

Feminist Books for Young Readers: Fiction Booklist

By Jenna Knorr

***Pink* by Lili Wilkinson (2009).** Wilkinson, L. (2009) *Pink*. New York, NY: HarperTeen.

Ava seems to have it all: a cool girlfriend, liberal parents, and the freedom to do anything she wants. Well... *almost* anything. In her parents' adavance to raise her as a non-conforming individual, Ava has a hard time admitting to herself that what she *really* wants is to attend an academically-driven private school. *Pink* explores a woman's right to choose, even if the choice that you make is to put your head down, study hard, kiss a boy, and wear pink.

Themes: choice/agency, sexuality, identity, romance/relationships; **Genre:** realistic fiction

***Sorrow's Knot* by Erin Bow (2013).** Bow, E. (2013). *Sorrow's knot*. New York, NY: Arthur A. Levine.

Otter is learning her mother Willow's trade as a Binder. Binders tie their community's dead with intricate ropes and knots to prevent them from coming back to life. When the binding process begins to fail and society is endangered, Otter, along with her best friends Kestrel and Cricket, must find a solution. Set in a matriarchal society, *Sorrow's Knot* is a great read for young feminists interested in fantasy, because fantasy has been notoriously non-/anti-feminist.

Themes: mother-daughter relationships, matriarchy/matrilineality; **Genre:** fantasy

***Uprising* by Margaret Peterson Haddix (2007).** Peterson Haddix, M. (2007). *Uprising*. New York, NY: Simon and Schuster.

Bella, Yetta, and Jane all come from diverse backgrounds, but the cause that unites them is the labour strikes of early 20th century America. Set against the backdrop of the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory, this story explores the rights (a.k.a. lack of rights) of female workers in the early days of the American women's suffrage movement. Labour strikes are inherently feminist issues, as the corporate world has long neglected the role and acknowledgement of female workers, even though female workers are dominant in many industries. When the Triangle Shirtwaist factory burned in 1911, 123 of the 146 employees who were killed were women.

Themes: women's suffrage, labour strikes, capitalism/anti-capitalism; **Genres:** historical fiction, realistic fiction

***Under the Mesquite* by Guadalupe Garcia McCall (2011).** Garcia McCall, G. (2011). *Under the mesquite*. New York, NY: Lee & Low.

Lupita's family is from Mexico, but they have immigrated to America where they live in Texas. Lupita's seven younger siblings are in her care because her mother is very ill. Just shy of fifteen, Lupita must take on the maternal role in the family and try to do what's best for her siblings, her mother, her family, *and* herself. Lupita contemplates how the various parts of her life intersect and how they fit together to establish her as a woman, especially as her quinceañera draws near. This novel is written in verse, and while it includes some Spanish words, it is not inaccessible for a reader who does not know Spanish.

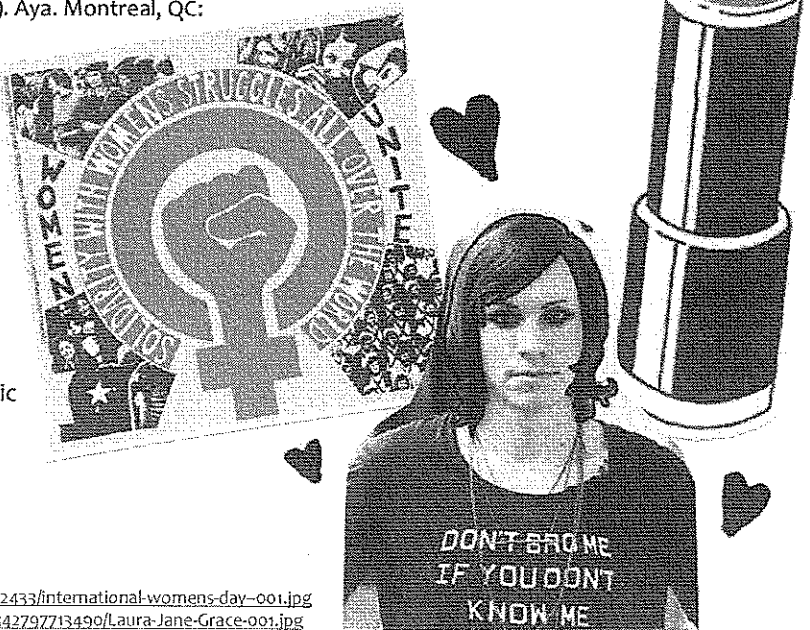
Themes: coming of age, illness in the family, immigration; **Genres:** poetry, realistic fiction

***Aya* by Marguerite Abouet, illustrated by Clément Oubrerie, translated by Helge Dascher (2005, English-language edition in 2008).** Abouet, M. & Oubrerie, C. (2005). *Aya*. Montreal, QC:

Drawn and Quarterly.

Aya and her friends Adjoua and Bintou live in Yop City (Yopougon), Ivory Coast. It's the late 1970s and Ivory Coast is a stable and affluent nation. Aya's story destroys the false colonialist idea that everyone in Africa is (and always has been) poor and hungry, and instead shows Aya's everyday life as a teen, hanging out with friends and checking out boys. *Aya* was originally published as comic books that were later amalgamated into a graphic novel.

Themes: colonialism, romance/relationships; **Genres:** graphic novel, series fiction, realistic fiction, historical fiction, autobiography



Images

Solidarity: <http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2010/3/8/1268052612433/international-womens-day-001.jpg>

Laura Jane Grace: <http://static.guim.co.uk/sys-images/Guardian/Pix/pictures/2012/7/20/1342797713490/Laura-Jane-Grace-001.jpg>

Lipstick: <https://creativelz.files.wordpress.com/2012/05/lipstick-4-5-12.jpg>