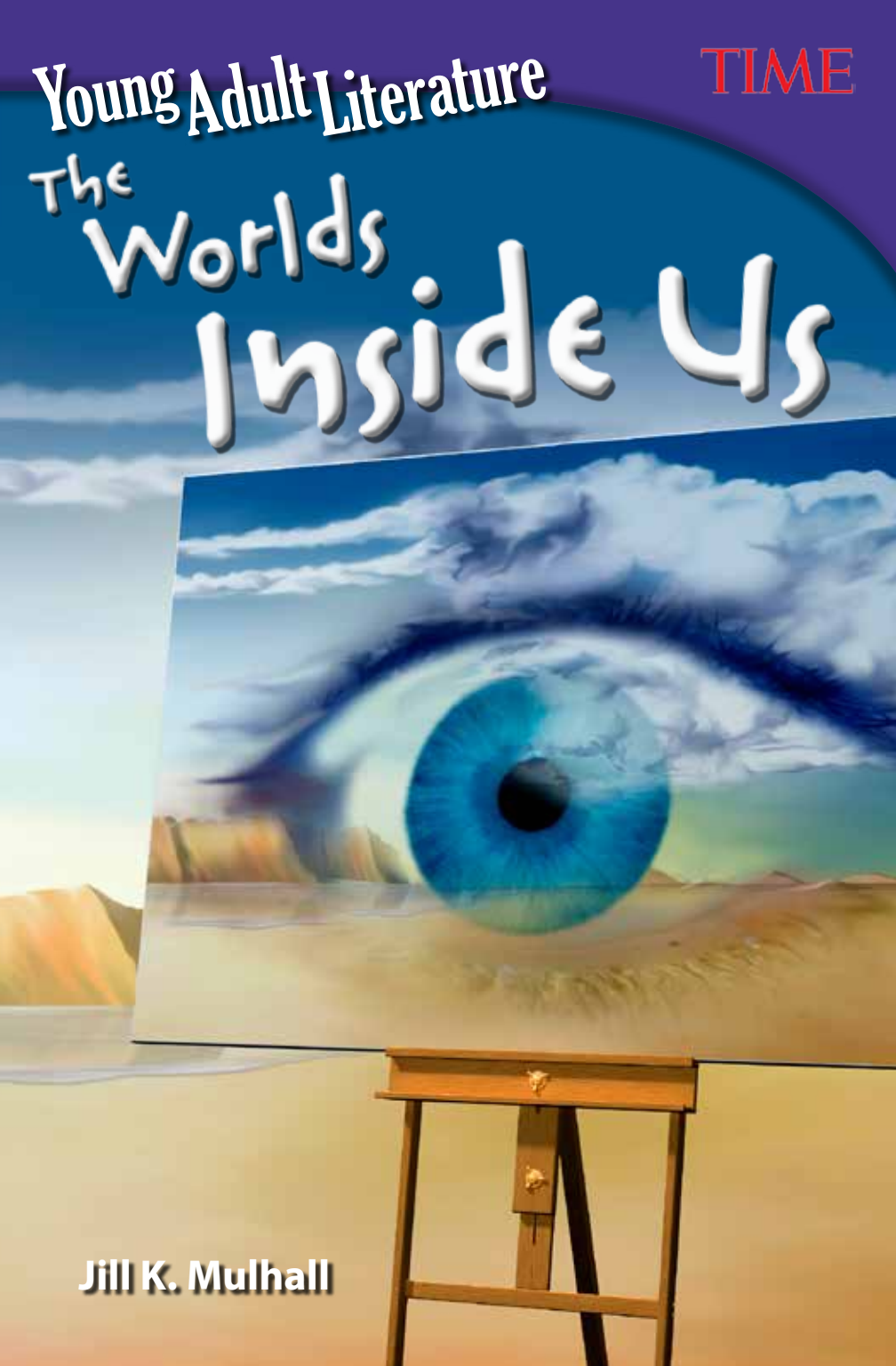
Young Adult Literature

TIME

The Worlds Inside Us



Jill K. Mulhall

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The Inside World

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One of the wonderful things about books is how they ignite our imagination. Open a book, and you find yourself in a world that looks nothing like your own. You can be inside the head of someone who lived 300 years ago or 300 years from now. You can experience what it is like to be a fisherman, a famous actress, or a Spanish nobleman.

But sometimes, one isn't looking to read about a time or place that is totally different. Sometimes, a person wants to read about someone who feels the same way he or she feels. This is especially true during the young adult years.

The time between childhood and adulthood is difficult. Growing up means **navigating** a complicated world of relationships and expectations. The pressures of home, school, and changing emotions can seem overwhelming. Books can help. You can read about someone whose friends have stopped talking to her. You can read about a boy who has lost his mother. Or you can read about a girl who feels self-conscious about her body. Going through these experiences with the **protagonist** in a book can help you better deal with them yourself.





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Coming of Age

Many novels about teenagers are called *coming-of-age stories*. These are books in which young people are growing from childhood to adulthood. They are changing along the way. Generally, very little action happens in these books. They are really about what the character thinks and feels.

In a Relationship

All kinds of relationships have been explored in young adult novels. Characters interact with boyfriends, girlfriends, teachers, friends, bullies, parents, grandparents, siblings, and even pets. If you are going through a difficult time in your life, you can bet there is a book out there in which a character has a similar problem!

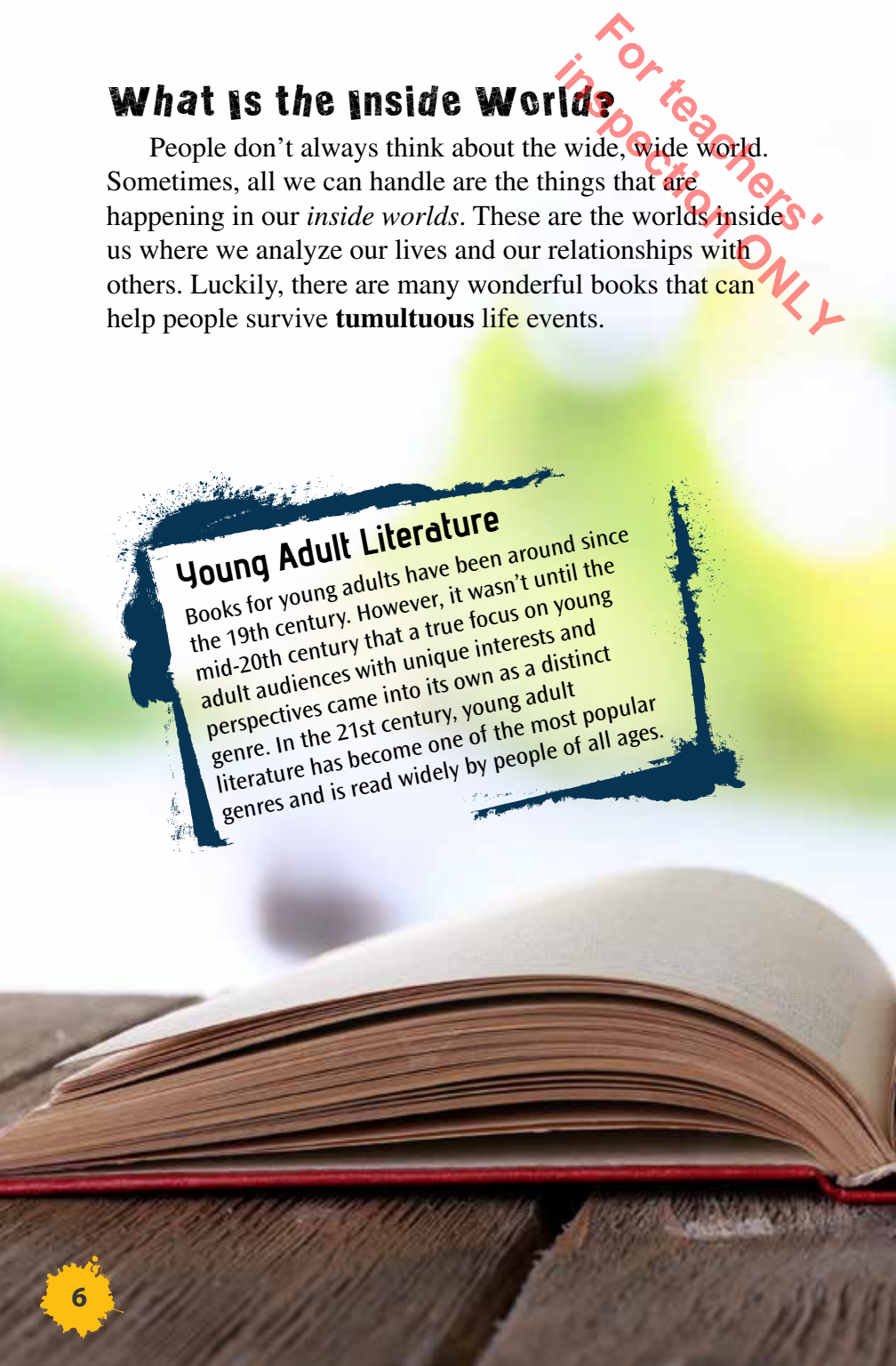
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What is the Inside World?

People don't always think about the wide, wide world. Sometimes, all we can handle are the things that are happening in our *inside worlds*. These are the worlds inside us where we analyze our lives and our relationships with others. Luckily, there are many wonderful books that can help people survive **tumultuous** life events.

Young Adult Literature

Books for young adults have been around since the 19th century. However, it wasn't until the mid-20th century that a true focus on young adult audiences with unique interests and perspectives came into its own as a distinct genre. In the 21st century, young adult literature has become one of the most popular genres and is read widely by people of all ages.



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Words That Relate to the Inside World

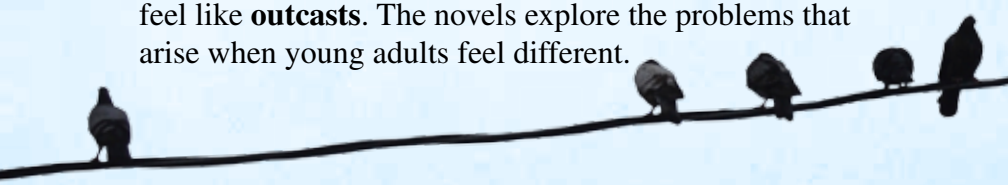
acceptance
alienation
bullying
change
communication
courage
depression
emotions
family
fear
first love
fitting in
freedom
friends
grief
home
independence
learning
loneliness
loss
loyalty
outcast
peer pressure
pride
romance
school
self-esteem
social awareness
taking a stand
voice

The Outsiders

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There is probably no time of life where "fitting in" is prized as heavily as during young adulthood. Many young people want to make sure they do not stand out. They don't want to draw any special attention. During this time of growth and change, fitting in might seem like the only way to protect yourself from harm.

However, sometimes it is impossible not to keep your world from coming into conflict with the outside world. Many young adult novels tell stories about characters who feel like **outcasts**. The novels explore the problems that arise when young adults feel different.



Growing Pains

Growing up is never easy. But for some characters, the time between childhood and adulthood is **torturous**. Many young adult novels explore the pain that comes with getting older. Some characters want to grow up too quickly. Others ignore growing up, wanting to hold onto their childhoods. Perhaps the most famous of these is Holden Caufield, the main character of J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*. Holden knows that adulthood is approaching. But he can't stand the way most adults behave. The novel explores how painful it is to grow up when you wish you didn't have to.



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Phony Baloney

The biggest problem Holden Caufield has with adults is what he describes as their "phoniness." He thinks that adults talk one way but act another. He worries that when he grows up, he will become one of the phonies that he hates.





Merry Go Round

For most of *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden is miserable. But he does have a few moments of joy near the end. He is watching his little sister on a carousel. Carousels, with their happy music and colorful animals, are traditional symbols of youth and innocence.

Reader's Guide

For teachers' inspection ONLY

1. Look at the chart on page 15 of books that have been banned since 1980. Should some books be banned from classrooms and public libraries? Why or why not?
2. In what ways can reading books help people through difficult times in their lives?
3. *Inside worlds* are the worlds of our minds, where we think about how we fit into society. How does your inside world impact your decisions?
4. Many of the novels described in this book have been made into movies. Describe how the experience of watching a movie is different from and/or similar to reading a book.

