

Pennsylvania Young Reader's Choice Awards Program 2011-2012
Young Adult Book Talk Script

Ship Breaker by Paolo Bacigalupi

This futuristic novel is set in a Gulf Coast shanty town where teenaged Nailer works as a shipbreaker, scavenging copper wire from beached oil tankers. The work is hard, dirty, and dangerous. And even when he makes his quota, Nailer barely makes enough money to get by. To make matters worse, Nailer's father is an abusive drunk who is prone to unpredictable rages. Like all of the shipbreakers, Nailer dreams of a "Lucky Strike" – finding a pocket of oil or other valuables that can he can sell for a hefty profit. It's the only possible way out of a life of scavenging. After a massive hurricane (a Category Six "city killer") nearly wipes out his village, Nailer discovers a beached clipper ship filled with unimaginable riches – and a badly injured, beautiful girl. Nailer is ready to steal her jewelry and leave her for dead. But then she opens her eyes and claims to be the owner of the ship. Now Nailer is faced with the decision of a lifetime - should he scavenge the ship for its wealth, or rescue the girl? If he chooses to save her, can he protect her (and her riches) from his father? And just why was she out on the open seas during a city killer? This is a fast-paced thriller with plenty of action and suspense. It's science fiction for everyone who isn't sure if they really like science fiction! – *Amy Pickett*

<http://windupstories.com/>

[http://www.hachettebookgroup.com/teens_authors_Paolo-Bacigalupi-\(1529243\).htm](http://www.hachettebookgroup.com/teens_authors_Paolo-Bacigalupi-(1529243).htm)

You by Charles Benoit

You're not sure how it came to this. You used to be a good student, a good person. You had decent friends. You actually cared about things, about life. Now ... well, "slacker" is being kind. What people actually call you and your friends (if that's what you can even call them) is "hoodies." No one expects anything much from a hoodie. You know, wearing all black, sitting in the back of class; never contributing anything but trouble. You don't even expect much from yourself anymore. What kind of life is this anyway? Even you know it's pathetic. So you've become intrigued by the new guy at school. He's different; he seems to have power over people. Sure, in a conniving, sneaky sort of way, but still ... there's something there that lures you into his trap. Now, every bad decision you've made, your pathetic lack of initiative, and the mediocrity you've encompassed will come crashing down. All because of You. – *Cara Woudenberg*

<http://www.charlesbenoit.com/>

The Dark Days of Hamburger Halpin by Josh Berk

Will Halpin is the new kid at school. This is tough even under the best circumstances, but Will is different; he's deaf, and his self-image isn't the greatest. He's a bit over-weight and compares

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his body to a “sedentary manatee.” Will left a school for the deaf, to attend public high school where he uses his exemplary lip-reading skills to learn *and* to spy. He likes “listening in” on conversations in the café and seeing what kids and teachers are saying to each other. This new high school experience has some perks, but it’s not easy. Eventually Will makes a good friend at Carbon High, fellow misfit and self-proclaimed geek, Devon Smiley. Devon and Will use their skills and powers of observation to investigate the death of a classmate who died while on a field trip to the Happy Memory Coal Mine. There’s a mystery for sure, but the best part of this book is the humor and the way Will, who’s new to the experience, describes high school. It’s also interesting since the story is set in eastern PA. You may recognize some of the places mentioned.
~Patty McClune

<http://www.joshberkbooks.com/>

Oh. My. Gods. by Tera Lynn Childs

Can you imagine having to move to another country, start a new school filled with snippy kids who look down on you, plus deal with an evil step-sister all at the same time?

Just before the start of Phoebe’s high school senior year, her mother comes back from vacation and announces she’s marrying a man she just met, and that she and Phoebe will be moving to a Greek island to live with him and his daughter. Phoebe’s shocked! She doesn’t want to leave California and her two BFFs. She especially doesn’t want to give up on her dream of a track scholarship to USC. (Phoebe’s a phenomenal runner!) But Phoebe gives in and makes the move. She enrolls in an elite, private school where her step-father is the headmaster and all the students are descendants of Greek gods. Phoebe’s the only nothos (ordinary person) in the whole school. There’s romance, betrayal, loyal friends, and a wicked step-sister with supernatural powers mixed with Greek mythology in the modern world. It’s a fun, fast-paced read. ~Patty McClune

<http://www.teralynnchilds.com/>

Dash & Lily’s Book of Dares by Rachel Cohn and David Levithan

Words have power. That’s what Lily discovers after her brother – trying to lure her out of her loneliness -- convinces her to start a literary adventure with a stranger. So she leaves a red notebook on a shelf in her favorite bookstore, challenging its finder to accept her dares. That stranger just happens to be the snarly Dash, a teenage boy, somewhat of a loner as well, who jumps at the chance to keep himself occupied during the winter holidays. As they embark on a treasure hunt of sorts -- passing the notebook back and forth without ever meeting each other -- Dash and Lily find that it’s easy to share their hopes and dreams on the pages of the notebook. It’s what comes next that proves to be the real challenge. – Cara Woudenberg

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<http://www.davidlevithan.com/>

<http://www.rachelcohn.com/>

Matched by Ally Condie

In the Society, the officials decide everything. Where you work. What you eat, and how you spend your free time. Even whom you marry. 17-year old Cassia Reyes has always trusted their choices, so when she is matched with her best friend, Xander, she has no reason to question whether the Society really knows best. She believes that Xander really is her perfect match. But when another boy's face quickly flashes on the Matching screen, Cassia starts to wonder if she belongs with Xander after all. Ky is mysterious, romantic, and more than a little secretive about his past. Then Cassia's grandfather teaches her part of a forbidden poem that begins, "Do not go gentle into that good night ... Rage, rage against the dying of the light." Cassia realizes that the poem has been banned because of its message to fight. Will she live the life that's been assigned to her, or will she fight to follow her own path? If you enjoyed *The Hunger Games* by Suzanne Collins, get ready to **LOVE Matched** and its dystopian love triangle! – *Amy Pickett*

<http://www.allysoncondie.com/>

<http://www.matched-book.com/>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xaeNWL8rlBI>

Take Me There by Carolee Dean

Seventeen-year-old Dylan wants to break from his bad-boy past and the gang members who harass him. He's got an honest job now, and a special girl. He hopes to change his life for the chance to be with Jess. Dylan knows she's too good for him. She's rich and beautiful, and can see right through his tough exterior and into his heart. When he's with Jess, his world seems complete. But Dylan also feels obligated to Wade, a friend who stood by him in juvie. When a gang altercation goes terribly wrong, the boys find themselves on the run...from the police and the gang. With his life spinning out of control, Dylan decides to leave California and drive to Texas to see his father who is a convicted killer on death row, with an execution date only days away. Dylan feels drawn to talk to his father before he dies...to hear his side of the story. Romance, mystery and family drama are interlaced with loads of action as Dylan uncovers the truth about his father's crime and about himself. ~*Patty McClune*

<http://authors.simonandschuster.net/Carolee-Dean/62845662>

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Black Hole Sun by David Gill

Earth is a compost pile and humans are mining Mars. On the planet Mars, the miners hire a young man named Durango and his friends to protect them from the other creatures there. These other creatures call humans "Mousies" and like to hunt them for food. They also have a "Queen" who occasionally likes to have succulent children for her table. The human miners are allowed to select the children who will become a special treat for the Queen. Hopefully, Durango and his friends can stop the hunting and selecting of tasty young humans. - *Peg Bruch*

<http://davidmacinnisgill.com/>

Please Ignore Vera Dietz by A.S. King

"To say my friend died is one thing. To say my friend screwed me over and then died five months later is another." These are the first words we hear from Vera Dietz in this amazing novel by A.S. King. Vera was best friends with her next door neighbor, Charlie, until the "Detentionheads" came between them during their junior year. Then Charlie blamed Vera for spreading rumors about how his father beat his mother, and in retaliation he revealed Vera's secret: that her mother was a stripper before she abandoned Vera and ran away to Las Vegas. Now Vera knows a secret about the night that Charlie died. It's a secret that could clear his name, but she's not sure how to tell it. So she stays busy with her full-time job delivering pizzas, flirting with her 23-year old co-worker, and trying to stay invisible at school. And then there's her complicated relationship with her father, who wants what's best for Vera but doesn't trust her to make any good decisions. All this, and a talking pagoda! (It makes sense when you read it.) This is an edgy, realistic slice of life in central Pennsylvania. - *Amy Pickett*

<http://www.as-king.com>

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1c4d5kSX6c>

Rot & Ruin by Jonathan Maberry

In the post-apocalyptic future, America has become a terrible Rot and Ruin, with small towns enclosed by fences to protect their citizens from roaming zombies. Ever since First Night, when his parents fell victim to the zombie plague, fifteen-year old Benny Imura has lived in one of these towns with his older brother, Tom, who is a respected zombie hunter. In fact, zombie hunting is the family business – and business is good! Tom is one of many bounty hunters who patrol the roads that connect these towns so that supplies can travel back and forth. Every once in a while the supply shipments include new Zombie Cards that feature some of the most fearsome zombies and notorious zombie hunters. One unusual card shows the Lost Girl, a beautiful girl living wild and alone in the rot and ruin. But is she real, or just a legend? When Benny sees her picture on the Zombie Card, he knows he has to find her. Then, when Benny and Tom set out into the ruin to track down a kidnapped girl, they come face to face with the one

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thing out there that might be worse than the zombies. This book has a lot of brains, but it has heart, too. Forget vampires – zombies are having all the fun these days! – *Amy Pickett*

<http://jonathanmaberry.com/rot-ruin>

Flash Burnout by L.K. Madigan

Blake is a soon-to-be-sixteen year old who has a girlfriend, Shannon, and a friend who is a girl, Marissa. Sometimes he's lost about what to do with either of them. Girls are hard for him to figure out! The story begins with a photography assignment. Blake wants to shoot something gritty and real world so he goes to the inner city to find more compelling subjects. He doesn't know it, but the person he ends up photographing turns out to be his friend Marissa's drug-addicted, homeless mother. When Marissa sees the picture she recognizes her mom, and asks for Blake's help to rescue her. Blake wants to help, but things get complicated because his girlfriend, Shannon, has expectations for her boyfriend and they don't necessarily involve him traipsing all over with another girl! Sometimes it's funny as Blake tries hard to please them both. In the end he learns a lot about himself, and about love, sex and friendship, too. (The book tackles some mature issues about family, romance, drug addiction, and friendship.) ~*Patty McClune*

<http://www.flashburnout.com/>

The Secret to Lying by Todd Mitchell

In his old high school James was totally unremarkable; the guy no one noticed. When he's offered a scholarship to a public boarding school for gifted students, he accepts. He's tired of being dull and boring and sees the American Science and Math Academy as a chance to reinvent himself. How hard could it be to impress a bunch of overachieving nerds and geeks? James spikes his hair, wears grunge clothes, tells a few little lies and convinces *most* of the kids that he's from the wild side; a street-fighting punk with pyromaniac tendencies. He has scars that help fuel the tough guy image, but these scars are real and self-inflicted. James builds friendships, pulls off outrageous pranks, deals with his first love and fights off demons in his dreams, and self-destructive tendencies in his real life. Some of the story is told through IMs between James and the enigmatic persona of Ghost44 who communicates best online and tells him, "I can't be myself in person." This is a sensitive and funny novel that offers a thoughtful take on the importance of learning to live in your own skin. ~*Patty McClune*

<http://www.toddmitchellbooks.com/>

<http://www.joshberkbooks.com/>

The Sky is Everywhere by Jandy Nelson

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Can a plant predict your health? Well, Lennie's Grandmother thinks that her plant can predict Lennie's health and the plant isn't looking so good. Bookworm, band geek, and clarinet player are the words that are used to describe Lennie before her older sister dies. After she loses her sister, she starts to become more and more like her older sister. Lennie no longer reads books and no longer hangs out with the band. Now, she spends time with her sister's friends and her sister's boyfriend. Will she ever become herself again? - *Peg Bruch*

<http://www.theskyiseverywhere.com/>

Virals by Kathy Reichs (*Virals* is the first book in a young adult series.)

Science geek, Tory Brennan, the fourteen-year-old niece of the world famous forensic anthropologist Temperance Brennan, loves adventure. When she has to go live with her father on Morris Island, South Carolina, she finds a life altering adventure. The adventure starts when Tory and some friends find the dog tag of a long dead soldier and the skeleton of a young woman on an island that no one is allowed to visit. While on this island, Tory forms a bond with a wolfdog puppy and involves herself in a life and death struggle when she rescues him from certain death at a research facility on the island. Fortunately, Tory and the pup are not alone. They have become part of a pack—a human wolf pack—who will back them up no matter what. *Peg Bruch*

<http://www.viralstheseries.com/>

Three Rivers Rising by Jame Richards

Celestia and Peter have a young love that is pure and true. It doesn't seem as though anything can spoil it. But when her wealthy father finds out she's dating the hired help, he threatens to disown her as his daughter. She is then sent away to avoid embarrassing her family's name. When she returns, her only thoughts are of reconnecting with Peter and restoring and protecting what they once had between them. But who will protect Celestia as the dam that sits atop Peter's hometown of Johnstown threatens to break? - *Cara Woudenberg*

<http://www.jamerichards.com>