

Expression, Action, and Activism: Transforming Trauma in YA Contemporary Realistic Fiction

After the Parkland shooting, one journalist wrote that it should be no surprise that the school's students sparked a nationwide movement against gun violence, as they had been fed a diet of dystopian fiction. What informs students about their civic duties and rights? Does civics education transform students, or is it the YA fiction that they read? Or, is it a combination of both in addition to other societal influences?

In "The Power of Active Citizenship: A Renewed Focus on Teaching Civics Education" by Bob Graham and Randi Weingarten, they explain that in the case of the Marjory Stoneman Douglas students they were the "first wave of students in Florida public schools to be taught civics in nearly four decades. The Stoneman Douglas students are the exception; research shows us that "only nine states and the District of Columbia require one year of U.S. government or civics." Given this information it seems that civics education has a less significant influence on young activists and perhaps it is more likely that today's youth are inspired to activism by the fiction they read and the films they view.

Recent works of contemporary realistic fiction place YA characters amid violence and its aftermath. My paper will explore the effects of the individual's trauma and demonstrate how each character copes with trauma by taking the internal conflict and transforming it into an external expression, action and/or public activism.

