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TEACHING, LEADERSHIP,  
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AN INTERACTIVE STUDY OF TEACHERS' ONLINE DISCUSSIONS OF YOUNG  
ADULT LITERATURE

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This qualitative study examined the conversations of teachers as they engaged in online discussions of young adult literature. It was framed within theories of reader response and dialogic professional development. The study was conducted as a case study using an emergent design in a naturalistic setting to answer the research question. The research site for the study was a small, nationwide online mailing list, or listerv. The participants were middle school teachers who volunteered to engage in online discussions about the literature that they teach.

Data were analyzed with the constant comparative method using an iterative and recursive strategy. From this analysis a grounded theory was developed: The nature of teachers' reading of young adult literature is a dynamic, interactive process. Given that teachers are not the intended audience for these texts, the subject positions in which they are compelled to process them creates interplay among critic, reader, and teacher. The dynamic of these positions is variable, depending upon the background and orientations of individual readers.

The teachers' discussions adhered to common notions of reading texts, seldom engaging in critical readings or discussions with an eye toward social-cultural issues and ideologies. Discussions tended to be monologic, rather than dialogic in nature. This could

be a result of a combination of factors; the electronic medium, the small size of the group (22 participants), and the demands placed on participants' time. The results of the study indicate that the teachers increased their knowledge of their subject matter, gained insights in their understanding of pedagogical practices, and experienced personal and professional growth. Many participants also found that, although the technology allowed them to participate in a book group, their commitment to the project and to the literature became overshadowed by the demands of teaching.