



Spirituality in Young Adult Literature: The Last Taboo (Studies in Young Adult Literature)

Patty Campbell

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In a time when almost any gritty topic can be featured in a young adult novel, there is one subject that is avoided by writers and publishers. Faith and belief in God seldom appear in traditional form in novels for teens. The lack of such ideas in mainstream adolescent literature can be interpreted by teens to mean that these matters are not important. Yet a significant part of growing up is struggling with issues of spirituality. The underlying problem, of course, is that there are so few writers who are willing to talk to teenagers about God, even indirectly, or who themselves have the religious literacy for the task.

Spirituality in Young Adult Literature: The Last Taboo tackles a subject rarely portrayed in fiction aimed at teens. In this volume, Patty Campbell examines not only realistic fiction, but young adult literature that deals with mysticism, apocalyptic end times, and even YA novels that depict the Divine Encounter. Campbell maintains that fantasy works are inherently spiritual, because the plots nearly always progress toward a showdown between good and evil. As such, the author surmises that the popularity of fantasy among teens may represent their interest in the mystical dimensions of faith and the otherworldly. In this study, Campbell examines works of fiction that express perspectives from Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, and Sikhism. Distinguished YA novelist Chris Crowe provides a chapter on Mormon values and Mormon YA authors and how their novels integrate those values into their books.

By looking at how spirituality is represented in novels aimed at teens, this book asks what progress, if any, has been made in slaying the taboo. Although most of the books discussed in this study are recent, an appendix lists YA books from 1967 to the present that have dealt with issues of faith. A timely look at an important subject, *Spirituality in Young Adult Literature* will be of interest to young adult librarians, junior and senior high school teachers, and students and instructors of college courses in adolescent literature, as well as to parents of teens.

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