

The *Breaking Dawn* of Teen Literature

Beyond the bewitching boy wizards and the blood-lusting vampires, Morgan Hill teens appreciate the excellent literary craftsmanship used to create the famous *Harry Potter* books and now Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight* series.

The fourth and final installment of Meyer's captivating *Twilight Saga*, *Breaking Dawn*, caused readers to commune at bookstores nationwide at midnight on August 2, 2008. There was a feverish celebration reminiscent of the Potter Midnight parties. This time, however, *Twilight* trivia welcomed in the midnight hour. More than a year earlier, J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows* exploded on the scene, completing the seven-part fantasy phenomenon.

Teenagers relate passionately to these novels because the books' protagonists, equipped with super strength, beauty and power, are also teens themselves. But, before dismissing these works as mere teen fantasy/fluff, readers everywhere must admire these female writing power-houses: both Rowling and Meyer are able to intertwine magic with the real world. And their double-edged pens leave their readers craving for more.

The *Harry Potter* craze has been unparalleled in history. Rowling obviously has the advantages of modern technology to popularize her books; however, her ability to merge wit and drama, and her skill in creating real, human people into out-of-this-world situations are qualities that give her work its enduring magic.

Teenagers and older fans have been intrigued by Rowling's language that paints the page with continuous detail, making her stories even more complicated and enchanting. They also love that she understands the complexity of the human character. All people have good and evil within them; however, "it is not our abilities that show who we are, but our choices," (*Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets*). Perhaps there will never be another series to equal the quality of *Harry Potter*, but fortunately, another author has written an incredibly gripping saga that chronicles the teenage and adult struggle between reason and passion. It is an unlikely struggle, a bizarre battle of vampires, werewolves and one lone human.

Stephanie Meyer, the Mormon mother of three with a bachelor's degree in English from Brigham Young University, is an unlikely master at combining the supernatural and sexual tension. She tells the story of Bella Swan, a human out-of-place in the human world, who enchants and is enchanted by Edward Cullen, a handsome, mind-reading vampire who craves a real human experience as well as Bella's human blood.

Yes, in Meyer's vampire world, blood *lust* can have many connotations. As Bella's feelings and body venture farther into a romantic and paranormal setting, she captures the emotions of Jacob Black, a motorcycle riding, American Indian "hot-bod" werewolf whose sole existence is to destroy vampires. This triangle love affair is dosed with constant danger and occasional violence, a sure recipe for a teen thriller.

Twilight, thoroughly entertaining and accessible to a multitude of readers, is also an example of remarkable writing. First, Meyer uses beautiful, finely crafted language to describe action and setting, from the rainy and green landscape of Washington state to the intense battle sequences between her magical characters. Second, her books are filled with references to classical works such as Pride and Prejudice and Wuthering Heights. Finally, Meyer *knows* her characters as if they were her own friends. She details every painful decision, every feeling of pure happiness, from Jacob's obsessive jealousy to Bella's heart-breaking depression.

Meyer is currently working on Midnight Sun, the rewritten Twilight told in the vampire Edward Cullen's point of view.

American teens have proven that they have good taste. Like Austen, Twain and Hemingway, J. K. Rowling and Stephanie Meyer have made history by creating literature that chronicles the human condition in a style that is accessible, witty and passionate. Above all, their spirited writings prove that human action and emotion can be as magical as magic itself. No wonder teens love their works.