Reading War: Modern Warfare in the Age of Terror and Recent American Literature

Kyle Anthony Kovacs
READING WAR:
MODERN WARFARE IN THE AGE OF TERROR AND RECENT AMERICAN LITERATURE

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Young Adult Literature is one of the fastest growing and most widely read genres of literature currently being produced. While it is marketed to adolescents, Susan Carpenter of the LA Times recently reported that over fifty-five percent of the buyers of books “designated for children aged 12 to 17 are actually age 18 or older” with the largest readership group being “between the ages of 30 and 44.” Young Adult Literature then takes on immense importance with its wide readership demographic and its potential to influence and inform multiple generations simultaneously.

America has been fighting the Global War on Terror since the late 1970’s, although most only became aware of the conflict after the horrific events of September 11, 2001. The style of combat being fought is a new evolution in the history of warfare. War has a long history of representation in the arts, and Young Adult Literature has proven no exception. War and all its related struggles and traumas have found voice in Young Adult texts. This thesis is a literature study that will seek to examine the ways in which the traumas of fighting and returning from modern warfare are being portrayed and related to the readers of Young Adult texts. Modern Warfare and its affects should provide a socio-historical context in which Young Adult texts can be fully understood and appreciated. Young Adult Literature ought to be analyzed because of its wide reach. This study will feature Orson Scott Card’s 1985 novel Ender’s Game and Rick Riordan’s
Percy Jackson series as primary texts. Riordan’s series contains five novels which will be treated as a single text. The first novel, The Lightning Thief, was released in 2005 and will, in conjunction with Card’s novel, offer a pre and post 9/11 view. Segments of other Young Adult novels will be used as supplementary texts providing additional support for the thesis’s conclusions. This study of Young Adult Literature will view the ways insurgency warfare is being reflected in the plots and tone of Young Adult novels and offer reflections on how both adolescent and adult Americans are comprehending and coping with life during the War on Terror.

This study will begin by explaining and orientating its readers to the changes in modern warfare that are being portrayed in Young Adult texts. This will be accomplished through my own observations, by reviewing recent works on the changed nature of warfare, like Dick Couch’s Down Range: Navy SEALS in the War on Terrorism, and through scholarly works which examine the impact of the new style of modern warfare, such as Michael Stephenson’s The Last Full Measure: How Soldiers Die in Battle and Shane Harris’s The Watchers: The Rise of America’s Surveillance State. An emphasis will be placed on explaining how Young Adult texts mirror the ways in which modern warfare is different through:

- A reliance on guerilla tactics as main body actions and not conventional two army warfare.
- A proliferation of ethereal insurgency forces.
- The loss of clearly identifiable battlefields and combatants.
- A need to defend against foes who strike at home and/or against noncombatants.
These points will form a basis for comparison when looking at the ways Young Adult Literature is reflecting real world traumas.

The chapters of this thesis will offer a close reading of the Young Adult texts. Prospective chapter subjects include depictions of what being at war is like, the feminine aspects of courage and war, the ethereal enemy, shadow strikes, and the vulnerability of home, and finally the difficulty of returning and restarting after conflict ends. Trauma theory will be used as a lens for observing and explaining the tone and actions of the novels. Cathy Caruth’s *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* will be used as a main pillar for the analysis of trauma and the ways in which the Young Adult protagonists navigate it. Bruno Bettelheim’s *The Uses of Enchantment: The Meanings and Importance of Fairy Tales* will serve as an established model to make the similar claim that Young Adult Literature can help adolescents relate and understand the chaotic world they are growing up in.

A variety of scholarship written implicitly for studying Young Adult Literature will be considered to emphasize and support my claims. Chris Crowe’s “Young Adult Literature: Peace-Keeping Forces: YA War Books” will be significant to support a claim that Young Adult Literature can impact its readers’ thinking. However, in opposition to Crowe’s opinion, this thesis will support a claim that Young Adult Literature, through its realistic depictions of trauma similar to that being experienced during the War on Terror, indoctrinates adolescents to understanding and surviving with the current war rather than preventing future violence.
This study should prove significant because of its timeliness and its potential for helping explain the nation’s current relationship with its foreign wars. It would be useful to understand how Young Adult Literature may be perpetuating or exposing adolescents to the stark realities of life during an insurgency war or the way adults who have grown up with the War on Terror as a constant are reflecting on the war and its effects. An examination of what Young Adult texts are doing by mirroring modern warfare could shed light on the psychological relationship between war and adolescent noncombatants. This work could lead to a greater cognizance of the effects that reading has on adults. The brutally realistic portrayals of war and trauma, in conjunction with the hopeful or at least safe returns for the protagonists of Young Adult texts, leads to a significant discussion of why adults are reading Young Adult Literature and what they are getting from it that this project can hypothesize answers for.

The greatest value of this work comes from its synthesis of subject material and its timeliness. Through a combination of a historical perspective on how we came to this current War on Terror and Young Adult Literature’s communication with this war, we can better understand the war’s far reaching influences. Young Adult Literature has certainly been affected and in turn is affecting adolescents as they develop into adults. As the War on Terror does not seem likely to end soon, it is important to understand how adolescents and adults are understanding and adapting to living during the conflict.
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A THESIS

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For the degree of Master of Arts

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I am indebted to my many friends who provided unfailing support and encouragement, especially when I began to doubt my abilities. They were always willing to read drafts or hear me vent my frustrations. I am blest to have too many friends to thank individually. I have succeeded thanks to all of you. My life is greater for having you a part of it.
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A Thesis By
Kyle A. Kovacs
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Reading War: 
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And now the youth 
was to enter the line of battle with his lord, 
his first time to be tested as fighter. 
His spirit did not break and the ancestral blade 
would keep its edge, as the dragon discovered 
as soon as they came together in the combat.
- Beowulf (2625-2630)

Introduction:

War occupies a central pillar in the formation of the human identity. Since our Paleolithic ancestors first fashioned weapons from sharpened rocks and recorded warfare in cave paintings, war has been used as the litmus test to create heroes and villains, spur the invention of new technology, and offer a pathway for reflection of a society. The indescribably horrible events of September 11, 2001 paralyzed America when war was violently thrust to the forefront of the national consciousness. When the people of the United States could move again, they were presented with a choice between mobilizing towards or fleeing from war. This conflict, known as the Global War on Terror, is being fought in both in the headlines of Iraq and Afghanistan and silently in places like Chechnya, the Philippines and Mexico. This global war did not simply begin on September 11; careful research and analysis reveals the conflict’s origins begin in the 1980’s and some of its most prevailing attitudes began to appear even earlier.

Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* and Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson* series¹ are principle examples of texts that display the influences of American literature’s engagement with the Global War on Terror. These novels are specific examples of Young

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¹ The *Percy Jackson* series will be used to denote the entirety of the *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series by Rick Riordan. The series is comprised of five books published between 2005-2009. In chronological and publication order, the books are: *The Lightning Thief*, *The Sea of Monsters*, *The Titan’s Curse*, *The Battle of the Labyrinth*, and *The Last Olympian*. 
Adult Literature (YAL) that have been shaped by the major issues associated with the war and can be viewed as representational of the wider changes taking place in American fiction. This thesis will constitute a literature review of the *Percy Jackson* series and *Ender’s Game*, and will offer an analysis of how the Global War on Terror\(^2\) has permeated into recent American literature and what effects it could have on readership. Young Adult Literature offers a poignant insight into modern warfare’s effects on the wider public because of its marketplace proliferation and diverse readership. Susan Carpenter’s *LA Times* article, “Most Young Adult Book Buyers Are Not Young Adults,” explains the benefits of examining YAL because “55% of buyers of books designated for children aged 12 to 17 are actually age 18 or older. Buyers between the ages of 30 and 44 account for the largest percentage of young adult sales” (n.p.). These statistics make YAL a viable source for examining both what is being presented to the nation’s youth and what adults are choosing to focus on in their purchases. The age range for the largest consumers of YAL are, as Carpenter reported, adults “between the ages of 30 and 44” (n.p.). This is crucial because these readers have grown up with the War on Terror and are continuing to communicate with its effects via their reading choices.

Literature, much like warfare, has always proven an insightful window into a society. Young Adult Literature has a history of portraying real world problems in accessible forms for adolescents. For example, Tamar Hager’s article, “New Miseries in Old Attire: Nuclear Adolescent Novels Published in the United States in the 1980’s,” seeks to understand YAL’s involvement with Cold War fears. Hagar’s article is typical of the larger trend in YAL to involve protagonists in plots that deal with timely issues. This

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\(^2\) This study acknowledges the many military and political issues the use of this term can conjure. For the purposes of this study, the Global War on Terror will refer to the military actions the United States has taken around the world to disrupt the activities of organized terrorist (another loaded term) groups.
study seeks to follow that tradition with an analysis of YAL’s concerns regarding modern warfare. The concern shown by the protagonists of the *Percy Jackson* series for Manhattan’s population during the Titan War and the jingoist bugger\(^3\) paranoia of Ender’s society are reflections of real world attitudes. Societal institutions have often mirrored the values and fears of a culture. The solidarity and essential oneness of the phalanx embodied the loyalty that was at the heart of the ancient Grecian city-state culture. In a similar manner, Napoleonic warfare’s choreographed and heavily ruled tactics reflected the gentility and honorable conduct that was prided during the eighteenth century. Today, recent American literature is reflecting an American nation concerned with protecting the homeland from faceless enemies.

The response of American literature to the Global War on Terror can be viewed as a response to a national trauma. Bessel van der Kolk and Alexander C. McFarlane note in their essay on literary trauma theory, “The Black Hole of Trauma,” that “history is written in blood” and there is often a preoccupation with understanding responses to tragedy (487). Trauma, in both physiological and emotional senses, is inseparable from warfare. American literature has logically begun attempting to understand the recurring traumas of the War on Terror. The emotional outpouring and solidarity movement following the September 11 attacks speaks to a national response to trauma, and the armed conflicts America has actively engaged in following the attacks in New York, Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania are a continuation of the response to that initial trauma. There is an innate need to remember traumas and to relay understanding of traumas; this is made easier through communal involvement. The traumas of life during

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\(^3\) The paranoia and negative attitude surrounding the bugger race is easily evidenced through the lack of capitalization applied to the term bugger throughout the novel. The term Formic is presented as the formal name for this alien race, but it is infrequently used in *Ender’s Game*. 
the Global War on Terror are being shared, even if subconsciously, through literature to a vast reading community.

The feelings and attitudes of the Global War on Terror have been infiltrating American literature since the 1980's when anti-American extremists began this war, unbeknownst to nearly all American civilians. While the conflict has come to the national forefront intermittently since its inception, it was only after September 11 that the majority of the population realized the nation was at war. This thesis's choice to analyze *Ender's Game* and the *Percy Jackson* series is a strategic one, as these books offer both pre-September 11 (*Ender's Game*, 1985\(^4\)) and post-September 11 (*The Lightning Thief*, 2005) examples of texts that have been shaped by this conflict.

American society today faces several extremist groups bent on its destruction. The Islamic culture that these groups have emanated from is estranged but still reconcilable to our own, yet negotiations and peace seem far away. These *jihadis*\(^5\) will attack civilians but do not seek direct confrontation with standard armies. They will attack when and where Americans do not expect it. These attacks will be swift, brutal, and carried out using devices and tactics that many in the Western world find grotesque and even cowardly. The threat of these attacks probably will not lift any time soon, as the April 15, 2013 Boston Marathon Bombings\(^6\) have sadly proven. American youth must live with the

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\(^4\) *Ender's Game* first appeared in August 1977 as a short story in *Analog*. It was published in its current novel form in 1985.

\(^5\) The etymology of *jihadis* is very clear as a derivative of *jihad*. *Jihad* is Arabic for struggle. The term has been adopted for common usage as a colloquialism among the military (sometimes corrupted to Hodge); its basic use is to identify possible targets or combatants. It follows in the longstanding and somewhat controversial tradition of nicknaming one's enemies. Similar examples would include Krauts or Gerries and Skinnies. The term *jihadi* will be used in this paper to indicate the radical Muslims who have attacked and continue to seek opportunities to attack the United States.

\(^6\) The Boston Marathon Bombings were carried out by Tamerlan and Dzhokhar Tsarnaev. The Tsarnaev brothers were originally Kyrgyz Nationals raised in the predominantly Islamic region of Russian Chechnya. They immigrated to the United States while young, yet claimed to have been motivated by radical Islamic
reality that they or their loved ones can fall prey to these extremists or they can choose to go abroad and fight them. Either choice will bring Americans back into the maelstrom of modern warfare and the traumas that accompany this new style of war.

The protagonists of American YAL in the age of modern warfare are going through the same struggles and traumas as the youth of today. They must balance fear, confusion, and perhaps even a hatred of shadowy enemies. The protagonists seek out their enemies and the keys to defeat them so their idyllic homes, friends and families will remain safe. Small bands of friends venture out to make a meaningful difference and protect those left behind through the omnipotent mixture of courage and compassion. YA heroes must live with the specter of loss and the horrors of bloodshed. The very changes of modern warfare have infiltrated YAL in order to prepare youths for the traumas of their world. By working through these difficulties in stories, youths should feel empowered to go out and brave their own dangerous world.

Young Adult Literature is depicting a new kind of war. This war is being fought in the pages of YA texts and around the world, but it is different from any other war the world has previously seen. The changes in warfare have brought about corresponding changes in American literature reflected by an emphasis on key plot devices (albeit biased ones) such as: the death or maiming of noncombatants; the unquestionable need to go abroad in order to protect the homeland; and staging antagonists as shadow-bound, unknown menaces. Before the literary changes can be fully appreciated however, an beliefs similar to those of large foreign extremist groups. At the current time, their connection to organized foreign terror groups is still under investigation.

7 While it is true that some of these threats are internally based within the United States, the most aggressive and well funded groups are international organizations. The prevailing attitude of American military strategy following September 11 is based on the belief that if these extremists are harassed and hounded abroad they will be unable to focus their efforts on attacking the American homeland. While this thesis acknowledges the internal threats to the United States, its main concerns will center on foreign-based adversaries.
overview of exactly how war has changed through revised definitions of war and new tactics would prove useful.

**Historical Background of the American War on Terror:**

In his historical overview of combat casualties, *The Last Full Measure: How Soldiers Die in Battle*, Michael Stephenson explores the historical, tactical, and psychological circumstances that surround combat deaths. As a former editor of the Military Book Club and National Geographic’s *Battlegrounds: Geography and the History of Warfare*, Stephenson possesses unique observations that are insightful and entirely on point for this thesis. In trying to define a loss of the traditional heroic in recent wars, Stephenson notes:

The end of World War II also marked the end of a compelling and luminous version of heroic warfare. There was an overwhelming national commitment. The war was noble, the enemy unambiguously evil. The Allies stood foursquare, untroubled by any niggling doubt as to the righteousness of their cause. There were no mass antiwar rallies. Good believed in itself without being undermined by the sneer of irony. (355)

Every conflict America has entered since World War II has been infected by a cynicism that saps national support and theatre resources. World War II saw standing armies oppose each other; there was no ambiguity between the ideals and troops of each army or between combatants and the civilian population. The certainty of one’s enemy cannot be over appreciated. There is a moral and tactical surety that comes from knowing, “they

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8 This overview may seem extensive. It is the goal that through this introduction I will explain the historical background of the conflict and its tactical changes prior to examining the primary texts to avoid overshadowing the literature in later chapters.
were the recognizable enemy. *They* wore uniforms... *They* might have been bastards, but *they* stood up and gave a good honest fight” (Stephenson 355; emphasis added). With victory in World War II, traditional warfare and its generally followed rules and clear combatants caught a waning sickness. The positioning of the Soviet Union and the United States as the only military superpowers and their nuclear capabilities made traditional warfare unthinkable because of the ease with which it may end mankind’s existence.

A squalling hybrid war that sought but failed to follow the traditional rules of warfare emerged in the nuclear age. The Vietnam War is the keystone example of the shifting face of war, and the changes exhibited during the commencement of its hostilities are only now being fully appreciated. The Vietnam War was the last war to employ regular armies engaging each other in traditional warfare; American forces won every major engagement of the war. However, a prevailing attitude of defeat surrounds the Vietnam conflict because of resistance to the war at home, the casualties, and inability to defeat the nontraditional forces collectively referred to as the Viet Cong. The Viet Cong seldom took to open engagements with American forces preferring hit and run raids and above all ambushes with mines and improvised explosives. Vietnam veteran Tobias Wolff describes in his memoir, *In Pharaoh’s Army*, the maddening inability to fight back against the guerilla tactics:

> They blew us up with homemade mines fashioned from dud howitzer shells, or real American mines bought from our South Vietnamese allies. They dropped mortars on us at night— never very many; just enough, with luck, to kill a man or two, or inflict some wounds, or at least scare us half to death... They booby-trapped our trucks and jeeps. They booby-trapped
the trails they knew we’d take... They sniped at us... We did not die by the hundreds in pitched battles. We died a man at a time, at a pace almost casual. You could sometimes begin to feel safe, and then you caught yourself and looked around, and you saw that of the people you’d known at the beginning of your tour a number were dead or in hospitals. And you did some nervous arithmetic. (7)

Wolff’s frustration at not having a recognizable enemy to fight identifies the supreme factor for “defeat” in Vietnam. The truth of Wolff’s memoir attests to the trauma of winning the traditional battles but losing the war one comrade at a time; this is a reality that both today’s soldiers and Percy Jackson have sadly experienced firsthand.

The United States military was never knocked-out by the North Vietnamese Army (NVA), but rather was pinpricked to death in strikes like the one Wolff describes above. The war was not lost in jungles and rice paddies of Vietnam but in suburban America, the very place from which most of our YAL protagonists are recruited. The frustration of mounting losses in strategically minor ambushes and the inability of American forces to prevent and counteract these attacks bled away support for the war. The American military could not maintain their presence in Vietnam with popular opinion turning overwhelmingly against the war; and it was inconceivable for the Pentagon to lobby for an escalation of the war by attacking NVA supply routes in Laos and Cambodia thus providing quantifiable results. The strategy of staving off American military might while demoralizing support at home proved effective in Vietnam and has been copied by the enemies of the United States ever since; the only difference is the mines and mortars of Vietnam have been replaced by rubbish-camouflaged improvised explosive devices
(IEDs) and rocket-propelled grenades in the Middle East. The Viet Cong taught the world that the American monolith can be defeated not by traditional combat in the field but through the joint trauma of sneak attacks and a steady supply of caskets being sent home.

Young Adult Literature’s heroes venture out to protect their homes and families, an aim that seeks to avoid the problems of Vietnam and to keep death away from home. Mazer Rackham, the hero of the first bugger war, congratulates Ender on his victory explaining, “This was the Third Invasion. There were no games, the battles were real… and today you finally fought them at their home world, where the queen was, all the queens from all their colonies, they all were there and you destroyed them completely. They’ll never attack us again” (Card 296-297). Rackham’s praise seems to explain the now standard strategy of the American military bringing the conflict overseas to protect the homeland. As former Navy SEAL and CIA operative Dick Couch explains, “[None] of those Communist, Cold War-era adversaries had the ability of the willingness to strike us here at home. That, if nothing else, is what makes this [current War on Terror] so much more important,” and why we see Ender departing Earth to chase after Buggers and Percy leaving the sanctuary of Camp Half-Blood because the security of the homeland is now paramount (Couch 182).

While most believe the current War on Terror began with the attacks on the American homeland on September 11, the reality is the conflict began in the 1980’s with the United States’ peacekeeping involvement in the Middle East and the Arab world’s responses. Today, the Global War on Terror extends around the globe from Islamic Africa to Russian Chechnya to the Middle East and the Philippines and numerous unknown countries home to classified operations. American involvement in the Muslim
world began in the late 1970's when the Soviet Union was engaged in an invasion of Afghanistan to support a fledgling socialist government. This invasion would ultimately fail due to the precise tactics described in the preceding paragraphs and to economic and technological support from the United States.

The weapons and money the United States sent to the Afghani Mujahideen and their foreign Arab allies allowed for the defeat of the Soviet forces but also set the stage for future conflict. The munitions the United States donated were stockpiled and later seized by Islamic fundamental extremists and used against the very same pro-democratic forces that had lifted the threat of a communist takeover. Foreign Arab allies went to Afghanistan to fight a *jihad* or holy struggle. They viewed the war as a religious conflict pitting radical Islam against the atheist communists. Many of today’s terror network leaders got their first experiences fighting in Afghanistan, including Osama bin Laden. The influx of foreign fighters would become a standard in Muslim nations wracked by combat and strife. Whether it is in the Philippines or a democratic Iraq, *jihadis* flock to theatres of conflict to inflict casualties in their global holy war in the same way that Rick Riordan describes hordes of “*dracaenae* snake-women, hellhounds, giants, and the humanoid seal-demons known as *telkhines*” flooding the decks of the *Princess Andromeda* to fight for Kronos (*Last Olympian* 11-12). Most Americans recognize that the War on Terror is not a war against all of Islam in the same way Percy Jackson is cognizant that the demigods loyal to Kronos had understandable reasons for joining him. Unlike the monsters in Kronos’s army, the demigods cannot magically reform if they fall in battle, making the conflict tragic and deadly.
Unfortunately, danger cannot be evaded by simply avoiding the Kronos’s monsters or the hotbed regions of terrorist activity. The buggers attacked Ender’s world twice and Kronos frequently targeted Percy’s friends and family. In a real life correlation, civilians of the United States were taken hostage for over a year by Islamic militants in Iran in 1979. Hostage taking seems to be a lasting precedent in the new style of modern warfare as Dick Couch explains, “With the rise of the Islamists and their contempt for life and modern Western values, we can expect neither mercy nor civil treatment for Americans who become prisoners of war. The policy of nations is now influenced by hostages and beheadings. For those who oppose us in this fight, hostage taking and executions are not a by-product of war, they are a tactic of warfare” (181). The threat to innocents is a part of what motivates the altruistic heroism of Ender and Percy. Percy is certain he must end the Titan War when he realizes “Beckendorf wasn’t the first death. He was only one of hundreds, maybe thousands. [He’d] never felt so angry and helpless” (Riordan, Last Olympian 39). The innocence and inability of noncombatants to defend themselves, allows the public to empathize with their plight and to share in a collective trauma. While the Iranian hostages were released in 1981 shortly after Ronald Reagan became President, the fear of being harmed when least expecting an attack has lasted in the minds of both military planners and civilians alike and has migrated to the plots of YAL texts.

In 1983, while the United States was still supporting the Afghan resistance, a suicide bomber attacked the barracks that housed a peacekeeping force of Marines in Lebanon. Despite Vice President Bush’s announcement that the United States “would not be cowed by terrorists,” the Marines were withdrawn by 1984 with no counteraction
taken for the attacks (Harris 32). Following the attacks, President Reagan signed anti-terror legislation into law and “In a public statement accompanying the bills, the president’s aides coined a new phrase: ‘war against terrorism’” (Harris 32). This was the first use of the term war on terror in American politics, but despite Reagan’s call that “we act immediately to cope with this menace” and address “this growing threat to our way of life” the wider American populace soon forgot the attacks in Beirut as if the Mist of Percy’s world, as penned by Rick Riordan, obscured their memories (Harris 32).

The 1980’s were marked by an increasing number of terror attacks against American military personnel, civilians, and bases in multiple European and African countries. The United States could not afford to continue a policy of non-action with terror groups or the nations that supported them and decided, much like the YAL protagonists, that safety would be found in a proactive approach. Ender takes this attitude when he willingly chooses to go to Battle School; the campers at Camp Half-Blood also took an active role in combating the enemy when they “left all the time on combat missions. [They] had no choice if [they] wanted to stop Kronos” (Riordan, Last Olympian 50). The Middle East remained a boiling kettle and the United States was repeatedly forced to intervene in the cause of peace.

Dick Couch superbly captures the full impact this war has on our society:

Oddly enough, the terrorists have been at war with us much longer than most Americans think; it did not just start with the attacks of 11 September... How long will our adversary in this struggle continue this fight? How soon can we ‘win’ this war, declare victory, and get on with our pursuit of happiness? The short answer is, not soon. We face an enemy
with fanatical beliefs, suicidal tactics, and a covert infrastructure. The terrorists are very committed and many see their struggle continuing well past their lifetimes. It will take a great deal of resolve on our part, for an extended time, to prevail. This may be a struggle that is not resolved in our own lifetimes. And it is, and will continue to be, a domestic political issue... More than a few understand that this is indeed a clash of cultures.

As a soldier and intelligence operative, Couch is in a deft position to explain the full cruelty war is capable of exposing, but is also burdened with a pro-American bias. Couch realizes the full weight this struggle carries; anything but unconditional victory has the potential to cast Western society into a Tartarus-like pit from which it may never emerge. The literary characters have similar beliefs as Couch; Colonel Graff muses on the importance of victory to Ender noting, “When it comes down to it, though the real decision is inevitable: If one of us has to be destroyed, let’s make damn sure we’re the ones alive at the end” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 253). The stakes of this war are exactly the same of those for Percy Jackson in the Titan War or Ender Wiggin in his fight against the buggers: victory or the possible end of the world. Literary protagonists like Ender and his junior commanders Bean, Petra, Vlad, and Crazy Tom function much like special operators in that small groups are going in harm’s way in response to trauma or to prevent further harm to their friends, families, and society.

In 1991, the United States invaded Iraq to oppose Saddam Hussein’s annexation of sovereign Kuwait beginning Operation: Desert Storm and the First Gulf War. The war was ended extraordinarily quickly because Saddam tried to fight a conventional
campaign against the American-lead coalition. The ease with which Saddam was
defeated proved once and for all that the United States cannot be opposed in traditional
warfare. Insurgency and terror tactics would become the only successful tactics used
against the United States.

It is not a coincidence that both the buggers of *Ender's Game* (1977) and Kronos
in the 2005 *Percy Jackson* series (2005) utilize insurgency tactics to strike at the
protagonists and their homes. The need for special operations to counter nontraditional
threats would increase dramatically after the First Gulf War. Today, the media is flush
with reports on the secretive communities of Navy SEALs and Green Berets but YAL
characters have been operating with a special operations format since *Ender's Game* was
published in 1977. *Ender's Game* was so successful at portraying the leadership of an
efficient and effective group of operators, the novel is listed on the professional
development reading list for the United States Marine Corps (www.marines.mil).

In 1993, a new conflict began in Somalia and launched a debate that would tie up
American foreign policy for the next decade. The mission in Somalia, comprised almost
entirely of American special operations forces, would form a prototype for the later
counterinsurgency campaigns in Iraq and Afghanistan. While the warlord Mohammad
Farrah Aidid was eventually killed fighting his former allies, the mission was largely a
failure and the war torn nation could not be stabilized. The mission was immortalized for
its failures as the Black Hawk Down Incident stemming from multiple helicopter crashes
and an extremely high casualty rate. Following the raid, Somalia militia publicly
desecrated captured American corpses horrifying the American people and infuriating the
military. The imagery of naked American soldiers being dragged through the dirt roads of
Mogadishu is one that came to characterize the mission. It has become a common complaint that the United States military must follow rules of engagement and international conventions while our enemies kill, capture, and torture whomever, wherever, and whenever they want. In perhaps an unconscious desire to avoid capture and desecration, the heroes of YAL regularly risk themselves rather than allowing their friends to be in harm’s way. Ender comes to realize, “The only reason [he is] here is so that a bugger won’t shoot out Valentine’s eye, won’t blast her head open...Won’t split her head with a beam so hot that her brains burst the skull and spill out like rising bread dough, the way it happens in [his] worst nightmares” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 93). Clearly, the YAL protagonists are willing to leave home in order to protect their homes and everything they represent.

While Ender initially left to protect his home and Valentine, he pushes himself to extreme lengths so that he can competently serve his comrades and close friends, like Alai. Young Adult protagonists are not the only ones who go to extraordinary lengths to protect those they love. The American tradition of never letting a soldier be forgotten or left behind was tested in Somalia and the enemies of America took note of the immense impact it had on the national consciousness (or at least the nation’s political and military circles). The extraordinary lengths the military goes through to recover its fallen offers dual benefits of helping both soldiers as well as the family cope with the trauma of their loved one’s loss and allowing other soldiers to go into battle confident that one way or another they will make their way home. *Jihadi* enemies have noticed this and take great pleasure in desecrating American dead or using the fallen as opportunities to ambush those retrieving them from the field. The bodies of fallen fighters have immense power as
evidenced by their political value to both American and terrorist forces. The *Percy Jackson* character, Nico Di Angelo, displays this power following the death of his sister. The lost of Nico’s sister, Bianca, and his ultimate decision to side with and help save the Olympians offers a prime example of both the devastating loss that suffering a fallen comrade inflicts and the motivation to fight on and honor the lives lost. Nico’s sister, Bianca, sacrifices herself to help the Olympian’s cause and Nico has a hard time moving on after her death. His suffering becomes so great that he tries to summon Bianca from Hades and is admonished by her spirit, “You’re mad because I died and left you alone. I’m sorry for that, Nico. I truly am. But you must overcome the anger...It will be your doom” (Riordan, *Battle of the Labyrinth* 167). Trauma scholar Cathy Caruth explains how, “For those who undergo trauma, it is not only the moment of the event, but of the passing out of it that is traumatic; that *survival itself*, in other words, *can be a crisis*” (original emphasis, 9). Nico experiences this crisis and struggles to move past Bianca’s death, but he eventually manages to say goodbye, understand himself, and joins the same crusade Bianca perished fighting for.

Similar to Nico, the United States needed time to transition into an aggressive mindset. Following Somalia, even in the wake of the first World Trade Center attacks and the 1996 Khobar Towers bombing in Saudi Arabia that killed American servicemen, the United States would hesitate or refuse to send ground troops into combat in the hopes of avoiding casualties and traumas like the kind Nico represents. America’s attitude would not change easily, not even in the light of the 1998 embassy bombings in Kenya and Tanzania or the 2000 attack on the USS Cole. The tragic events of September 11, 2001 would finally change this attitude when al-Qaeda and its Taliban allies struck a decisive
blow against the United States’ civilian population. As the nation mourned the thousands of innocent noncombatant civilians, firefighters, and police officers killed, al-Qaeda and dozens of international terrorist groups like it cheered; the war they had been fighting for almost three decades finally came to the forefront of the American consciousness.

The September 11 attack was critical both for its lethality and the national trauma it caused. The military response that followed the attacks could be viewed as a quest for vengeance fueled by this trauma. Before this militaristic response occurred, the fear the attacks elicited must be overcome. The days following September 11 contained a palpable fear as the civilian public became aware that America had an enemy that sought its utter destruction and was willing and able to attack noncombatants unexpectedly at home. Roberta Seelinger Trites’s article “September 11, 2001” appeared in the *Children’s Literature Association Quarterly* in the fall of 2001 and expressed a sense of fear and powerlessness in the wake of the attacks. Trites’s faith was restored, however, when she realized that “someone had to have taught the terrorists” and she was empowered with the realization that both negative and positive ideologies could be taught (114). Trites’s work as a teacher puts her in a position to use “children’s literature to raise children’s consciousness about the political world that surrounds them [and] will improve their lives;” Trites explains how she “no longer share[s] the sense of despair that has gripped so many of [her] colleagues in literary studies. In fact, what we do as a profession seems to [her] an eminently rational response in an increasingly madding world” (115).

The security of the homeland and the sanctity of innocents were forever violated on September 11 and cannot be restored, but hope for an ultimate victory is offered through the triumphs available in YAL texts as Trites has realized. Secretary of Defense Donald
Rumsfeld and the United States Special Operations Command (SOCOM) issued declarations that terrorists would be hunted and fought wherever they hid. SOCOM has operators actively working in the field in at least sixty countries each day. The nation realized that its security and very likely its future depended on adapting and conquering the *jihadis*. America was finally resolved to take the lead in the fight. Through a description of General William Garrison, Mark Bowden, in his book *Black Hawk Down: A Story of Modern War*, summarizes the attitude of modern warfare:

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Soldiering was about fighting. It was about killing people before they
killed you. It was about having your way by force and guile in a dangerous
world, taking a shit in the woods, living in dirty, difficult conditions,
enduring hardships and risks that could— and sometimes did— kill you. It
was ugly work...[Garrison] embraced its cruelty. [Garrison] would say,
this man needs to die. Just like that. Some people needed to die. It was
how the real world worked. (original emphasis, 24)
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Following September 11, this ethos was celebrated and spread. Acknowledging the dire circumstances and stakes of modern warfare, YAL protagonists do not gleefully go into battle as evidenced through Percy and Annabeth’s questioning of their roles in leading the war effort: “Why are you saying that?” [Annabeth] cried. ‘You want to be responsible for the whole world?’ It was the last thing [Percy] wanted, but [he] didn’t say that. [He] knew [he] had to step up and claim it” (Riordan, *Titan’s Curse* 310). Both real world soldiers and YAL heroes acknowledge that there is evil in the world that must be defeated to secure the safety and happiness of those who are peaceful. In the wake of September 11, America’s citizens finally realized that some need to die, deserve to die,
and would die to keep America safe; the protagonists of YAL joined this fight, even if they did so as reluctant heroes.

In 2003, the Global War on Terror expanded to include Operation Iraqi Freedom and the operation became a focal point for the new kind of warfare in the modern age. The war against regular forces was over in days, yet foreign fighters flooded in and sectarian violence raged amidst peaceful civilian neighborhoods. The quagmire of insurgency warfare found in Iraq mirrored the situation in Afghanistan in every way except topography. Insurgency was not the predominant type of warfare the United States was fighting, it was the only kind. While America was willing to fight, the fighting did not come without a cost; Ender stands as an example exhibiting the burdens of victory through his computer game experiences. Ender finally reached Fairyland, but instead of reveling in the victory or exploring he is distraught because “He hadn’t meant to kill the Giant. This was supposed to be a game. Not a choice between his own grisly death and an even worse murder” (Card, Ender’s Game 65). While military service or the plots of YA texts may sometimes feel like an adventure, there is no forgetting the stakes over which they fight.

Young Adult Literature and the battlefield of modern warfare share another disturbing trend: the necessary mistrust of allies. On May 1, 2011 a raid was conducted that killed Osama bin Laden and other high ranking al-Qaeda leaders, but the action took place within walking distance of the Pakistan Military Academy and lead to a reconsideration of Pakistan’s commitment to fight terrorism. More recently, the number

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9 The rationale for the initial invasion of Iraq has proved to be flawed, despite Iraq’s longstanding classification as a state-sponsor of terrorism. Following the United States’ invasion foreign fighters flooded the country. Al-Qaeda in Iraq (a distinct subset of al-Qaeda), under Abu Musab al-Zarqawi, developed a major presence in Iraq and their successful defeat became a major strategic goal in the War on Terror. A detailed discussion on this topic is offered in General Stanley McCrystal’s memoir, My Share of the Task.
of American and coalition force casualties has been growing in Afghanistan due to a rise in suicidal attacks by Afghani police and military recruits. The Associated Press reports, "authorities have detained or removed hundreds of soldiers" while more thorough background checks can be completed (Riechmann A-17). It is disheartening to think that the very people the United States helped escape from the yoke of the Taliban and is expecting to continue fighting the Taliban when American forces leave in 2014 are the ones now causing the most harm. YAL offers parallel narratives through Ender feeling betrayed by Colonel Graff and his habit of never telling the whole truth and Percy being betrayed when his supposed friend Luke becomes the leader for Kronos's army. In another trauma of modern warfare, soldiers must cope with fighting for people who may be ambivalent to their efforts and so they must be on guard against both enemies and possibly allies.

The ways warfare has changed may seem to have little to do with YAL, and as time passes the trauma of modern warfare may lessen or seem to be nonexistent. This is a false perception because human nature is bound to adapt to handle the traumas of war that have become a part of everyday life. The American people's desensitization to these wars has been going on for decades through the literature that mirrors them. Americans have begun to accept that we face a ruthless enemy and have tried to counteract this enemy with steps like the creation of Homeland Security and taking the fight overseas. The greatest weapon in this war may be the mental preparation offered through YAL as a metaphor for the conflict and to help readers cope with life during that conflict. YAL's portrayals of modern warfare offer its readership hope because despite the lost friends
and physical and emotional scars, Ender Wiggin and Percy Jackson survive. That means the readership can survive, too.
Defending the Homeland: The YA Hero’s Duty to Protect

Young Adult Literature is functioning as war texts that present the brutal realities and immediate needs of characters embroiled in deadly conflicts. Orson Scott Card’s *Ender’s Game* and Rick Riordan’s *Percy Jackson* series reflect the need to protect the homeland and its innocent noncombatants from the ruthless tactics that are now regularly being employed in modern warfare. These YA texts raise awareness of the lost invulnerability of the United States, but offer their readers hope through the courageous young protagonists who rise to help and defend others.

David Kieran debates in his article, “What Young Men and Women Do When Their Country is Attacked: Interventionist Discourse and the Rewriting of Violence in Adolescent Literature of the Iraq War,” whether the message being sent to youths through depictions of war in YAL is the proper one. He offers analysis on how “over the past decade the lives of young people living in the United States have consistently served as a terrain for debate over the most significant issues related to these conflicts” and examines a trio of YA texts (Ryan Smithson’s *Ghosts of War: The True Story of a 19-Year-Old GI*, Walter Dean Myer’s *Sunrise Over Fallujah*, and Patricia McCormick’s *Purple Heart*) that contribute to this debate (5). Kieran proposes that an ideology is being pushed through YAL to garner support for “the legitimization of the discourse of neoconservative humanitarian interventionism” which has defined the United States’ military policies in the wake of September 11 (5). He is concerned over how “a contentious struggle between a discourse that positioned adolescents as citizen-subjects to be interpellated within interventionist discourses, and an alternative narrative that viewed them as potential critics, if not potential victims, of those conflicts” is affecting
adolescents’ attitudes on the War on Terror and glorifying war (6). A superficial look at the way Ender is portrayed as the victorious and all powerful genius general or the many monsters that disintegrate into dust without a second thought along the course of Percy’s adventures might seem to support an argument that YAL is glorying war.

Kieran’s article is significant because the same questions he raises about the glorification of war in *Ghosts of War, Sunrise Over Fallujah, and Purple Heart* can be asked of *Ender’s Game* and the *Percy Jackson* series. Kieran’s examination takes a narrow view of the War on Terror as a relatively unambiguous and short event that began with September 11 and has progressed forward, but deeper analysis reveals this is simply untrue. Kieran believes the plot events, characterization, and first person addresses to the reader in YA texts are a “concerted effort to construct the citizenship of young Americans according to particularly pro-war contours and threaten to foreclose students’ consideration of other attitudes” (7). Orson Scott Card directly responds to this claim in a lengthy interview in *Ender’s World* in which he explains how, “*Ender’s Game* does not glorify war... On the contrary, if anything, *Ender’s Game* shows with brutal clarity just what war costs those who fight it, so that even when war is necessary, only a fool goes into it joyfully” (*Ender’s World* 238). Other scholars have taken a more open-minded stance than Kieran and believe that, rather than indoctrinating adolescents into a pro-war mindset, YAL helps to educate them about the current conditions of their world and to prepare them to live within dangerous times and circumstances.

Patricia M. Hauschildt is one such scholar and in her article, “Worlds of Terrorism: Learning through Young Adult Literature,” she posits,
While talk of terrorism, kidnapping, hijacking, bombings, and bioterrorism are not pleasant, 9/11 brought these words into a U.S. American consciousness, now as a reality and as a possibility for repetition. Yet even as news media sustains the focus, people in general continue to live within a more immediate world of work, family, socializing or otherwise surviving. (18)

Hauschildt believes that YAL that is in dialog with the War on Terror can help educators fulfill their “responsibility to help students better understand the world in which they live by facilitating an examination of, or inquiry into, topics that confuse, create fear, raise questions and baffle world leaders” (18). Rather than simply creating mindless warmongers as Kieran believes, Huaschildt sees how YAL’s involvement with the War on Terror can better prepare adolescents for the world by having them engage in the same realities that adults are already facing. Ender’s story is characteristic of this belief as he is continually learning and training to defeat a threat against the human race that the adults around him have been unable to vanquish. By relating to Ender and identifying similarities between his world and the reader’s own, the readers are prepared to face the challenges of their everyday reality.

In “Peace-Keeping Forces: YA War Books,” Chris Crowe supports using YA texts as educational tools through his statement on how “contemporary war books for young adults make the traumatic effects of war even more personal by showing that war is indeed hell, not only for soldiers, but also for children and their families who become its direct and indirect victims” (159). When Percy is faced with choosing his reward for saving Olympus, it is the many people who have paid the terrible cost of war that come to
mind: "[He] looked at Annabeth again. [He] thought about [his] friends from camp: Charles Beckendorf, Michael Yew, Silena Beauregard, so many others who were now dead. [He] thought about Ethan Nakamura and Luke. And [he] knew what to do" forcing the gods to recognize and care for their demigod children and thus hopefully avoid the resentment that helped to foment the Titan War (Riordan, *Last Olympian* 351). Crowe hopes, "good YA books about war can help today's teenagers appreciate the blessings of peace and the horrors of war. And maybe, just maybe, that appreciation will inspire them to do whatever they can to preserve peace in our country and around the world" (159).

Ender has learned the lessons Crowe suggests YA war books teach about peace: "it did not occur to them that this twelve-year-old boy might be as gifted at peace as he was at war... He was concerned, not about getting credit, but about getting the job done" (Card, *Ender's Game* 309-310). Crowe was writing in a pre-September 11 world and the peace he hopes YAL will help preserve was simply a lull between waves of attack. The hope Crowe identifies though is still valid; YAL can inspire adolescents to seek peace, but YAL influenced by the War on Terror must acknowledge that before peace can become available, some victory over the extremists must be achieved.

*Ender's Game* is continually focused on the ultimate victory that will end the conflict consuming Ender's world. Hilari Bell explains, "In the future Earth of *Ender's Game*, the Formic War has reshaped all of human society— and that world— shaking alien threat is still there" (71). Ender's society has changed as a direct result of the bugger attacks, similar to the way the United States has changed security protocols in response to terrorism. Children in Ender's world view "the films of the buggers that everyone had to see at least once a year. The Scathing of China. The Battle of the Belt. Death and
suffering and terror” (Card, *Ender's Game* 25). In the wake of this scale of suffering, neither the people of Ender’s earth nor the United States can feel safe while threats like these remain. One of the changes to help counter this threat is Ender’s engineered creation as a Third, a specially commissioned child created to aid in the war against the buggers. The military system that creates Ender is so vast that advisers are assigned to watch monitors placed within prospective soldiers’ backs to assess their development and potential. When Colonel Graff is initially depicted, he is described as “wearing the only military uniform that meant anything anymore, the I.F., the International Fleet” (*Ender’s Game* 17). Graff’s characterization and the other changes evident in Ender’s world are responses to counter the savagery of the buggers and to protect against further attacks.

In an attempt to protect the United States from additional attacks, President George W. Bush asserted an overly simplistic strategy towards the conflict declaring, “Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists. From this day forward, any nation that continues to harbor or support terrorism will be regarded by the United States as a hostile regime” (Kemper n.p.). This call for real world unity mirrors the unity represented through the International Fleet in *Ender’s Game* and suggests that the world has banded together to defeat the bugged threat with a similar all-in dedication. The dangers posed by the buggers and the Islamic extremists are a threat to the survival of the earth and the Western way of life. The extreme responses hamper peaceful resolutions, such as the I.F.’s failure to establish communications with the buggers, yet they are adequate responses when the protagonists believe they are facing a contest for the survival of mankind.
In “The Price of Our Inheritance,” Neal Shusterman, a *New York Times* best-selling YAL author, explains that *Ender’s Game* is so compelling because it is a story of survival. Shusterman notes that readers “remember details about their first reading of *Ender’s Game*, in the same way people remember profound, life-changing events. For instance, so many of us remember exactly what we were doing the moment we heard about planes hitting the Twin Towers” because they carry the emotional weight of a “deeper, more primal place” (240, 241). These primal feelings are tapped during the Wiggin children’s play, during Ender’s Battle School contests, and when Ender realizes what he has accomplished through his defeat of the buggers. Peter and Ender’s rough play with a bugger mask continues despite their Mother’s concerns because “Dad pointed out that the war wouldn’t go away just because you hid bugger masks and wouldn’t let your kids play with make-believe laser guns. Better to play the war games and have a better chance of surviving when the buggers came again” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 11). The emphasis on preparation moves with Ender into Battle School where he brutalizes Bean to prepare him for the trials ahead:

I’m hurting you to make you a better soldier in every way. To sharpen your wit. To intensify your effort. To keep you off balance, never sure what is going to happen next, so you always have to be ready for anything, ready to improvise, determined to win no matter what... when the time is right you’ll find that I’m your friend, and you are the soldier you want to be. (168)

Ender is hard on Bean because he trying to prepare him for worse fights with the buggers. Ender kills Stilson and Bonzo, appears uncaring towards Bean, pushes Petra to her
breaking point all in an attempt to prepare defenses against the buggers. Ender describes the case launched against him following his victory over the buggers: “Throughout the trial, it was Ender himself under attack… there were attempts to make him look sick, perverted, criminally insane” (308). These cases cannot succeed because Ender is a savior, despite the cost of this salvation totaling the entire bugger race. The reader is unable to view Ender negatively either. Ender’s pure motives to protect his home and his guilt when he realizes the price of meeting this goal makes Ender invulnerable to the taint that accompanies a sadistic character like Peter. Ender remains a hero, despite being tricked into the ultimate confrontation against the buggers, because his motive to protect earth remains pure regardless of the means that secure this end.

In his essay “The Monster’s Heart,” John Brown hypothesizes: “part of what defines who is a good guy and who is not— the good guys realize they are corruptible as any, and so they watch themselves, making sure both their actions and motives are as right as they can make them” (35). Neal Shusterman spells out the clear threat the buggers pose:

The threat from the formics was spelled out clearly. They attacked twice… On both occasions, it was clear that they meant to destroy humanity, and there was no reason to think that they would stop. So, how was humanity going to save its children? How many formics would we kill? As many as necessary. Even if it meant every last one of them. (243)

The text itself is cognizant of the lengths the characters must endure to ensure the survival of earth. This is evidenced through Graff’s explanation, “It isn’t the world at stake, Ender. Just us. Just humankind… Human beings are free except when humanity
needs them. We might both do despicable things, Ender, but if humankind survives, then we were good tools” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 35). Ender is a hero because he saves earth and is able to retain his own humanity by mourning what he has done, even though it was the necessary action.

John Brown tries to explain why Ender is firmly entrenched as a heroic character despite the blood that stains his hands. Brown explains: “Ender only fights to secure his safety. He kills two boys and wipes out a whole species, because he is never acting to hurt someone else, only to defend. And so we end up rooting for him instead” (34). The multitude of innocents is frequently forgotten in *Ender’s Game* because Ender is isolated from them as part of his training. Graff recognizes the danger of this isolation and crucially allows Ender three months of recuperation in Greensboro because, “it’s easy to forget why Earth is worth saving. Why the world of people might be worth the price you pay” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 243). For most of the novel, the innocent masses Ender is fighting for are absent and only represented by the memories and emotional attachments he has for Valentine, but as Graff admits “that’s real, that’s what matters. Billions of those connections between human beings. That’s what you’re fighting to keep alive” (Ender’s Game 244). Ender holds these civilian crowds in his heart and, much to his horror, finally equates them with the buggers he destroys. Ender successfully defends the homeland but reinforces the high price of freedom and security.

As with Ender, Percy Jackson is motivated to protect his home. The threats to home are foreshadowed early on through descriptions of nature in rebellion:

Overhead, a huge storm was brewing with clouds blacker than I’d ever seen over the city. I figured maybe it was global warming or something,
because the weather across New York state had been weird since Christmas. We’d had massive snow storms, flooding, wildfires from lightning strikes. I wouldn’t have been surprised if this was a hurricane blowing in. (Riordan, *Lightning Thief* 8).

This tension is repeated often, such as when Percy felt “A sudden chill rolled through [him]. [He] felt like someone—something—was looking for [him] right now, maybe pounding its way up the stairs, growing long, horrible talons” (*Lightning Thief* 32). Percy explains how “something felt wrong. There was tension in the air, as if the hill were holding its breath, waiting for something bad to happen” (*Battle of the Labyrinth* 21). The scale of the dysfunction caused by the conflict becomes evident when the reader considers the various locations Percy visits to combat monsters. Percy’s travels take him, among other places, to New York and New Jersey, Colorado, New Mexico, Florida, South Carolina, San Francisco, Las Vegas, and the Hoover Dam. These many locations not only add to the scope of the conflict but serve to elevate its importance as it truly becomes a battle for the fate of America and concomitantly, of the Western world.

Dionysus, the god in charge of Camp Half-Blood, explains to Percy the true peril the world faces:

Your entire society will dissolve. Perhaps not right away, but mark my words, the chaos of the Titans will mean the end of Western civilization. Art, law, wine tastings, music, video games, silk shirts, black velvet paintings—all the things that make life worth living will disappear! (*Last Olympian* 268)
The Western culture that the demigod heroes are fighting for is embodied in the automatons Annabeth activates to defend Manhattan. These artworks join an alliance of Artemis’s Hunters and the half-blood campers to represent the very culture and people of the threatened American society rising up to defend it. In “The Functions of War Literature,” Catharine Savage Brosman explores the historical roots of war literature noting how it often sought to set the conduct of proper warfare and inspire a warrior spirit. Brosman believes, “Modern war literature... [has] acted on the imagination of the young to shape a sense of national purpose and inspire a bellicose purpose” (86). While Brosman’s claims for literature fostering an aggressive attitude are contentious and in direct contrast to what other scholars, like Chris Crowe, have claimed, her identification of a national purpose is easily supported through the text of the *Percy Jackson* series. Young Adult Literature generally and *Percy Jackson* specifically foster a need to be cognizant of threats to our country and to the duty of each person to protect those around them.

Percy is often burdened with concerns for his friends’ safety and the wellbeing of bystanders caught in the conflict. Percy is filled with a sense of growing unease directly related to the conflict’s vast scope and secretive methods that the enemies of Olympus employ in the war. Kronos, like the enemies in the War on Terror, chooses to operate through secrecy and is not revealed as the true antagonist until the very end of *The Lightning Thief*. Throughout the novels, he most frequently appears in an immaterial form in Percy’s dreams presenting carefully censored images to worry or confuse the protagonists. Deception is Kronos’s primary weapon to manipulate and trick the young heroes.
*The Sea of Monsters* offers the best example of Kronos's manipulations as the entire plot is motivated by a ruse Kronos has perpetuated to gain an advantage in the war. Percy's satry friend and protect, Grover, was endangered by the cyclops Polyphemus, but in reality Grover's life was inconsequential to Kronos and his plan. Kronos's true desire is to have Percy deliver the Golden Fleece to camp and bring Zeus's daughter, Thalia Grace, into play as another candidate to fulfill the Great Prophecy. In a dream, Kronos mocks Percy for feeling accomplished at having survived the many ordeals that lead to Grover's rescue: "*Polyphemus sits blindly in his cave, young hero, believing he has won a great victory. Are you any less deluded?*" (Riordan, *Sea of Monsters* 275). Chris Crowe posits, "even worrying about war can have subtle negative effects on young people. They know war is dangerous to them and to those they love, and they know they're powerless to do anything about it" (159). In "Rethinking the Child Hero," Aaron Johnston refutes the claim that children are powerless. Johnston presents Ender Wiggin as the first in a long line, in which he specifically includes Percy Jackson, of strong independent heroes: "Rather than stand[ing] idly by while the adults solve all the problems and make all the decisions, these modern-day child heroes take the helm, defeat evil, and prove time and again that they have the same capacity for greatness that adults do" (152). Kronos's mocking of Percy could paralyze him with concern over what he has overlooked, but Percy is instead consumed with the safety of those around him. While noble, this extreme focus has the potential for disastrous consequences. The protagonists' lives depend on recognizing immediate dangers, but they cannot fail to recognize the larger significance of events that impact the wider war.
The immediate needs that propel the plot, like rescuing Grover or restoring the master bolt to Zeus, must always be subordinate to foiling Kronos’s greater plan which targets the entire world. There is no safety or certainty in the face of the wanton destruction Kronos desires. Percy goes to Chiron seeking reassurance, but is instead presented with the perils of their situation:

‘But the gods can’t die now, right? I mean, as long as Western civilization is alive, they’re alive. So… even if I failed, nothing could happen so bad it would mess up everything right?’

Chiron gave me a melancholy smile. ‘No one knows how long the Age of the West will last, Percy. The gods are immortal, yes. But then, so were the Titans… All we can do, child, is follow our destiny.’ (Riordan, *Lightning Thief* 156)

Chiron’s speech does not offer much comfort and speaks to larger concerns that are outside the control of the heroes. Despite moments of whimsy, like Grover’s enchilada addiction, the *Percy Jackson* series is weighed with the tension of a world in mortal danger. Rather than lamenting the pressure placed upon them, Percy and his friends are often their most mature during the bleakest moments. For example, Percy remains calm while Kronos has Manhattan surrounded and Annabeth lays wounded inside the Plaza Hotel; instead of turning to despair Percy sees that his troops have medical supplies and his defenses are in place (*Last Olympian* 198). Percy’s commitment and stoicism provide an example to adolescents, who may experience similar moments of chaos during terror attacks like September 11 or the Boston Bombings of April, 2013.
Patricia M. Hauschildt investigates the connection between terrorism, adolescents, and YAL in her article, “Worlds of Terrorism: Learning through Young Adult Literature.” Hauschildt expresses her belief stating,

For many teens, terrorism or acts of terrorism may be too distant a phenomenon… Many young adult novels can cross this gap and initiate healthy conversation towards understanding one’s fears, finding alternative ways to handle fear and the situations that cause fear, becoming aware of why some need to terrorize others, and becoming more knowledgeable about terrorism on a larger scale. (20)

Percy’s success against minor enemies, like Medusa or the Chimera, provides him confidence to undertake larger and more important quests. Percy dispatches Ares’s giant boar and cites this success as he challenges the god of war: “But [Percy] was done running from monsters. Or Hades, or Ares, or anybody… [He] turned back to Ares ‘Are you going to fight me now? [He] asked. ‘Or are you going to hide behind another pet pig?’” (Lightning Thief 325). Young Adult Literature functions in a similar vein by allowing readers to gain a sense of security and confidence by accompanying Percy on his quest. Brosman concludes that for modern readers of war literature this is typical as readers see “literature as a way of resolving, or attempting to resolve, war experiences whose recurring trauma must be relieved, reexamined, and through an apparent catharsis, accepted” (90). The reader experiences the stress and emotional range of combat alongside Percy and can then relate this shared experience to the stress and emotion that comes with the ever-present dangers of modern warfare. This process offers a limited
catharsis that can then be applied to the reader’s own life where the dangers are much more ferocious and the war is much more complex.

The complexity of war is easily engaged through the character Luke Castellan. Luke is initially a friend and mentor to Percy, but his familial issues are warped by Kronos until Luke emerges as Kronos’s leading general and surrogate body. The reader is privileged to Luke’s inner rage, “[Hermes] abandoned me, Percy! I want Olympus destroyed! Every throne crushed to rubble!... Each time a half-blood joins us, the Olympians grow weaker and we grow stronger” (Riordan, Sea of Monsters 130). In the same way Ender cannot be viewed as a villain, Luke cannot be viewed without receiving some sympathy because of his motives. Luke sides with the Titans because he feels wronged by the gods. His mother is struck mad for trying to become the Oracle of Delphi and Luke’s father, Hermes, abandons the struggling family; Luke was left to fend for himself. Luke symbolically redeems himself by sacrificing himself to defeat Kronos and save the world. Luke’s choices to begin the war by siding with Kronos and to later save the Olympians illustrate just how important and convoluted each person’s individual commitment to the conflict can be.

The brutality and the length of the conflict forces the young heroes like the new, mortal Oracle of Delphi, Rachel Dare, and Percy to question their commitment to resisting Kronos. Rachel is an especially poignant example because she is a wealthy mortal who has multiple chances to avoid getting involved. Percy explains his duty as a demigod hero to fight because “Everyone in New York was in danger— and all those lives depended on us” (Last Olympian 200). Although mortal, Rachel realizes her duty to help. While Rachel is differentiated from most mortals because of her ability to see
through the Mist that obscures magical happenings from mortals, she is representative of a greater need among mortals to become involved and stands as an example to others such as Paul Blofis, Percy’s stepfather. Ruth Caillouet expresses how, “We are a nation at war, but most of us are without the daily reminders or even the World War II sacrifices of rationing and can drives” (68). Her comments shed light on the way that YAL can connect the American public to the War on Terror and the sacrifices necessary to ensure long lasting security. Rachel’s commitment to help embodies personal sacrifice as she “forced her family to cut short their vacation, agreed to go to a horrible school, and [flew] a helicopter into a monster battle… In her own way, she was as brave as Annabeth” (Riordan, Last Olympian 277). The favorable comparison to Annabeth validates Rachel’s contributions. Rachel faces the same dangers as the demigods because she has chosen to become a part of their world. As a full participant in the Olympian world, Rachel shares in its benefits and risks and proves that there are no civilian bystanders in this conflict.

Civilians are often exposed to the same level of danger as combatants. Percy and his comrades are forced to protect civilians while trying to foil Kronos’s strategic goals. Kronos’s tactics specifically put innocents at risk; his armies often attack from the shadows striking unexpectedly against unprepared targets. The Titan general Atlas vents his disdain stating, “The lives of all mortals will be meaningless,” if Kronos is victorious (Titan’s Curse 108). From the beginning of his adventure, Percy is cognizant of a duty to protect the mortals who are exposed to danger during his mythic battles. Percy recounts his concern during his battle with the Chimera: “I ended up next to the family and the park ranger, who were all screaming now, trying to pry open the emergency exit doors. I
couldn’t let them get hurt” (*Lightning Thief* 210). Percy frequently endangers himself to protect mortals who because of the magical Mist do not even realize their true peril.

The climactic battle of the Titan War is waged in Manhattan and depicts literal and symbolic peril for its inhabitants. The mortals magically lulled to sleep during the battle are at risk of being killed collaterally during the melee. However as the fate of the world rests on the battle’s outcome, the mortals are also in danger of being enslaved or killed if the Titan army proves victorious. Manhattan cannot be read as a setting for contemporary battle without conjuring images of September 11 and the continued specter of terrorism. The dual threats to the mortals in the streets of Manhattan are easily relatable for the reader who faces the same risks from extremists in the War on Terror.

Karin E. Westman would appreciate the significance of Manhattan as the final battlefield and its significance as the meeting point between the differing ideologies. In her article, “Forsaken Spots: At the Intersection of Children’s Literature and Modern War,” Westman expresses how “By placing our emphasis on the child’s experience within the modern landscapes of war, we can make explicit the transformative, often didactic, ideologies that shape modern life. We are granted license to explore emotional realities, from trauma to renewal, from fear to hope” (215). Manhattan, as both the site of Percy’s Mount Olympus and in real life, the past terror attacks, is imbued with figurative and literal emotion. Percy’s characterization during the chapters on the battle reflects the varied responses— from fear to anger to sadness— that are a natural part of waging war in the center of his metropolitan home.

Percy deploys his forces to defend the island and the heart of the Western world that is centered there, but is beset by foes on all sides. The campers were fighting demons
among mortals, but it was “a hopeless battle... the forces of the Titan’s army seemed just as endless. Meanwhile, Manhattan was being destroyed. Mortals, now fully awake, were running in terror” (Riordan, Last Olympian 330). The battle seems bleak but Percy never waivers in his commitment to defending his home and those that share it with him. Percy’s close friend and love interest, Annabeth, reminds everyone of their commitments and the families they are fighting for as she cries out to her former protector, Luke, “Family, Luke. You promised” (Last Olympian 334). This moment of loyalty from Annabeth and Percy’s faith that Luke will regain his senses allows Luke Castellan to wrestle control from Kronos and to defeat the Titan Lord. Family is a lasting image the reader is presented with as Percy sees Luke mortally wounded and imagines “May Castellan, alone in her kitchen, baking cookies and making sandwiches for a son who would never come home” (Last Olympian 340). The reader unconsciously imagines all the other families who (will) wait in vain for “demigods” who never return either in real life.

The fear that family and friends may be maimed or killed by relentless enemies is palpable in Ender’s Game and the Percy Jackson series for both their readers and protagonists. The horrible effects of war that are presented in YAL are what Chris Crowe believes “may help today’s teenagers think twice before merrily going off to war” (162). In modern warfare, though, the protagonists do not have to go off to war; war comes looking for them, perhaps akin to an invitation from Colonel Graff or in the roar of the Minotaur. Ender’s Game and the Percy Jackson series display the extreme need for vigilance in the age of terror. Ender and Percy and their comrades go into combat seeking neither adventure nor glory. The protagonists are motivated by a duty to protect the
countless innocents that are endangered by fanatical enemies; security and safety are the real goals for these YA heroes. Ender’s and Percy’s enemies strike unexpectedly with devastating results and the young heroes are forced to respond with similar violence. These texts allow their readership to become aware of the dangers directed towards home in the War on Terror. While Ender and Percy do not pass through their wars entirely unscathed, they do survive. The fact that their homes (whether planet Earth or Manhattan) were successfully defended and the possibility exists for a new beginning following the conflict should deliver hope to the reader. Although the War on Terror may be long and bloody, the reader can imagine surviving it, especially after the reader has already successfully navigated the perils of the bugger war and the war against the Titans as did Ender and Percy.
Returning Home: Recovering From the Traumas of War

Young Adult Literature has often dealt with orphaned protagonists who struggle with loss and traumatic stress. Recent, American YAL has renewed emphasis on traumatic stress that reflects the emotional trials of living through the War on Terror. Both protagonists like Ender Wiggin and Percy Jackson and supporting characters like Petra and Silena Beauregard struggle to cope with the emotional and physical stresses of combat and its aftermath. The inclusion of post traumatic stress within *Ender's Game* and the *Percy Jackson* series is directly related to the War on Terror and the unusually long period for reflecting on trauma it has provided. The Department of Veteran Affairs reports that post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) affects 11-20% of the soldiers deployed in America’s recent wars; PTSD also afflicts an unknown amount of the civilian population who must deal with the shock of terror attacks and worry over continued hostilities (www.va.gov). Through the traumatic stress of its protagonists, YAL allows its readers to become aware of trauma and to believe that they can successfully navigate its effects, just as their favorite literary heroes do.

Tamar Hager has a belief in the duty of YAL to educate youths about their world, and in her article, “New Miseries in Old Attire: Nuclear Adolescent Novels Published in the United States in the 1980’s,” she expresses how “Presenting the maturation of their young protagonists in the face of destruction and death, these novels tend to imply that nuclear war and its terrors imaginable and could be successfully faced and handled” (286). While different from nuclear war driven texts, recent American literature focusing on the trauma of modern warfare in the War on Terror has a similar goal of allowing its readership to communicate with the dangers of war but feel confident they will somehow
survive its horrors. Joan Kaywell et al explain in their essay, “Growing Up Female around the Globe with Young Adult Literature,” how “Through literature, authors show the realities of their times and spaces. Their stories are gripping, but the realities are based in facts and research” (62). Both Hager and Kaywell speak to YAL’s ability to portray the reality of the world for youths in a palatable way. According to Kaywell et al, these YA texts “exemplify sources of hope and remediation,” but they are much more than simply a source of hope (Kaywell et al. 62). These texts are fundamental in shaping the young adult population’s conception of crucial issues like PTSD.

Distinguished trauma theory scholar Dominick LaCapra notes, “A crucial issue with respect to traumatic historical events is whether attempts to work through problems, including rituals of mourning, can viably comes to terms with (without ever fully healing or overcoming) the divided legacies, open wounds, and unspeakable losses of a dire past” (45). Both the Percy Jackson series and Ender’s Game offer an answer to this all-important question by portraying characters (Percy, Nico, Silena, Ender, and Petra) experiencing traumatic stress and struggling to cope with it. These portrayals of major protagonists dealing with traumatic stress allow the reader to gain an understanding of trauma and know that it can be managed even if the wounds can never fully heal.

Near the end of Rick Riordan’s The Lightning Thief, Poseidon apologizes to his son Percy, “I am sorry you were ever born, child. I have brought you a hero’s fate, and a hero’s fate is never happy. It is never anything but tragic,” because he has foreseen the struggles that compose a hero’s life (Lightning Thief 346; emphasis added). Orson Scott Card’s Ender’s Game begins with a similar address from Colonel Graff:
Ender Wiggin, if it were just a matter of choosing the best and happiest future for you, I’d tell you to stay home. Stay here, grow up, be happy. There are worse things... The buggers may seem like a game to you now, Ender, but they damn near wiped us out last time... Maybe you’ll break down under the pressure, maybe it’ll ruin your life... But if there’s a chance that because you’re with the fleet, mankind might survive... then I’m going to ask you to do it. To come with me. (24-25)

Both texts acknowledge the inevitable hardship and sacrifice, the loss of friends and family, and emotional and physical traumas that are an unavoidable part of accepting the mantle of hero and choosing to become a soldier.

Both *Ender’s Game* and the *Percy Jackson* series revolve around wars (the Formic War and the Titan War, respectively). Young Adult Literature seems to increasingly function as war literature; and the soldiering efficiency of the youthful protagonists often belies their age. YAL’s has historically focused on the adolescent development of its characters; the focus on war is not changing YAL, but rather presenting a new perspective from which youthful maturation can be examined. In her study on the functions of war literature, Catherine Savage Brosman would seem to support this view as she makes a special effort to note how, “War literature has its own, powerful version of such themes as initiation and maturation, themes that reach far beyond the military context” (88). Ruth Caillouet is interested in war’s effects on adolescent maturation and in “The Adolescent War: Finding Our War on the Battlefield” she explains how “Adolescence is a war zone— an emotional, hormonal war zone filled with angst, uncertainty, and fear... when that conflict is complicated by the harsh realities
of war, the internal battles of adolescence are shadowed by the cruel emotions of the battlefield” (68). The ability to fight a war while navigating the perils of adolescence exemplifies the heroic character of each protagonist. Percy, Ender, and their comrades struggle to fight enemies and establish their identity; yet despite the privations that accompany this choice, these young protagonists assume this role because their sacrifices aid a greater cause. This knowledge allows Percy and Ender to forge past the traumas of war and adolescence to save those they love.

Leslie Frost’s article, “Shadows Of War: Fascist and Anti-Fascist Representations of Childhood in *Triumph of the Will, A Letter to Santa Claus*, and *The Little Princess,*” takes a look at the importance of posturing youths to form ideological support leading for or against war. Frost notes how, “As the focus of Depression-era adult anxieties and hopes and as the embodiment of vigor, dynamism, and growth, children carried great symbolic value both as the future of America and America of the future. Nursery and nation were inextricably linked” (80-81). While the situations surrounding the current War on Terror and the build up to World War II that Frost analyzes are completely different, Frost’s conclusions on the use of children to create a national identity and foster hope for the future remain as relevant today as they were in the 1930’s. Percy and Ender¹ serve as examples to the nation as both have been wounded by their experiences but continue on.

The traumas of war in *Ender’s Game* begin with Ender’s conception. Ender laments, “It was not his fault he was a Third. It was the government’s idea, they were the

¹ Ender serves a unique role in this respect as *Ender’s Game* was published in 1977. It’s publication date could allow for Ender’s post traumatic stress to reflect Vietnam but its popularity throughout the 1980’s and up until today also allows it to apply to the War on Terror which began as the nation was reading *Ender’s Game.*
ones who authorized it,” out of their need to create a capable leader for their war against the buggers (Card, *Ender’s Game* 5). Ender’s creation has traumatic repercussions for him the entire time he is on earth as he was created as a response to unexpected attacks from an alien culture, attacks which mirror many of the incidents of the War on Terror including September 11. Ender was not born out of love, but rather was crafted for war long before he ever went to the Battle School. The early fight with Stilson, in which he “didn’t take a fight like this seriously... he wasn’t prepared for a truly desperate blow,” is life or death to Ender (*Ender’s Game* 5). Ender takes a desperate survival mentality into the fight in which “[He has] to win this now, and for all time, [he’ll] fight it every day and it will get worse and worse” (*Ender’s Game* 5) and this indicates a classic traumatic mindset. Cathy Caruth explains: “The historical conception of trauma can also be understood as conveying the urgent centrality... of the relation between crisis and survival,” and Ender is clearly caught in this crisis (9). In the encounter with Bonzo, a Battle School bully, Ender showcases his desperate need to win fights and protect himself with results similar to his earlier fights. Ender has tremendous prowess as a leader and a fighter, but he does not want to use this power. Following the fight with Bonzo, “Ender began to cry...he gasped his sobs, tears seeping out of his closed eyelids... ‘I didn’t want to hurt him!’” even in victory Ender experiences to traumatic stress because he is knowingly causing pain he finds abhorrent (Card, *Ender’s Game* 213).

Ender frequently and bitterly reflects how his actions have made him like his sadistic brother Peter, “I am Peter. I’m just like him. And Ender hated himself,” and these realizations increase Ender’s suffering as he comes to believe in a darker side to his nature (*Ender’s Game* 33). Ender clearly experiences mental trauma during even these
brief conflicts with classmates. Yet because Ender is aware of the pain he is causing, the necessity behind his actions and a corresponding sense of compassion, Ender distinguishes himself as different from his brother. Ender, because of his ability to feel compassion as he fights, retains his ethical purity even as he is mentally tormented by his actions. At the lake house, Ender briefly attempts to explain to Valentine how he has changed because of his training regimen. He is unable to do so and throughout the novel Ender is only able to privately express or internalize his emotional struggles. Dori Laub explains, in his article “Truth and Testimony: The Process and the Struggle,” how “[traumatic survivors] feel that the rest of the world will never come to know the real truth, the one that involved the destruction of their humanity;” the destruction of Ender’s humanity is exactly what he is facing and unable to express (original emphasis, 67). The buggers are the only ones able to understand Ender’s pain, since they were telepathically communicating with Ender as he was destroying them. This understanding is evident in Ender’s communication with the Formic Queen who despairs, “We did not mean to murder, and when we understood, we never came again” (Card, *Ender’s Game* 321). The buggers’ feelings of regret mirror Ender’s own. It is through this mutual pain and understanding that the buggers are able to offer Ender his new role as Speaker for the Dead.

Before Ender could become the Speaker for the Dead and move past the traumas it caused, he needed to first win the war. Ender’s ability to win the Bugger Wars once and for all derives directly from his ability to synthesize a killer instinct and a compassionate response. In a brief moment of peaceful reflection, Ender explains to his sister Valentine how “in the moment when I truly understand my enemy, understand him well enough to
defeat him, then in that very moment I also love him... And then in that very moment when I love them... I destroy them” (Ender’s Game 238). This ability to win comes with a tremendous price and Ender is gradually worn down. The pain of each victory has been building in Ender until his reserve finally breaks,

‘I didn’t want to kill them all. I didn’t want to kill anybody! I’m not a killer! You didn’t want me, you bastards, you wanted Peter, but you made me do it, you tricked me into it!’ He was crying. He was out of control...

‘It had to be a trick or you couldn’t have done it... We had to have a commander with so much empathy that he would think like the buggers... So much compassion that he could win the love of his underlings and work with them like a perfect machine, as perfect as the buggers. But someone with that compassion could never be the killer we needed... If you knew, you couldn’t do it... Any decent person who knows what warfare is can never go into battle with a whole heart. But you didn’t know. We made sure you didn’t know.’ (Ender’s Game 297-298)

It is following these revelations that Ender collapses and is medicated for an unspecified amount of time while his superiors wonder whether “he’ll be permanently damaged” (Ender’s Game 299). In his article “Notes on Trauma and Community,” Kai Erikson explains, “‘Trauma’ has to be understood as resulting from a constellation of life experiences as well as from a discrete happening, from a persisting condition as well as from an acute event,” and this definition of trauma perfectly describes the stresses of Ender’s status as a Third, his long engagement with the Battle School, and the shocking revelation that his final test was actually the destruction of the bugger race (original
emphasis, 185). Ender’s life is imperiled by his long relationship with traumatic stress. The period following Ender’s blackout, when he refused to do anything besides work as a spacecraft mechanic, is when Ender truly makes the decision whether or not his life will be forever dominated by his traumas.

Caruth explains how trauma is marked by repetition:

in which the overwhelming events of the past repeatedly possess, in intrusive images and thoughts, the one who has lived through them... its insistent reenactments of the past do not simply serve as testimony to an event, but may also, paradoxically enough, bear witness to a past that was never fully experienced as it occurred. Trauma, that is, does not simply serve as record of the past but precisely registers the force of an experience that is not yet fully owned. (151)

Ender’s experiences fully evidence traumatic fixations especially in the computer games which reflect his family. Ender fanatically plays his desktop computer simulation game, despite his avatar frequently dying gruesome deaths, because it allows him to work through his unexpressed feelings. The simulation game continues into Ender’s sleep as he “lived it in his dreams,” and Ender laments how his sleep is often plagued by nightmares (Card, Ender’s Game 118).

Ender eventually becomes so exhausted he is granted a recuperation leave with Valentine on earth. Ender’s troubles persist though and “he could not sleep. He lay awake longer and longer each night, and his sleep was less restful... Whether he was waking up to think more about the game or to escape from his dreams, he wasn’t sure” (Ender’s Game 283). Ender eventually pleads to his mentor, Mazer Rackham, “I don’t want to
keep dreaming these things. I’m afraid to sleep. I keep thinking of things that I don’t want to remember. My whole life keeps playing out as if I were a recorder and someone else wanted to watch the most terrible parts of my life” (Ender’s Game 286). Ender’s symptoms (exhaustion, nightmares, listlessness, and an inability to engage others socially) have reached the level of becoming a true disorder. However, his continued involvement with these fixations, in the form of internal inquiries and conversations with trusted friends, allows Ender to eventually own his experiences and to integrate them into his own identity.

Ender is able to move past his traumas by reconciling them as a part, but not the whole, of his total being and assuming the mantle of the Speaker for the Dead. He recognizes that exterminating the entire bugger race was an unnecessary (perhaps evil) act, but Ender does not allow this single action to define his identity. Laub explains: “What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing... is not simply the information, the establishment of facts, but the experience itself of living through testimony, of giving testimony. The testimony is, therefore, the process by which the narrator (the survivor) reclaims his position as a witness” (original emphasis, 70). As Speaker for the Dead, Ender is finally able to become a witness and can reconcile both his past and the past of the destroyed bugger civilization with the new future of colonizing human world.

In his book Writing History, Writing Trauma, LaCapra supports the primacy of testimony’s place in recovering from trauma and posits that one of the largest hindrances to recovering from trauma is discovering “how to provide a means of symbolizing and expressing difference and conflict... symbolizing difference and conflict in an effective manner that enables them to be addressed and to some extent dealt with” (60). Ender

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Wiggin expresses this difference and conflict by moving to the bugger worlds and becoming part of a new “world [which] will be full of stories,” codified in his writings which told the truth of both the bugger and human races (Card, *Ender’s Game* 312). Ender’s redemption and ultimate healing is seen when he forsakes his warrior-killer role and is recast as the governor-mother of the human colony and single bugger larva. Ender promises how, “[he]’ll tell [the buggers’] story to [his] people, so that in time they can forgive [the buggers], too. The way that [the buggers have] forgiven [him]” and is renewed by this peaceful sense of purpose (*Ender’s Game* 321). Caruth, commenting on the Nazi Holocaust, states how “an address that takes place in all the struggles to communicate traumatic experience— opens up the possibility of what could be called a truly historical transmission” and allows the event to be available through history (156). Telling the bugger stories allows Ender to begin this historical transmission. Ender is unable to erase his traumas, but by accepting them as part of his identity and finding a new sense of purpose he is able to move on with his life.

Percy Jackson’s traumatic experiences share many similarities with Ender Wiggin, but Percy’s trauma never reaches the same depth as Ender’s since Percy has an adequate supporting network of family and friends. Percy never sets out on a quest alone, is never subjected to the same isolation as Ender, and thus benefits from the group ethos that frequently forms amongst trauma survivors. This shared mindset is displayed by Grover Underwood during a respite in a particularly harrowing battle, “Well… sure good to be together again. Arguing. Almost dying. Abject terror. Oh, look. It’s our floor” (Riordan, *Last Olympian* 302). Percy’s first traumas stem from what he perceives as failing his support group, namely his mother.
Percy begins narrating his story with several direct addresses to his readers and quickly explains how he has burdened his mother. Percy believes his mother, Sally Jackson, is “the best person in the world, which just proves [his] theory that the best people have the rottenest luck,” and he identifies his birth as the cause of her misery (Lightening Thief 30). Percy is weighted by guilt that his mother “worked odd jobs, took night classes to get her high school diploma, and raised [him] on her own. She never complained or got mad... But [Percy] knew [he] wasn’t an easy kid” (Lightening Thief 30). Percy’s dyslexia and attention deficit disorder, while strengths on the battlefield, cause him frustration and shame among his peers as he “had never made above a C- in [his] life” and lead him to be on his “sixth school in six years and... probably going to be kicked out again” adding to his mother’s concerns (Lightning Thief 7, 9). The traumas Percy is experiencing here are not directly related to war, but are instead a natural part of adolescence. However as Vivian Yenika Agbaw adroitly states, “war creates universal suffering and touches every aspect of the life of those involved for generations,” these adolescent traumas are complicated and compounded when the protagonist must confront them in the face of war (53). This challenge belongs not just to Percy but also to a readership who must similarly try to cope with life’s normal pressures and the extraordinary ones imposed by war.

One of Percy’s additional difficulties is his school record. Percy’s in-school problems are indicative of a longstanding involvement with trauma. In one of his personal addresses, Percy explains, “[he] could start with any point in [his] short miserable life to prove it, but things really started going bad last May when our sixth-grade class took a field trip,” and details the first attack by Mrs. Dodds (Riordan,
This episode offers a brief glimpse at a host of traumas that Percy has suffered before he even embarks on his quest to save the world. Caruth identifies repression and latency as hallmarks of trauma: “Since the traumatic event is not experienced as it occurs, it is fully evident only in connection with another place, and in another time… this is significant in so far as its blankness— the space of unconsciousness— is paradoxically what precisely preserves the event in its literality” (8). Percy recounts how, after beginning to discuss his experiences at Yancy Academy, “a flood of memories came back to [him]— all the weird, scary things that had ever happened to [him], some of which [he’d] tried to forget” (Riordan, *Lightning Thief* 40). These memories serve as evidence of repressed traumas that Percy has blocked in order to not be overwhelmed but return as he is preparing to face his true identity. Percy understands his status as a “Big Three” demigod only after his arrival at Camp Half-Blood when he is surrounded by campers who have experienced similar journeys. This delayed understanding allows Percy to confront the latency of trauma and begin learning how to confront it, even as more traumas are forced upon him. The latency of trauma is physically embodied in the attic of the Big House at Camp Half-Blood in which “Old hero trophies were stacked everywhere— dented shields, pickled heads in jars from various monsters, a pair of fuzzy dice on a bronze plaque” (*Last Olympian* 49). The way these relics of past traumas are hidden away indicates that the survivors, including Percy and Annabeth who recognize their own trophies, have not come to terms with their experiences and thus they remain locked out of sight.

The protagonists are continually challenged to balance their personal lives and the ever-present possibility of death. Percy’s friend Thalia Grace, a daughter of Zeus, once
remarks, “Must be nice to be a regular mortal.’ She said that as if she’d given it a lot of thought;” it is easy to believe all the demigods have felt the same way because their normal lives have stalled due to their involvement with the Titan War (Titan’s Curse 222).

Early in the novels, Grover, a satyr charged with protecting newly identified demigods, “looked at [Percy] mournfully, like he was already picking the kind of flowers [Percy would] best like on [his] coffin” and Annabeth and Percy decide that they’d want to go to the Isles of the Blest when they died because “That’s the place for heroes” (Lightning Thief 28, 302). This mindset is clearly atypical for adolescents, but it is the perfect defense mechanism against the continual pain that comes with involvement in a protracted struggle.

No amount of preparation can lessen the pain of losing a loved one. In a pivotal moment of despair, Percy “remembered something Chris Rodriguez had said: There’s no point in defending camp if you guys die. All our friends are here” (Last Olympian 307).

Friendships are pivotal in the conflict, and while they may be a source for trauma, they function more importantly as sources of support, healing, and motivation to press on despite hardships. The heroes fight not for themselves but for each other. The emphasis is always on the collective whether it is saving camp or the entire world. This is how Percy, Annabeth, and Grover can resist Luke’s temptations to fight for Kronos. Their individual concerns and desires never become their main focus.

Percy’s main focus centers on protecting his home, his family, and his friends. The deciding motivation for Percy to assume the mantle of hero and embrace his demigod fate was the Minotaur’s attack on his mother. Like the jihadi extremists, the Minotaur seeks to hurt innocents as Percy recounts, “The bull-man stormed past like a
freight train, then bellowed with frustration and turned, but not toward me this time, toward my mother (**Lightning Thief** 52). Only after Percy believes his mother has been killed does “Newfound strength [burn] in [his] limbs— the same rush of energy [he’d] gotten when Mrs. Dodds grew talons” (**Lightning Thief** 53). Percy’s trauma is evident and he explains how “[his] head felt like it was splitting open. [He] was weak and scared and trembling with grief… [He] wanted to lie down and cry, but there was Grover, needing [his] help” (**Lightning Thief** 55). Percy cannot give up while others are in need of his help. Like Ender, Percy could refuse to fight or let others take the lead. His service is necessary but voluntary. Percy is even offered eternal life and peace on Calypso’s Island, but refuses because “[his] friends need [him]. [He knew] how to help them now. [He had] to get back” (**Battle of the Labyrinth** 224). Repetition is a principle facet of trauma whether it is reliving circumstances of trauma or repetitive tics that seek to avoid similar conditions. The frequent endangering of his family and friends conditions Percy to endanger himself as he seeks their safety. Protecting his home and friends becomes the motivation for Percy to continually return to the conflict.

As the goddess of homes and hearths, Hestia, reminds Percy, “I am here because when all else fails, when all the other mighty gods have gone off to war, I am all that’s left. Home. Hearth. I am the last Olympian” (**Last Olympian** 103). The primacy of the home is established in each of the novels. The first major attack significantly begins in the Jackson “rental cabin [which] was on the south shore, way out at the tip of Long Island. It was a little pastel box with faded curtains, half sunk into the dunes,” and ends with the Minotaur’s death at Camp Half-Blood (**Lightning Thief** 37). The cabin, especially because of its history as his parent’s meeting place and his fond memories of it,
represents Percy’s first home and “[Percy] loved the place” (Lightning Thief 37). The attack on his home and Camp Half-Blood, Percy’s adopted home, leaves him with a sense of vulnerability he is unable to shed. The final battle in the Titan War, the Battle of Manhattan, occurs in Percy’s home territory surrounded by all of his friends, but the traumatic stress of seeing the deaths of so many comrades and the destruction of his city is almost too much for Percy to bear. Percy confesses to the reader:

I looked at Pandora’s jar, and for the first time I had an urge to open it. Hope seemed fairly useless to me right now. So many of my friends were dead. Rachel was cutting me off. Annabeth was angry with me. My parents were asleep somewhere while a monster army surrounded the building. Olympus was on the verge of falling, and I’d seen so many cruel things. (Last Olympian 307)

All of Percy’s quests are undertaken to protect his Manhattan home and the symbolic power of Olympus. Percy desperately wants to avoid losing anymore of the people he cares about. While Percy may be close to his breaking point, he can never consider surrendering to the enormity of the trauma because of his duty to his family and friends.

Erikson discusses how trauma “has a social dimension,” and that “Traumatic wounds inflicted on individuals can combine to create a mood, an ethos—a group culture, almost—that is different from (and more than) the sum of the private wounds that make it up” (185). He concludes that traumatic experience makes trauma survivors experience difficulty relating to others (Erikson 186). At Yancy Academy, Percy is bullied and describes himself as an outcast because his classmates “were juvenile delinquents, like [him], but they were rich juvenile delinquents... [Percy] was a nobody, from a family of
no bodies” (Riordan, *Lightening Thief* 22). Percy’s school experiences would suggest he faces difficulties similar to those Erikson describes because, as a trauma survivor, Percy is only able to befriend Grover, who can relate to narrowly escaping monsters through his position as a satyr. When Percy does finally bond with others at camp, he does so only because the campers have an unspoken understanding of each other as they have all been forced to fight for their lives. The friendships formed between trauma survivors are unusually strong; so strong, in fact, that Athena cautions Percy:

> My heart crept into my throat... Athena looked almost sorry for me.
> ‘Kronos knows your flaw, even if you do not... How has he manipulated you? First, your mother was taken from you. Then your best friend, Grover. Now my daughter, Annabeth... In each case, your loved ones have been used to lure you into Kronos’s traps. Your fatal flaw is personal loyalty, Percy. You do not know when to cut your losses. To save a friend, you would sacrifice the world.’ (*Titan’s Curse* 298)

Erikson details how trauma survivors “know one another in ways that the most intimate of friends never will, and for that reason they can supply a human context and a kind of emotional solvent in which the work of recovery can begin” (187). This is perhaps why Percy and Grover become best friends after experiencing their first battles together or why demigods seem to frequently become romantically involved with other demigods, such as Silena Beauregard and Charles Beckendorf or Percy and Annabeth. Unfortunately, relationships are clearly another avenue for traumatic experiences as antagonists in both the War on Terror and the Titan War target comrades.
Casualties are a reality of war and Percy and his companions deal with the loss of many friends. One of the most egregious losses is the death of Bianca di Angelo who sacrificed herself to save her companions. Percy feels personally responsible for Bianca’s death and wonders, “Why hadn’t I seen it? Why did I let her go instead of me?” (*Titan’s Curse* 198). Bianca’s introduction into the world of demigods mirrors Percy’s own and Percy, as his group’s leader, can relate to Bianca and the responsibility she bears for her brother Nico.

Nico struggles to recover from Bianca’s death and fixates upon locating her in the underworld, a clear symptom of the “compulsive seeking out of similar circumstances” that is a common to trauma (Erikson 184). Nico’s obsession makes him a vulnerable pawn in Kronos’s schemes until Bianca appears in ethereal form before Percy and Nico. Bianca helps to alleviate Percy’s guilt by reaffirming her commitment to the cause when she says, “You have nothing to apologize for, Percy. I made my own choice. I don’t regret it” (*Battle of the Labyrinth* 166). She then confronts her brother: “You’re mad because I died and left you alone. I’m sorry for that, Nico. I truly am. But you must overcome the anger...It will be your doom” (*Battle of the Labyrinth* 167). Following this confrontation, Nico begins to heal and recommits himself to the Olympians’ cause proving vital at the head of Hades’ Armies in the Battle of Manhattan.

Unfortunately, not every hero’s story ends as happily as Nico’s. A daughter of Aphrodite, Silena Beauregard, is nearly driven mad with grief following the death her boyfriend of a well-liked son of Hephaestus, Charles Beckendorf. Beckendorf is betrayed by a spy and cornered while on a mission to sink the enemy troop transport, the *Princess Andromeda*. Beckendorf is mourned as a hero after choosing to detonate his bomb and
sacrifice himself in order to accomplish the mission. Silena Beauregard, later revealed to be the spy who betrayed Beckendorf, takes her boyfriend’s death especially hard. Percy explains how, ‘We’d already lost so many people over the summer, but this was the worst. With Beckendorf gone, it felt like someone had stolen the anchor for the entire camp” (Last Olympian 47). Silena took Beckendorf’s loss hardest because she had been promised her cooperation would save lives. The trauma of realizing Silena caused Beckendorf’s death and betrayed her friends for no benefit renders her nearly catatonic. Silena is killed herself after she enters the battle obsessed with redeeming herself; her last words are still focused on undoing her treachery: “Silena took a heavy, painful breath. ‘Forgive me... Charlie...’ Silena’s eyes were a million miles away. ‘See Charlie...” (Last Olympian 297). Silena is presented with redemption through her final act of sacrificing herself to help turn a crucial skirmish during the Battle of Manhattan.

Silena’s response to trauma is much like Percy’s; they both find solace in the belief that their actions aid their friends. Percy and his companions begin recovering from trauma by refusing to be paralyzed by it. By choosing to act in the face of terror, Percy and the other demigods seize some semblance of control and are able to, at least temporarily, move past their traumatic experiences. The campers are finally able to mourn in the public ceremonies held at Camp Half-Blood. Each individual is able to focus on something new; they take their part in rebuilding the world. Percy comforts Grover, “We will come back from this. We’ll plant new trees. We’ll clean up the parks. Your friends will be reincarnated into a better world” (Riordan, Last Olympian 344). Annabeth can pour her energies into her reunited family and rebuilding Mount Olympus. Percy has saved his friends and home, and achieved lasting good through a pact in which
the gods will recognize all their children eliminating the bitterness that fueled the Titan War. Even more importantly though, Percy can enjoy his personal life as he is “heading back to Goode High School for [his] sophomore year— the first time in his life [he’d] ever done two years at the same school” and has consummated his romantic relationship with Annabeth with a kiss in the camp’s forest (Last Olympian 379). Percy “remembered what [Annabeth] told [him] in New York, and [he] thought— just maybe— [they] were off to a good start” (Last Olympian 380). It is this hope that there is the possibility to heal from the traumas of war and to begin again that allows Percy and all the heroes to recover from the war.

Ender Wiggin and Percy Jackson share a common need to communicate their experiences. This communication signifies mastery over their traumas and marks the healing process. Laub explains: “What ultimately matters in all processes of witnessing, spasmodic and continuous, conscious and unconscious, is not simply the information, the establishment of facts, but the experience itself of living through testimony, of giving testimony” (original emphasis, 70). Ender stands as a testament of the human race’s perseverance by pushing through the pain and horrors of his training to win the war and save mankind. He is able to reengage in a normal peaceful life by accepting his actions and attempting to define his life by more than his generalship. The campers at Half-Blood testify to trauma by refusing to be paralyzed by it. Their actions in the face of trauma and loss stand as a testament to their fallen comrades. This testament is made permanent through the creation of beads commemorating the major events of each year at camp. Laub explains the central importance of communicating traumatic experiences:
The survivors did not only need to survive so that they could tell their stories; they also needed to tell their stories in order to survive. There is, in each survivor, an imperative need to tell and thus to come to know one’s story, unimpeded by ghosts from the past against which one has to protect oneself. One has to know one’s buried truth in order to be able to live one’s life. (63)

The use of first-person narration in both *Ender’s Game* and the *Percy Jackson Series* indicates that each protagonist has begun to tell their story.

Ender testifies as the Speaker for the Dead through his creation of the tomes *Hive-Queen* and *Hegemon* while Percy’s direct address to the reader at the start of *The Lightning Thief* suggests that the actual text of the novels is Percy’s testament to the trauma. This use of first-person narration and direct addresses involves the readership in the pain and loss of each conflict. In “Mourning *A Series of Unfortunate Events*,” Kim Hong Nguyen discusses how, “Speculation about [*A Series of Unfortunate Events*’] ever-growing appeal among adults, comparisons between characters regarding the qualities of heroism and evil, and accounts of actual readers mapping their own fears and hopes onto the series all became evidence that children’s literature could help readers cope with the trauma associated with and attributed to the terrorist attacks” (266). It is easy to view *Ender’s Game* and the *Percy Jackson series* the same way, yet they do so much more. When considered in the context of the entire War on Terror, and not simply an isolated event like September 11, these YAL texts inform their readership about the realities of war and its traumas. They offer hope that the reader can survive and will flourish in the rebuilt world just as well as little Ender Wiggin and Percy “Seaweed Brain” Jackson have
done. Traumatic experiences may be unavoidable in modern warfare, but as *Ender's Game* and the *Percy Jackson* series illustrate, trauma cannot darken the hope that comes with a bright tomorrow.
Conclusion

American society has a unique relationship with Young Adult Literature (YAL) and the War on Terror. Young Adult Literature is influenced by both the War on Terror and the American society that creates and consumes this literature, but YAL also takes a crucial role in shaping the American relationship with modern warfare. Young Adult Literature is consumed by both adults and adolescents and thus retains a special power to engage and comfort adult readers who clearly see their reality reflected in fictional plots and to educate and prepare adolescents who will be forced to deal with the horrors of war. This thesis has touched upon some of the central points of connection between YAL and the modern warfare it depicts. There exists a myriad of other engagements between modern warfare and YAL that are outside the scope of this present work and others will develop as the War on Terror progresses. Young Adult Literature has been engaging with modern warfare for a number of years and thus it is crucial to understand the literature’s ability to inform and console its readers.

Ender’s Game and the Percy Jackson series present plots that are embedded with facets of modern warfare that seem to leap directly from newspaper headlines, as the Boston Bombings have sadly reinforced. Bruno Bettelheim’s The Uses of Enchantment: The Meaning and Importance of Fairy Tales explores popular fairy tales and how the tales and the ways they were transmitted are used to educate children. Bettelheim explains how oral transmissions of fairy tales allow them to be customized to children’s needs and thus were more powerful; the logic for this is that to a child a story “to be most effective, has to be an interpersonal event, shaped by those who participate in it” (151).
Written texts\(^1\) do not allow for this type of customization. Young Adult Literature has been effectively communicating with the War on Terror for almost twenty-five years by including its crucial issues and main themes within its plots. The inclusion of issues like the need to protect the homeland or responding to traumatic stress in early novels like *Ender’s Game* (1977) and more recent examples like the *Percy Jackson* series (2005) are evidence of YAL’s continuing engagement with modern warfare. Ken Scholes speaks of his experiences noticing the communication between modern warfare and YAL during his first encounter with *Ender’s Game*:

> And on September 11, 2001, we became afraid of a new enemy— one who flew passenger planes filled with men, women, and children into buildings filled with men, women, and children...I remember being afraid. Not a Cold War but a different kind of war this time, one that played even more directly to fear... to terror... *Ender’s Game* translates perfectly into this context as well, and as a first-time reader here in 2012, eleven years after the Al-Qaeda attacks on the World trade Center and the Pentagon, I found a different experience than I ever could have had back in 1985. Because there’s more to the story. More to my context for *Ender’s Game.*

(261)

Scholes’s experience proves the validity of Bettelheim’s central point: stories crafted to entertain children can also be effective tools to educate as well.

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\(^1\) While it is outside the scope of this project, the argument could be made that YAL has replaced the traditional fairy tale. The wide readership of YA texts, their diverse plots and themes, and autonomous, round adolescent characters could prove YAL a more effective learning tool for today’s youth than the traditional fairy oral tale.
YAL functions as more than just a tool to teach children. Young Adult Literature has, consciously or unconsciously, increasingly begun to function as war literature. This may be due to the pervasive, unavoidable nature of modern war. In an explanation of the nature of war literature, Catherine Savage Brosman reminds her readers:

Fiction, drama, and poetry concerning war tend toward recording not simply the causes and conduct of armed conflict or individual battles but the manner in which they are lived, felt, used, and transformed by participants... they bring a type of satisfaction different from that of simply knowing the facts... This authenticity and satisfaction come from a powerful appeal to readers' imaginations through identification with characters and their emotions and through literary language. (86)

The identification and authenticity that Brosman speaks of is seen in the wide audiences to whom these texts appeal. The fantastical elements of the plots allow issues of modern warfare to be distant enough to limit the paralyzing fear they induce, but realistic enough for the reader to relate to the protagonists and their struggles. Young Adult Literature allows readers to be affected and transformed by engaging with situations having similar perils as those encountered by the protagonists that parallel our everyday lives during the War on Terror.

The reader will never have to deploy to space for command training or to slay hydras or the Nemean lion. Young readers, however, can explore the tribulations of adolescence during war alongside Ender and Percy. Adult readers have already grown with the same fears about security and sneak attacks that Ender and Percy continually face. Alethea Kontis cites Bettelheim explaining, “at different points in a person’s life
that person had a different favorite fairy tale. The tale they identified with spoke great volumes about that person’s current problems, triumphs, and stage of development. Depending on when... we read *Ender’s Game*... we, the readers, look into that mirror and see one—or all—of Card’s cast staring back at us” (121). Readers identify themselves and the traumas of their own lives in these texts. The wide reading audience of these texts strongly suggests that the emotions contained within YA novels can reach across age groups. The diverse readership of these novels supports a claim that YAL can adequately teach individuals how to cope with the traumas modern warfare presents.

Young Adult Literature provides a horde of monsters and traumas for the protagonists to defeat. Ender and Percy each face a fanatical enemy bent on the destruction of their entire world. Each young protagonist is burdened with the mantle of the hero/savior and must deal with the pressures that accompany this role. Among the responsibilities that Ender and Percy hold are the need to protect the homeland, and to care for the many unprepared civilians who are targeted by the enemy to instill fear and to manipulate. The heroes of these texts do not escape battle unscathed. Ender and Percy experience traumatic stress as the pressures of combat and the loss of companions weighs on them heavily. They are faced with doubts about the righteousness of their actions and their responses to the enemy’s attacks. In the end, they are motivated to act because of a need to protect those closest to them. Ender and Percy emerge from their wars scarred but whole. Their actions saved lives and allowed for the possibility of a future where wrongs can be addressed. The texts are infused with hope since they do not end with scenes of death. Whether it is a new colony on a bugger planet or a new girlfriend and sophomore year of high school, each text presents the opportunity to begin anew. The fact that Ender
and Percy survive their ordeals and start over empowers the reader with a belief that they too can withstand the terrors of modern warfare and thrive.

Neal Shusterman posits, “the great hope for humanity is that we are compelled to find new perspectives, and to look at complex situations presented to us...The more we challenge ourselves with literature that dares to pose the hard questions, the better equipped we are to navigate real-world complexities” (251). Young Adult Literature poses these hard questions. The oath Percy forces the Olympians to swear preventing them from neglecting their demigod children validates healthy doubt, even if this doubt questions established institutions. Ender’s soul-wrenching debate over the right response to the bugger threat stands as a further example. Shusterman uses this example to offer positive analysis: “Ender’s Game is both an indictment and a vindication of militaristic thinking at the same time. It provides a quandary, not a position. Ender’s Game does not give us a moral neatly wrapped in a bow- instead it opens the drawstring on a nasty bag of questions” (244). Young Adult Literature is valuable for its role in promoting thoughtful discussion about the nature of modern warfare. Scholars like Chris Crowe champion YAL as a vehicle that will pose questions and provide answers that lead to long lasting peace. Perhaps, over time, YAL will prompt debates that will lead to peace, but presently it is engaging adults and adolescents to reflect on the best ways to wage and survive modern warfare. Until victory or mutual understanding lead to peace, readers of YAL must hope that they have the strength of Ender and Percy to bravely face the chaos of modern warfare and work towards a better tomorrow.
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