

## Rolling Out the Red Carpet for Teen Readers: A University, Public School, and Public Library Production



Hollywood's big Oscar event is scheduled near the end of February each year and so are the Melinda Awards for Young Adult Literature. I created the Melinda Awards not only to recognize the best-written young adult books published each year but also to give teen readers and graduate education students a chance to learn about YA literature together.

Since 2000, the first year of the Printz Award, the American Library Association's (ALA) award for the young adult books that exemplify the highest literary quality, my Young Adult Literature graduate class at NCSU has met with the Eva Perry Public Library Mock Printz Award Book Club. A few years later the Middle Creek High School Club was formed and joined our project. For the past four years, we have shared our event with the world via a live, streaming video webcast.

The teens read the newly published YA books throughout the year and share their short list with us when we begin class in January. Then, just prior to the official Printz Award announcements in January at ALA's Mid-Winter Conference, the teens select their Printz winner and honor books. Our class continues reading an average of two books per week until we finish the short lists and vote on our award winners just before the Melinda Awards near Oscar time.

The teens love the Oscar theme and dress in prom clothes for the Melinda Award ceremony. Emotions run high as each club (Eva Perry, Middle Creek, and NCSU) passionately presents their award-winners. We usually have some differences of agreement with the official Printz choices. Then, for a little comic relief, we announce the results of the voting for such Oscar-inspired categories as "Best Performance by a Starring Female Character" or "Best Dressed Book."

We are fortunate to have these two Mock Printz Award Clubs in the Raleigh area – two of the few in the country. My class always considers this event the highlight of the semester because they hear from teen readers who have read the same books. There is no more effective way for teachers to gain insight into how teens respond to books and to understand their perspectives on some of the issues related to YA literature.

I would like to invite other YA graduate classes in North Carolina or even across the country to join us in this project. The Melinda Award events are archived at [www.ncwiseowl.org/teenread](http://www.ncwiseowl.org/teenread) (go to Projects). Please take a look and get in touch if you are interested in collaborating.