-age story, in which the narrative revolves around the individual growth and maturation of a character, but Roberta Trites expands on this notion by chronicling the dynamics of power and repression that weave their way through YA books. Characters in these novels must learn to negotiate the levels of power that exist in the myriad social institutions within which they function, including family, church, government and school. Trites argues that the development of the genre over the past 30 years is an outgrowth of postmodernism, since YA novels are, by definition, texts that interrogate the social construction of individuals. Drawing on such 19th-century precursors as "Little Women" and "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn", "Disturbing the Universe" demonstrates how important it is to employ poststructuralist methodologies in analyzing adolescent literature, both in critical studies and in the classroom. Among the 20th-century authors discussed are Blume, Hamilton, Hinton, Le Guin, L'Engle and Zindel.

Trites' work has applications for a broad range of readers, including scholars of children's literature and theorists of postmodernity as well as librarians and secondary-school teachers.

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