An Annotated Bibliography:

The mother/daughter relationship is finally being explored fully in adolescent fiction. For many years it was neglected, with the mother either portrayed as perfect or conveniently kept in the background. The following novels directly face the relationship and realistically explore the tensions between adolescent daughters and their mothers. Common themes and situations appear in many of them: the single parent family; reversal of the roles of mother and daughter; major life crises (death, abandonment, mental illness, divorce); and development of a heightened understanding between mother and daughter.

This bibliography has been compiled to assist those interested in recent trends about women in adolescent fiction and to assist teachers and librarians recommending fiction to young adults. The annotations emphasize the particular nature of the mother/daughter relationship.

The list includes novels that were cited in the following recommending sources: "ALA Best Books for Young Adults," 1980-85; CCBC Choices (University of Wisconsin, Cooperative Children's Book Center), 1980-85; Junior High School Catalog, 5th edition with supplements (H.W. Wilson, 1985); School Library Journal's "Best Books for Young Adults," 1980-85; Senior High School Catalog, 12th edition with supplements (H.W. Wilson, 1982); University of Iowa's "Books for Young Adults Poll." Adult novels of interest to young adults are not included.


Fifteen-year-old Kelly pulls away from her mother when she realizes that her mother regards Kelly as her best friend. When her mother attempts suicide and is hospitalized for mental illness, Kelly is sent to stay with her grandmother in Florida and feels responsible for her mother's unhappiness. Guilt blends with a sense of betrayal when Kelly states, "I still needed her so much, but she wasn't there for me." Gradually Kelly comes to understand that her mother has to develop her own life to get well; nevertheless, fighting family opposition, Kelly returns to provide emotional support during her mother's recovery. This time she will be the daughter, not the friend. The complex emotional struggles of both mother and daughter are sensitively presented.


When Heather's father, the lively connecting link of the family, dies, her mother becomes distant and immerses herself in a frenzy of work. While recognizing her mother's need for privacy, Heather is saddened by the
separateness of their lives and feels the need to share her grief. After
Heather initiates emotional contact by becoming involved in her mother's work,
the mother is able to reveal her fears of being a burden. Acting as the
mature counselor, Heather then assures her mother that "I want you in my life.
I want to be a part of yours."


Through three novellas, the reader meets Alice first as a devoted daughter
who translates for her deaf mother, and then as mother of Anne. In the second
novella, Anne and her mother await a visit from Anne's father who is fighting
in World War II. Instead, they receive a telegram announcing his death. At
first both are absorbed in their own grief and unable to comfort each other,
but gradually they begin to share the pain and find a close communion with
each other. The final novella presents Anne as an anxious mother who
overprotects her freedom-seeking daughter in New York City. After a period of
resentment, the daughter comes to appreciate her mother's concern and
understand the roots of her fears. Each story sheds light on the motivations
of the mother in the following story, creating a subtle interplay of tensions.

Childress, Alice. *Rainbow Jordan.* New York: Coward, McCann & Geoghegan,

Alternating the narrator from fourteen-year-old Rainbow to her twenty-
ine-year-old mother, Kathie, to her foster mother Josephine of fifty,
Childress illuminates the various emotional and economic struggles at work in
this three-way relationship. Although Rainbow is proud of her mother's beauty
and always ready to defend her and greet her with forgiveness and love, she
feels rejected when her mother repeatedly disappears for long periods of time
to find work. During these times Rainbow is placed in Josephine's foster
home, and she rejects Josephine as a mother substitute as if it would be a
betrayal of Kathie. Though hating to admit her enjoyment of Josephine, she
finally comes to grips with the reality of her mother's existence and accepts
and returns Josephine's love.


"Protecting parents' feeling can be a full-time job," states Phoebe, the
teenager who spends weekdays with her divorced father in Woodstock and
weekends with her mother in New York City. Phoebe expresses growing
resentment towards her mother, who sometimes forgets Phoebe is the daughter in
the relationship. She has always been there to comfort her mother in times of
need, but feels pushed aside as a visitor when her mother remarries a man
Phoebe dislikes. Phoebe finally finds security and joy in her father's home
and accepts the fact that "if she (my mother) were just some person in the
street, I wouldn't want to know her."

Fox, Paula. *A Place Apart.* New York: Farrar, Straus, Giroux, 1980; pap. NAL,
1982.

Victoria and her mother begin a new life after Victoria's father dies and
they move from Boston to a small town. Fox exposes the chain-smoking mother's
pain in moving from their old house, planning finances, finding an occupation,
and adjusting to the idea of remarriage. The dominant focus, however, is on
the fourteen-year-old's life with new school friends. Throughout their year of adjustment, both mother and daughter provide each other enough space to disagree so that a strong bond of mutual support and understanding emerges.


Seventh-grader Samantha Gold wishes her mother were like everyone else's. Instead, Sam's mother, a writer of children's books, produces an adult sex novel and becomes completely consumed with its publicity. Samantha takes over the cooking and cleaning responsibilities but wishes her mother would show an interest in Samantha's upcoming bat mitzvah. Though both mother and daughter are absorbed in themselves, by the end of the bat mitzvah Sam comes to appreciate her mother's individuality and helps her mother to refocus her life.


Carol Ann, oldest daughter of a gypsy fortune teller, has dreams of becoming a famous country-western singer. Mrs. McCaffrey, the church organist, encourages Carol Ann by helping her develop her talent. But pulling Carol Ann away from her dreams is her mother, an irresponsible schemer who is caught up in her own magic and lands in jail. When her mother neglects to attend Carol Ann's high school graduation and encourages her daughter to marry for money, Carol Ann realizes it is time to leave home and make her own life. Having always carried the responsibility for the family of many children, she reflects on her situation: "I needed my mother to be that -- a mother. A caring, seeing-to-everything, taking-charge mother. But the truth was she was at least half the time just another one of the kids."


By writing from three different viewpoints, Hall exposes buried tensions in this farm household. During the year following graduation, Roxanne plans to move to the city to prove herself, even though she loves working the farm. She resents her domineering father and feels unloved because her mother seems to neglect Roxanne's interests and achievements. Thora, the mother, feels hurt that Roxanne is leaving the farm and knows that her husband will also leave their marriage soon. The father feels inadequate on the farm and unloved as well. All of these feelings remain unspoken until Roxanne returns to work the farm with her mother. Finally their bonds of love are expressed, and their common talents in farming bring them fulfillment.


Fourteen-year-old Tree regards her mother as the "mood and background of her life" even though her mother works away from home and has given Tree all the household responsibilities, which include caring for her ailing, retarded brother, Dab. Tree's resentment builds as Dab's illness grows more serious, and her encounters with her uncle's ghost, Brother Rush, revive painful memories of her mother's abuse of Dab. In confronting her mother after Dab's
death, Tree tries to sort out her mixed feelings of love and hate. In an original style, Hamilton paints a perceptive montage of complicated family dynamics.


Loving respect and understanding among three generations of women unfold when sixteen-year-old Rhys and her mother spend the summer with Rhys' dying grandmother. Rhys understands her grandmother when her mother can't, just as the grandmother assists Rhys in interpreting her mother. Each of the three women ends the summer with a better appreciation of the others and a stronger sense of self.


This novel is Marge's memoir of the year after her parents' divorce, when she and her mother and sister, Blainey, move to a new life in a California Theosophical Colony. Closeness develops among the three, demonstrated by Marge's compassion for her mother's despair, as well as by Marge's openness in discussing her own traumas adjusting to a new school. As the mother develops new job skills, finds employment, and eventually buys a new house, Marge and Blainey's admiration for her grows. The sisters guard their mother against stress and become a tight support group for each other.


Having spent five happy years in the U.S. during World War II, Rusty returns to her native England at age twelve to find her family cold and restrictive. Her mother, changed through her work in the Women's Voluntary Service, has become an expert car mechanic, an unacceptable talent in her authoritarian father's eyes. Absorbed in the problems of their failing marriage, the parents send Rusty to a strict boarding school, her mother failing to recognize how similar she and her daughter are. When her mother separates from her father and withdraws Rusty from boarding school, they begin a new relationship, taking pride in each other's talents and supporting each other in their new life together.


Having thought her mother died when she was a toddler, fourteen-year-old Terri discovers that she was kidnapped by her father after a divorce and that her mother is still alive. Since her loving father has kept her isolated from all family ties, Terri secretly plots to find her mother because she feels the need for a larger sense of connection and identity in the world. A new bonding takes place when mother and daughter reunite and find they have much in common. The mother, now remarried with another child, is proud of Terri, and Terri tries to understand the pain her mother has suffered. When faced with the decision to stay with her mother or return to her father, however, Terri chooses her father, considering him more isolated and in emotional need. Both mother and daughter accept this separation, knowing that this time it will not be permanent.

Joss, absorbed in the changing sexual tensions of her own life in junior high, is shocked when she discovers her mother's sexual involvement with an older professor. Joss had feared that her father was in love with one of his students, but never considered her mother's desiring anyone but her father. When Joss' mother explains her sense of being belittled by her husband, she tries to make Joss recognize the importance of feeling self-worth. Through Joss's changing experiences with her own friends as well as her new awareness of her parents' relationship, she realizes the complexity of really knowing anyone, even someone with whom you live.


In this novel, Anne Cameron comes to grips with her mother's death, but more importantly with her whole relationship with her mother. When she represses memories and feelings so that her mother appears to her a figure of perfection, Anne is unable to do her schoolwork, to relate emotionally to her boyfriend, or to face her emotions. After a jarring skating accident, Anne confronts the past honestly. She realizes the guilt she has harbored over her mother's rejection of the family when Anne was eight, the feeling of responsibility she has borne for her mother's death, and her genuine dislike of her mother's control over her life. With subtle images, O'Neal exposes the ambivalent feelings of attachment and rejection, of love and hate. Anne realizes she and her mother "had loved each other in their imperfect ways."


When Mr. Walker is arrested for embezzlement, his wife and four children have to auction their mansion to move to an apartment over the drugstore. Mrs. Walker has a mental breakdown, and Rebecca, known as the "best all-around" kid, assumes the household duties. Rebecca's mother had always been remote and overprotected, even by her children, but with her father gone, Rebecca feels real need for a mother. Having masqueraded unity and well-being to preserve her pride for many weeks, Rebecca finally rebels and abandons responsibility. The other children then have to take over until Rebecca gradually returns to her old self and allies herself with her siblings to form a support network for their recovering mother.


"It was a full-time job growing up to resist my mother's plans for me," states Mary when she runs away from her disapproving mother to work in Professor Page's home for the summer. Although she can sympathize with some of her mother's previous hardships, Mary is furious when she learns that her mother is trying to get Professor Page fired for her views on abortion. Both mother and daughter compromise in the end and are able to see qualities of themselves in each other. Mary's understanding is expressed this way: "I like her. She is a good woman -- narrowminded, of course -- like anyone who is afraid of the confusions and changes in the world and has to protect her children from them."

An understanding, supportive mother helps her daughter, Ancil, adjust to a new stepfather with whom she is uncomfortable. Ancil, devoted to the memory of her father who has been missing in action in Vietnam for over ten years, feels like acceptance of this man would be a betrayal of her father. Her mother provides Ancil with the security and support that she needs.


When Tansy's mother disappears, leaving a note about her need to develop her own life, Tansy and her brother and sister have to take over the household. Their father, who has always been aloof, now withdraws into his study and does nothing. While working on the household tasks, Tansy begins to consider more carefully the nature of her parents' relationship -- the insensitivity of her father, the selfless work done by her mother. She finally locates her mother and listens to the painful tales of her parents' marriage. Tansy comes to accept her mother's need for independence, and in the end, the mother convincingly demonstrates her love for Tansy.


This is a painful story of a dying mother's devotion to her daughter's success as a dancer, and of a daughter's devotion to her mother. Brooke's life and ambition had been so completely intertwined with her mother's goals for her that she has difficulty imagining life without her. She despairs that she cannot sustain her mother's life as a mother sustains a baby. However, after her mother's death, Brooke realizes that her mother's goals are not her own and grows resentful. She stops dancing, changes her style, and deals with years of bitter feelings she had kept bottled inside. Brooke develops a sense of freedom in the end by knowing that she loved her mother but was influenced too strongly by her.

-- Compiled by Jan Savage
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