

# Teaching Notes for *Year's Best YA Speculative Fiction 2013*

Edited by Julia Rios and Alisa Krasnostein

A Kaleidoscope imprint book

[kaleidoscope.twelfthplanetpress.com](http://kaleidoscope.twelfthplanetpress.com)



## Themes:

*Year's Best Young Adult Speculative Fiction 2013* collects a range of diverse fiction originally published in 2013. These stories first appeared in a variety of magazines and books, and they explore issues relating to adolescence. There is a combination of light and dark themes among the science fiction and fantasy worlds, and the protagonists come from a diverse array of backgrounds.

## Summary:

*"Selkie Stories Are For Losers"* by Sofia Samatar: A teen whose mother is a selkie and has left home.

*“By Bone-Light”* by Juliet Marillier: A contemporary retelling of the Russian fairy tale “Vasilissa the Fair” in which a girl escapes an abusive home situation.

*“The Myriad Dangers”* by Lavie Tidhar: A boy in Tel Aviv faces waves of paranormal invasions on Rosh Hashana.

*“The Carpet”* by Nnedi Okorafor: Two African-American sisters visiting family in Nigeria buy a mysterious carpet.

*“I Gave You My Love by the Light of the Moon”* by Sarah Rees Brennan: A girl comes to terms with becoming a werewolf.

*“57 Reasons for the Slate Quarry Suicides”* by Sam J. Miller: A numbered list of reasons why a group of boys killed themselves at the Slate Quarry.

*“The Minotaur Girls”* by Tansy Rayner Roberts: A teenage girl will do anything to be part of a glitzy roller club called the Minotaur, but not all is what it seems.

*“Not With You, But With You”* by Miri Kim: In a dystopian future, a teenage girl tries to decide whether she is with the rebellion or not.

*“Ghost Town”* by Malinda Lo: Told in reverse chronological order, this story is about an LGBTQ+ teen who is set up for a prank in a haunted house but gets her own back.

*“December”* by Neil Gaiman: A homeless girl looks for warmth on a cold winter’s night.

*“An Echo in the Shell”* by Beth Cato: Allison’s grandmother is suffering a disease, but Allison doesn’t want to let her go.

*“Dan’s Dreams”* by Eliza Victoria: Dan will do anything to graduate with a scholarship to college, even cheat.

*“As Large As Alone”* by Alena McNamara: Two sisters find a mermaid in the lake, but there’s more to her than they realise.

*“Random Play All and the League of Awesome”* by Shane Halbach: Three boys have mundane superpowers that may just help save the day.

*“Mah Song”* by Joanne Anderton: Children must be sacrificed to procure rain for the drought, but one girl will do anything to save her brother.

*“What We Ourselves Are Not”* by Leah Cypress: In a future where microchips can be embedded in the teenage brain to remember specific cultural histories, Zach has a world-altering choice to make.

*“The City of Chrysanthemum”* by Ken Liu: Imprisoned by binary gender roles, Bobby escapes into an alternate reality where he can be whoever he wants.

*“Megumi’s Quest”* by Joyce Chng: Megumi faces a challenge that’s more than just climbing cliffs and battling thorns – it’s a fight for her life.

*“Persimmon, Teeth, and Boys”* by Steve Berman: A gay boy has ups and downs at school, and a series of run-ins with the tooth fairy, who is different than he expected.

*“Flight”* by Angela Slatter: This fairytale-esque story follows a young princess, a transformation, and a history of complicated familial relationships.

*“We Have Always Lived on Mars”* by Cecil Castellucci: Living in a colony on Mars, Nina has always been told not to go far from the safety of her habitat, but she’s beginning to question that choice.

**Study notes:**

*Year's Best Young Adult Speculative Fiction 2013* would be useful in teaching various social issues, history, and areas of geography.

- *By Bone-Light* is a contemporary retelling of “Vasilissa the Beautiful”. Read the annotated version from Sur La Lune Fairy Tales online (<http://surlalunefairytales.com/babayaga/index.html>) and then compare and contrast this fairy tale retelling with the original story. What changes did the author make, and why? Can you think of other retellings? How would you choose to retell a fairy tale?
- *The Carpet* is set in Nigeria and contains a mixture of traditional African lifestyle and Western culture. Do you or someone you know have relatives in another country? How does your experience of visiting your relatives compare with the one in the book?
- Several of the stories are told in non-conventional styles. Write a persuasive text on which non-conventional style worked better as a narrative device than if it were written in a conventional style, and why.
- Was Zach’s choice right or wrong at the end of *What We Ourselves Are Not*? What would you choose, and why?
- *Persimmon, Teeth, and Boys* mentioned a mouse throughout the story. Research cultural variations of the tooth fairy such as Ratoncito Pérez ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratoncito\\_P%C3%A9rez](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ratoncito_P%C3%A9rez)) and discuss how the tooth fairy is different to different cultures. What other myths cross cultural boundaries, and how do they differ?
- Choose one of the stories in this collection and design a poster for it using strategies such as juxtaposition and symbolism to appeal to its target audience.
- Assign one story to each pair or group of students and have each student compile a list of interview questions for a different character in the story. Then have students take turns playing the part of interviewer and interviewee in their groups.
- Some of the short stories in this book have a twist ending. Write a short story with your own twist ending.