

### Mental Illness Statistics

- The NIMH reports that 18.3% of all U.S. adults in 2016 had any mental disorder (a mental, behavioral, or emotional disorder) in the past year. Prevalence higher in women than men (no report for transgender).
- Young adults ages 18-25 had a higher prevalence than adults over 26.
- ➤ Between 2001 and 2004, lifetime prevalence of adolescents ages 13-18 between was 49.5% for any mental disorder.
- Of those, approximately 22.2% had severe impairment (according to DSM-IV criteria). Higher numbers correlate with older youth.

### Mental Disorders in the DSM-5 include

- Neurodevelopmental disorders (e.g., intellectual disabilities)
- Autism spectrum disorder
- Schizophrenia spectrum and other psychotic disorders
- Bipolar and related disorders
- Depressive disorders
- Anxiety disorders
- Personality disorders

- Trauma- and stressor-related disorders (e.g., PTSD)
- Feeding and eating disorders (e.g., anorexia, bulimia)
- Substance-related disorders (e.g., alcohol use disorder, opioid-related disorder)
- Attentiondeficit/Hyperactivity disorder (ADHD)
- Obsessive-Compulsive disorder (OCD)



# Feeding and Eating Disorders

Types of disorders include pica, rumination disorder, avoidant/restrictive food intake disorder, anorexia nervosa, bulimia nervosa, and binge-eating disorder.

Each of these includes some type of persistent problem with eating or eating-related behaviors that results in changed ingestion or absorption of food and that negatively affects physical health or psychosocial functioning in a significant way.



#### **ANOREXIA**

Includes the presence of a fear of gaining weight or being fat, atypically low body weight, and a distorted view of one's body weight.

Typically begins in adolescence.

Most common among females at a ratio of 10:1.

One subtype includes bingeeating episodes.

Can include apprehensions about eating in public, desires to exert control over one's environment, feeling ineffective, and difficulty expressing emotions.

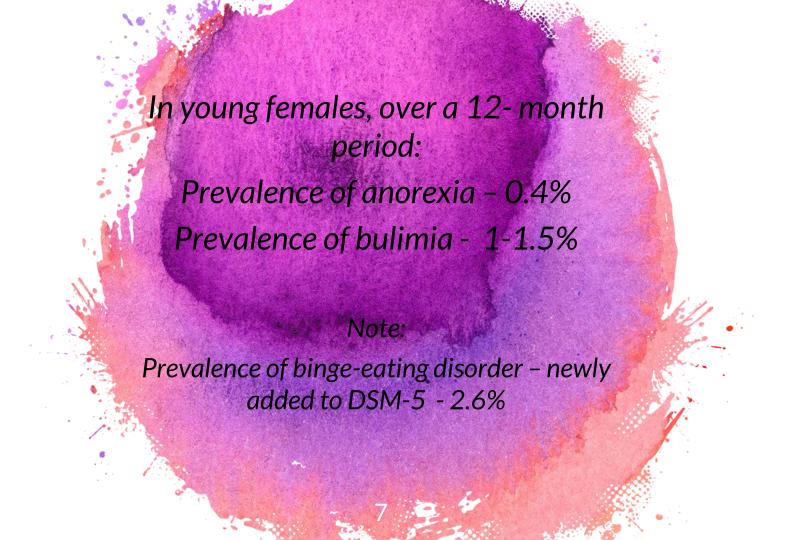


### **BULIMIA**

involves repeated episodes of binge eating with a lack of control over stopping, inappropriate behaviors to prevent weight gain (e.g., purging, misuse of laxatives or diuretics, etc.), and a selfassessment that is excessively influenced by body shape and weight.

During binges, individuals tend to eat items they typically avoid and sometimes include a dissociative quality (not being aware of eating so much).





### Posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD)

PTSD, is a trauma-related disorder and occurs in individuals who have either experienced or witnessed a traumatic event such as death, serious injury or accident, natural disaster, an act of terrorism or war, assault (e.g., rape or torture), or another violent or disturbined incident.

#### Symptoms of PTSD include

- invasive and involuntary memories of the event (e.g., flashbacks or nightmares); emotional detachment or avoidance of reminders of the event;
- negative thoughts or feelings about oneself or others;
- and increased arousal or negative reactions (e.g., irritability angry outbursts, self-destructive behavior, increased startle responses, difficulty sleeping or concentrating).

# PTSD

Females are more likely to have PTSD than their male counterparts (8% compared to 2.3%).

Approximately 5% of adolescents have met the criteria for PTSD in their lifetime.



# Inspiration for My Research on Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature

British scholars
Rose, Thornicroft,
Pinfold, and
Kassam 's (2007)
essay, "250
Labels Used to
Stigmatise People
with Mental
Illness."

They asked
14-year-olds what
words might be
used to describe
someone who
experiences
mental health
problems.



# The following were most prominently used terms:

- Disturbed
- > Nuts
- Confused
- Psycho
- Spastic
- Crazy

- Depression
- Disabled
- Mad
- Unpredictable
- > Insane
- > Loony

- Mental
- Schizophrenia
- Thicko
- Weird
- Different
- Freak



# Laurie Halse Anderson's Wintergirls and The Impossible Knife of Memory



Wintergirls (2009): Lia Overbrook, a high school senior whose symptoms of anorexia nervosa – and problems with self-injury - are exacerbated when her best friend from childhood, Cassie Parrish, dies from complications of bulimia. Overwhelmed by guilt for not answering any of Cassie's thirty-three phone calls the night before she died, and haunted by a hallucination of Cassie that becomes more and more insistent that Lia starve herself, Lia relapses despite having received prior treatment for her eating disorder.

The Impossible Knife of Memory (2014): Eighteen-year-old Hayley Kincain and her father "drifted back and forth across the country in a dented eighteen-wheeler" before he decided Hayley needed to spend her senior year in a regular school, Belmont High School, his alma mater. Anderson's novel pulls readers into Hayley's life as a high school senior who experiences symptoms of anxiety while trying to cope with her father's PTSD and comorbid alcohol and drug use.



# Language Analysis: Wintergirls

Lia counts the calories of her food, and Anderson, using strikethrough font, allows readers to hear Lia's censored thoughts about being hungry. When her stepmother, Jennifer, offers her various items for breakfast, Lia thinks, "Because I can't let myself want them I don't need a muffin (410) [...] and waffles (180) make me gag."



Lia experiences a disturbance in the way her weight and body shape are experienced.

In Chapter 25, Lia sees herself in the mirror and notices that her "metabolism is slowing down again." She sees "yellow bubbles of fat" floating under her skin and feels "disgusting again, weak."

When she describes the second time she was admitted to New Seasons, Lia tells us she weighed 85 pounds, which was "not enough for stuffing a paper Lia girl." Though they told her she had to gain weight, Lia told them her goal was 80 pounds.

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## Language Analysis: Wintergirls

Lia actively participates in self-injury, cutting her skin. In Chapter 17, Lia goes to the movies, sitting in the back of the theater, where she "takes the box of razor blades out of the bag" and thinks

::stupid/ugly/stupid/bitch/stupi d/fat/stupid/baby/stupid/loser/ stupid/lost ::

Lia "inscribe[s] three lines, hushhushhush, into [her] skin. Ghosts trickle out." Lia talks to her mother:

"This is ridiculous. I'm not that sick?"

wintergirl

LAURIE HALSE

"The inability to rationally evaluate your situation is a result of malnourishment and disturbed brain chemistry."

"I hate it when you talk like a textbook."

"I hate it when you starve yourself. I hate it when you cut open your skin, and I hate it when you push us away."

"I hate it, too, [...] But I can't stop,

"You don't want to stop."



# Language Analysis: The Impossible Knife of Memory

Andy's PTSD has been a part of Hayley's world since he was discharged from the Army. She says she is old enough now to understand where her father got his limp and "why he screamed in his sleep and that something inside him was broken."

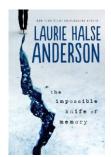
A few days after we moved in, Daddy got unstuck from time again [...] All he heard were exploding IEDs [...] All he saw were body fragments [...] All he tasted was blood." In one flashback, Andy Kincaid remembers a bomb detonating while driving back to the outpost in Afghanistan: "Shock waves ripple through metal, glass, and flesh. Bone crumbles. Skin explodes. Nerves snap [...] I swim through the smoke. Private Stolzfuss still sits behind the wheel [...] She doesn't have a face anymore."

LAURIE HALSE

# Language Analysis: The Impossible Knife of Memory

Hayley explains that her father is afraid of "bridge overpasses" and "toll booths" because they could be hiding "snipers." He avoids "[d]umpsters or trash cans 'cause they could be hiding an IED." She says he "knows it's stupid, but knowing doesn't stop the panic attacks. Sometimes he won't leave the house for days."

Hayley is frustrated with her father's behavior (Chapter 33) and tells him so: "You're a mess, Daddy. [...] No job. No friends. No life. Half the time you can't even take the dog for a walk without freaking out. [...] all you do is sit on your ass and drink."



After her father's friend, Roy, dies, Hayley comes home to find her father "curled into a ball" after having trashed the live room. He drinks heavily, and Hayley spends the night cleaning up broken glass and caring for Captain Kincaid. "His hands were bruised, the knuckles oozing blood, probably from punching the holes in the drywall [...] A monster had rampaged through the house."

"The thing under his skin took over his eyes and made them look dead." (\* \* \* \*)

Finally, at 3:45 a.m., "he puked all over the carpet and finally passed out." Hayley "Laid him on his side, put a bucket by his head, and threw a towel over the mess so the dog wouldn't eat it."



### Language Analysis Activity: Close Reading

- Read the passage, paying attention to how the characters are described (who speaks?)
  - Physical characteristics
  - Emotional characteristics
  - Social characteristics
- Consider the language used by the characters (what do they say?)
  - What terms are used?
  - What do those terms mean? (denotation definition; connotation positive and negative associations with the words)
  - Is the language formal or informal? Is jargon used?
  - Consider the following aspects of language: pace, tone, structure (full sentences, fragments, run-ons); punctuation, spacing.
- Examine the assumptions underlying the language
  - What positionings can you identify based on the words used? (social; political; culpersonal)
  - What beliefs can you identify based on the words used?
  - Is there evidence of stigma?
- What does doing this kind of analysis teach you about the characters, plot, and/or theme?

# Assignments for Wintergirls and The Impossible Knife of Memory

#### **VIDEO & RESPONSE**

#### **Before Reading**

Watch a video related to anorexia or PTSD and post a question or comment about how the videos influenced your understanding of anorexia nervosa or bulimia nervosa, especially within the context of the novel as you start to read.

#### **ADAM RIPPON**

Dr. Matthew Shear PTSD

#### **CHARACTER ANALYSIS**

#### **During Reading**

Choose one character to analyze based on his or her actions in the novel.

# **Identifying Character Traits Worksheet**

**Sample Character Traits** 



# Assignments for Wintergirls and The Impossible Knife of Memory

## FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

#### **During Reading**

Choose one of the chapters from the novel in which Lia Overbrook makes references to being a "real girl" (e.g., Chapter 006.00, Chapter 009.00, Chapter 010.00, Chapter 024.00, etc.).

Examine the use of figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, onomatopoeia).

Make a list of ways that the author employs figurative language and discuss the effects of its use.

# FIGURATIVE LANGUAGE ANALYSIS

#### **During Reading**

Choose one of the vignettes from the novel in which Andy Kincain reflects on his experiences in Iraq (e.g., Chapter 20, Chapter 34, Chapter 45, Chapter 71).

Examine the use of figurative language (metaphor, simile, personification, hyperbole, alliteration, onomatopoeia).

Make a list of ways that the author employs figurative language and discuss the effects of its use.



# Assignments for Wintergirls and The Impossible Knife of Memory

#### **ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION**

#### **After Reading**

Create an artistic interpretation of one of the themes in *Wintergirls* (e.g., body image/self-image, ghosts/spirits, liminal space [the "in-between"], connections to Sleeping Beauty/Persephone, winter, death, losing, illusion of control, etc.).

You may choose to represent the theme in a collage, drawing, sculpture, video, or other visual medium.

Write a memo about the theme, noting at least two places in the novel where evidence of the theme can be identified and describing your interpretation of the theme through visual means.

#### **ARTISTIC INTERPRETATION**

#### **After Reading**

Create an artistic interpretation of one of the themes in *The Impossible Knife of Memory* (e.g., pain of addiction, fidelity, forgiveness, effects of war, trust, etc.)

You may choose to represent the theme in a collage, drawing, sculpture, video, or other visual medium.

Write a memo about the theme, noting at least two places in the novel where evidence of the theme can be identified and describing your interpretation of the theme through visual means.-

# Let's make some lesson plans!

Individually, freewrite about what kinds of issues you might want to emphasize in a lesson on one of Anderson's novels and what CCSS ELA standards you might want to address.

You might also consider how Wintergirls or Impossible Knife of Memory could fit into your current curriculum. Think about themes, characters, plot, issues, language, or style.

Working together in pairs, start with the end in mind.

- What goals do you want to achieve in your lesson (literary language, emotional, social, cognitive)?
- What resources will you need (web-based, literature, research, video, music)?
- What will students do? What will the teacher do?
- How will you assess their learning (writing, project, speech, test)?

My lesson plan template - handout (Aligned with Danielson Model)

Grade Level	What grade are students in?	(1b: Knowledge of Students)
Subject(s)	What content subject is being taught? Is there any overlap with other subjects?	(1a: Demonstrating Knowledge of Content and Pedagogy)
Planning instruction	How long will this lesson take?	
Goals	What do you want students to walk away knowing after the lesson?	(1c: Setting Instructional Outcomes)
Objectives	What are the standards that you will focus this lesson on?	A Section of the sect
Materials	What items do you need to complete the lesson?	(1d: Demonstrating Knowledge of Resources)
Procedures	What will the teacher do? What will students do?	(1e: Designing Coherent Instruction) (3c Engaging Students in Learning)
Assessment	How will you assess the content standards or Common Core Standards?	(1f: Designing Student Assessments) (3d Using Assessment in Instruction)

# Sharing

What would you like to share from your work today? What questions do you still have?

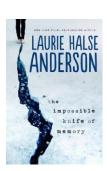


# Thanks! Any questions?

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pks to Laurie Halse Anderson for her

ul novels! Picture from 200







### **Additional Resources**

**Richmond**, **K.J.** (2018, in press). *Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature: Exploring Real Struggles through Fictional Characters*. Under contract with ABC-CLIO/Greenwood Press.

**Richmond**, **K.J.** (2018, In press.). An examination of mental illness, stigma, and language in *My Friend Dahmer*. The ALAN Review 46 (1).

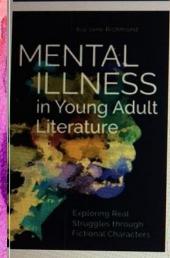
**Richmond, K.J.** (2017, August 23). Language and symptoms of mental illness in young adult literature. <a href="http://www.yawednesday.com/blog/language-and-symptoms-of-mental-illness-in-young-adult-literature">http://www.yawednesday.com/blog/language-and-symptoms-of-mental-illness-in-young-adult-literature</a>

**Richmond**, **K.J.** (2014). Using literature to confront the stigma of mental illness, teach empathy, and break stereotypes. *Language Arts Journal of Michigan* 30 (1), Article 6.





Mary Control



seember 2018, 190 pp, 6 1/8x9 1/4, Cloth vint: 9781440857398 39, £30, £33 Book: 9781440857393 Book pricing available upon request aprint: Greenwood

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### Coming Soon

Mental illness affects approximately one in fipe American teens, and according to recent surveys, one quarter of young adult literature features characters with mental or psychological disorders.

### Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature

Exploring Real Struggles through Fictional Characters

Kia Jane Richmond

1 VOLUME

This book explores how mental illness is portrayed in 21st-century young adult fiction and how selected works can help teachers, librarians, and mental health professionals to more effectively address the needs of students combating mental illness.

#### FEATURES

Offers extensive analysis of contemporary young adult fiction to help teachers and mental health professionals make informed choices when selecting novels to study in their courses or to recommend to individual adolescents

Examines the symptoms and warning signs of mental illness in addiescents in addition to how various disorders are diagnosed and treated

Suggests strategies for incorporating texts into existing educational curricula and community initiatives aimed at confronting the stigma associated with mental illness

Follows a standardized chapter format that makes it easy for readers to learn about the books and the mental illnesses they highlight

Provides an extended list of resources at the end of each chapter that includes additional young adult fiction and nontiction as well as adult fiction texts

Kia Jane Richmond, PhD, is professor of English at Northern Michigan University, where she directs the English Education program. She was selected as the recipient of her university's Excellence in Teaching Award in 2014.

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