

Stefano Tarantino

Professor Mary Warner

English 112B

22 November 2023

Annotated Bibliography

Young adult literature has evolved over the years to encompass a diverse range of themes and genres, reflecting the multifaceted nature of the adolescent experience. One such genre that has gained significant popularity is sports fiction. The fusion of sports and young adult narratives provides a compelling lens through which adolescents can explore their identity, relationships, and the quest for meaning. This essay delves into young adult novels centered around sports. It examines how these narratives resonate with young readers and contribute to their search for meaning, drawing insights from Mary Warner's seminal work, *Adolescents and the Search for Meaning: Tapping The Powerful Resource of Story*.

Young adult novels often use sports as a backdrop to explore the intricate journey of self-discovery and identity formation. Characters engage in sports to understand their strengths, weaknesses, and passions. By participating in athletic endeavors, protagonists navigate challenges, setbacks, and triumphs, mirroring adolescents' real-life struggles on their path to self-realization. The team dynamics inherent in sports provide a rich backdrop for exploring the complexities of relationships. Whether it be the camaraderie among teammates or the challenges of competition, these novels delve into the interpersonal aspects of adolescence. Through the lens of sports, authors skillfully weave narratives highlighting themes of teamwork, friendship, and the impact of collaboration on personal growth. Mary Warner's insights into the search for meaning in adolescence resonate with the emotional landscapes of sports-oriented young adult

novels. As characters face triumphs and tribulations, they grapple with profound questions about purpose and significance. The emotional resonance of these narratives allows young readers to connect with the characters' journeys, fostering a deeper understanding of their search for meaning.

Sports fiction confines to the playing field; it often serves as a platform to address social issues. Through these novels, authors tackle themes such as discrimination, socioeconomic disparities, and gender equality. By intertwining societal concerns with personal growth narratives, young adult sports literature becomes a powerful tool for educating readers about broader issues while encouraging them to reflect on their role in creating positive change.

In young adult literature, sports narratives are a vibrant and dynamic genre that engages adolescents on multiple levels. By exploring identity, relationships, and the search for meaning through the lens of sports, these novels provide a compelling and relatable platform for young readers to navigate the challenges of adolescence. Mary Warner's insights into the power of storytelling to tap into the search for meaning align seamlessly with the emotional and thematic depth found in young adult sports fiction, creating a rich literary landscape that resonates with the complex experiences of today's youth.

Annotations:

1. (New Read) Feinstein, John. *Foul Trouble*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.

Foul Trouble by John Feinstein follows the story of Terrell Jamerson, a talented high school basketball player whose life takes a dramatic turn when he becomes entangled in a scandal that threatens his future in the sport. As Terrell navigates the complexities of amateur basketball, he discovers the industry's darker side, including corruption and exploitation. The

novel explores themes of integrity, loyalty, and the challenges young athletes face in a highly competitive and often unscrupulous environment.

Foul Trouble by John Feinstein is an essential read for young adults, providing a gripping narrative within high school basketball and a cautionary tale about the ethical challenges in amateur sports. The novel addresses issues of corruption, exploitation, and the moral dilemmas faced by young athletes, offering valuable insights into the complexities of the sports industry. By engaging with themes of integrity and personal values, "Foul Trouble" encourages young adults to critically examine the world of competitive sports critically, fostering a greater understanding of the ethical choices they may encounter in their own lives.

2. (New Read) Fader, Mirin. *Giannis: The Improbable Rise of an NBA MVP* First edition., Hachette Books, 2021.

Mirin Fader's *Giannis: The Improbable Rise of an NBA MVP* chronicles the extraordinary journey of Giannis Antetokounmpo, tracing his humble beginnings in Greece to his ascent as a two-time NBA Most Valuable Player. The biography explores the challenges, triumphs, and personal growth of the Milwaukee Bucks superstar, revealing the resilience and determination that fueled his improbable rise. Fader's narrative provides an intimate portrait of Giannis, offering readers a deeper understanding of the human side behind the basketball phenom and the inspirational nature of his journey.

Mirin Fader's "Giannis: The Improbable Rise of an NBA MVP" offers a compelling, inspirational narrative that transcends the basketball world. The biography delves into the life of Giannis Antetokounmpo, detailing his remarkable journey from a struggling immigrant in Greece to becoming a two-time NBA MVP. Through Fader's meticulous storytelling, young adults are not only exposed to the thrilling dynamics of professional sports but also to the

universal themes of perseverance, resilience, and the pursuit of dreams against all odds. Giannis's story is a powerful testament to the potential for personal growth and success, making this biography an essential read for young adults seeking motivation and guidance.

3. (New Read) de la Peña, Matt. *Ball Don't Lie*. New York, Delacorte Press, 2005.

Ball Don't Lie by Matt de la Peña follows the tumultuous life of Sticky, a teenage basketball prodigy with a troubled past. Living in foster care, Sticky finds solace and purpose on the basketball court, where his raw talent attracts attention. As he navigates the challenges of his personal life and the competitive world of street basketball, Sticky discovers the redemptive power of the game and the potential for a brighter future.

Ball Don't Lie by Matt de la Peña is a poignant and gritty exploration of adolescence, resilience, and the transformative power of sports. The novel not only delves into the complexities of the foster care system but also portrays the cathartic and redemptive qualities of basketball for the protagonist, Sticky. Through the raw and authentic narrative, young adults are exposed to the harsh realities many individuals face in similar circumstances, fostering empathy and understanding. This compelling story is a powerful tool for sparking conversations about identity, perseverance, and the potential for positive change, making it an essential read for young adults navigating their journeys of self-discovery.

4. (New Read) Knight, Phil. *Shoe Dog*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.

Shoe Dog by Phil Knight is a memoir that chronicles the remarkable journey of Nike's co-founder and former CEO. The narrative follows Knight's entrepreneurial pursuits, from the founding of Blue Ribbon Sports, the precursor to Nike, to the global phenomenon the brand became. The book provides insights into Nike's challenges, triumphs, and evolution, offering a compelling story of business innovation, determination, and the pursuit of a vision.

Shoe Dog by Phil Knight is a captivating memoir that provides a behind-the-scenes look at the founding and evolution of Nike and offers invaluable lessons in entrepreneurship and perseverance. Knight's narrative is a testament to the power of vision, determination, and the willingness to take risks in pursuing one's dreams. For young adults navigating a rapidly changing world, the book is an inspiring example of how a relentless commitment to innovation and a passion for one's ideals can lead to unprecedented success. Knight's journey, filled with setbacks and triumphs, provides a roadmap for aspiring entrepreneurs and instills the importance of resilience, creativity, and ethical business practices. It is a compelling and educational read for young minds on the brink of their ventures.

5. (New Read) Allen, Carrie .S. *Michigan VS. The Boys*. Kids Can Press, 2019.

Michigan vs. The Boys by Carrie S. Allen follows the story of Michigan Manning, a skilled ice hockey player who fights for her place on an all-boys high school hockey team after being cut from the girls' team. Facing adversity, gender bias, and resistance from her male teammates, Michigan strives to prove herself on the ice while challenging societal expectations. The novel explores perseverance, gender equality, and pursuing one's passion in the face of opposition, providing a compelling and empowering narrative for readers.

Michigan vs. The Boys by Carrie S. Allen is a compelling and empowering novel that tackles themes of resilience, gender equality, and determination. The story follows Michigan Manning as she confronts the challenges of breaking into a male-dominated space, fighting for her place on an all-boys hockey team. The narrative highlights young women's struggles pursuing their passions in traditionally male-dominated fields and emphasizes the importance of resilience, teamwork, and self-discovery. For young adults, this novel is an inspirational and

thought-provoking exploration of identity, breaking stereotypes, and standing up for one's dreams in the face of adversity.

6. Epplin, Luke. *Our Team: The Epic Story of Four Men and the World Series That Changed Baseball*. First edition. New York, Flatiron Books, 2021.

Our Team by Luke Epplin tells the story of the St. Louis Cardinals baseball team during the mid-20th century, focusing on the racial integration of the group. The narrative unfolds through the experiences of three key figures: Branch Rickey, the team's innovative general manager; Eddie Stanky, the scrappy second baseman; and Tom Alston, the talented but marginalized African American player. The novel explores the racial tensions and challenges faced by the Cardinals as they strive to overcome prejudice and become a symbol of integration and unity in American sports.

Our Team by Luke Epplin is a compelling historical novel that not only delves into the world of baseball but also explores pivotal moments in the struggle for racial integration within the sport. The narrative provides a nuanced look at the challenges the St. Louis Cardinals face as they navigate the racial tensions of mid-20th century America. This novel is a powerful educational tool for young adults, offering insights into the historical context of racial inequality and the transformative impact sports can have on breaking down barriers. Through the stories of real-life figures like Branch Rickey, Eddie Stanky, and Tom Alston, "Our Team" encourages readers to reflect on the importance of equity, unity, and social progress, making it a valuable and thought-provoking read for young minds.

7. Shirley, Paul. *Ball Boy*. Paperback. Fourth Bar Books. 2021.

Ball Boy by Paul Shirley is a memoir that reflects on the author's experiences as an NBA player, precisely his time as a reserve player or "ball boy" for various teams. Shirley provides a

humorous and insightful account of the challenges and realities of being on the fringes of professional basketball, detailing the unique perspective of a player who is not in the spotlight. The book offers a candid and engaging narrative that explores the highs and lows of the author's unconventional journey through the world of basketball.

Ball Boy by Paul Shirley offers a refreshingly candid and humorous perspective on the less glamorous side of professional basketball, presenting the author's experiences as a reserve player with wit and insight. The memoir not only delves into the challenges of navigating the fringes of the NBA but also provides valuable life lessons about resilience, adaptability, and finding one's place in adversity. Young adults, particularly those interested in sports or aspiring to enter competitive fields, will appreciate the behind-the-scenes look at the realities of professional athletics. Shirley's storytelling, laced with humor and authenticity, is an engaging narrative that encourages readers to embrace the unpredictable journey of pursuing their passions, making "Ball Boy" a relatable and motivating read for young minds.

8. Lupica, Mike. *The Underdogs* Unabridged., Penguin Audio, 2011.

The Underdogs by Mike Lupica is a sports-themed novel centered around middle school friends forming a Football team. Led by their passionate and determined coach, the underdog team faces numerous challenges, both on and off the field, as they strive for success. The narrative explores themes of friendship, teamwork, and overcoming obstacles, providing a heartwarming and inspiring story for young readers.

The Underdogs by Mike Lupica is a compelling sports novel that captures the essence of teamwork and competition and addresses essential life lessons for young adults. Lupica's narrative explores themes of friendship, perseverance, and resilience, providing young readers with relatable characters and situations. The novel is an excellent read for young adults as it not

only entertains with its sports-centric plot but also imparts valuable insights into the significance of determination, unity, and facing challenges head-on.

9. Nemens, Emily. *The Cactus League*. First edition. New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020.

The Cactus League by Emily Nemens is a novel that immerses readers in spring training baseball in the Arizona desert. The narrative is structured around the interconnected lives of various characters, including players, coaches, and fans, as they navigate the complexities of the sport and their relationships. Set against the backdrop of the Cactus League, the novel weaves a tapestry of stories that explore ambition, love, and the pursuit of dreams within professional baseball's unique and competitive environment.

Young adults should delve into Emily Nemens' *The Cactus League* as it offers a rich and immersive exploration of the world of professional baseball, providing a nuanced understanding of the complexities within the sport. Through its interconnected characters, the novel delves into themes of ambition, relationships, and pursuing dreams, offering readers relatable and thought-provoking narratives. The unique setting of spring training in the Arizona desert adds a layer of intrigue, making it an engaging read for those interested in sports culture. Additionally, Nemens' storytelling prowess and attention to character development make "The Cactus League" not just a sports novel but a compelling reflection on human nature, making it a valuable literary experience for young adults.

10. Deuker, Carl. *Gym Candy*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co, 2007.

Gym Candy by Carl Deuker follows the story of Mick Johnson, a high school football player with dreams of becoming a star. Driven by intense pressure to succeed and to live up to his father's expectations, Mick turns to steroids to enhance his performance. As the consequences

of his choices unfold, the novel explores the dangerous allure of performance-enhancing drugs in the competitive world of high school sports.

Young adults should read Carl Deuker's *Gym Candy* for its potent exploration of the pressures and ethical dilemmas athletes face in pursuing success. The novel provides a compelling and cautionary tale about the consequences of performance-enhancing drugs, shedding light on the physical and psychological toll they can take on individuals. Through the character of Mick Johnson, readers are confronted with the moral complexities of competition, parental expectations, and the sacrifices made in the relentless pursuit of athletic excellence. "Gym Candy" is a thought-provoking narrative that encourages young readers to critically examine the values, choices, and societal pressures inherent in competitive sports.

Work Cited:

1. Feinstein, John. *Foul Trouble*. New York, Alfred A. Knopf, 2013.
2. Fader, Mirin. *Giannis: The Improbable Rise of an NBA MVP* First edition., Hachette Books, 2021.
3. De la Peña, Matt. *Ball Don't Lie*. New York, Delacorte Press, 2005.
4. Knight, Phil. *Shoe Dog*. Simon & Schuster, 2016.
5. Allen, Carrie .S. *Michigan VS. The Boys*. Kids Can Press, 2019.
6. Epplin, Luke. *Our Team: The Epic Story of Four Men and the World Series That Changed Baseball*. First edition. New York, Flatiron Books, 2021.
7. Shirley, Paul. *Ball Boy*. Paperback. Fourth Bar Books. 2021.
8. Lupica, Mike. *The Underdogs* Unabridged., Penguin Audio, 2011.
9. Nemens, Emily. *The Cactus League*. First edition. New York, Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 2020.
10. Deuker, Carl. *Gym Candy*. Boston, Houghton Mifflin Co, 2007.
11. Warner, Mary. *Adolescents In the Search For Meaning: Tapping The Powerful Resource of Story*. Scarecrow Press, 2006.