

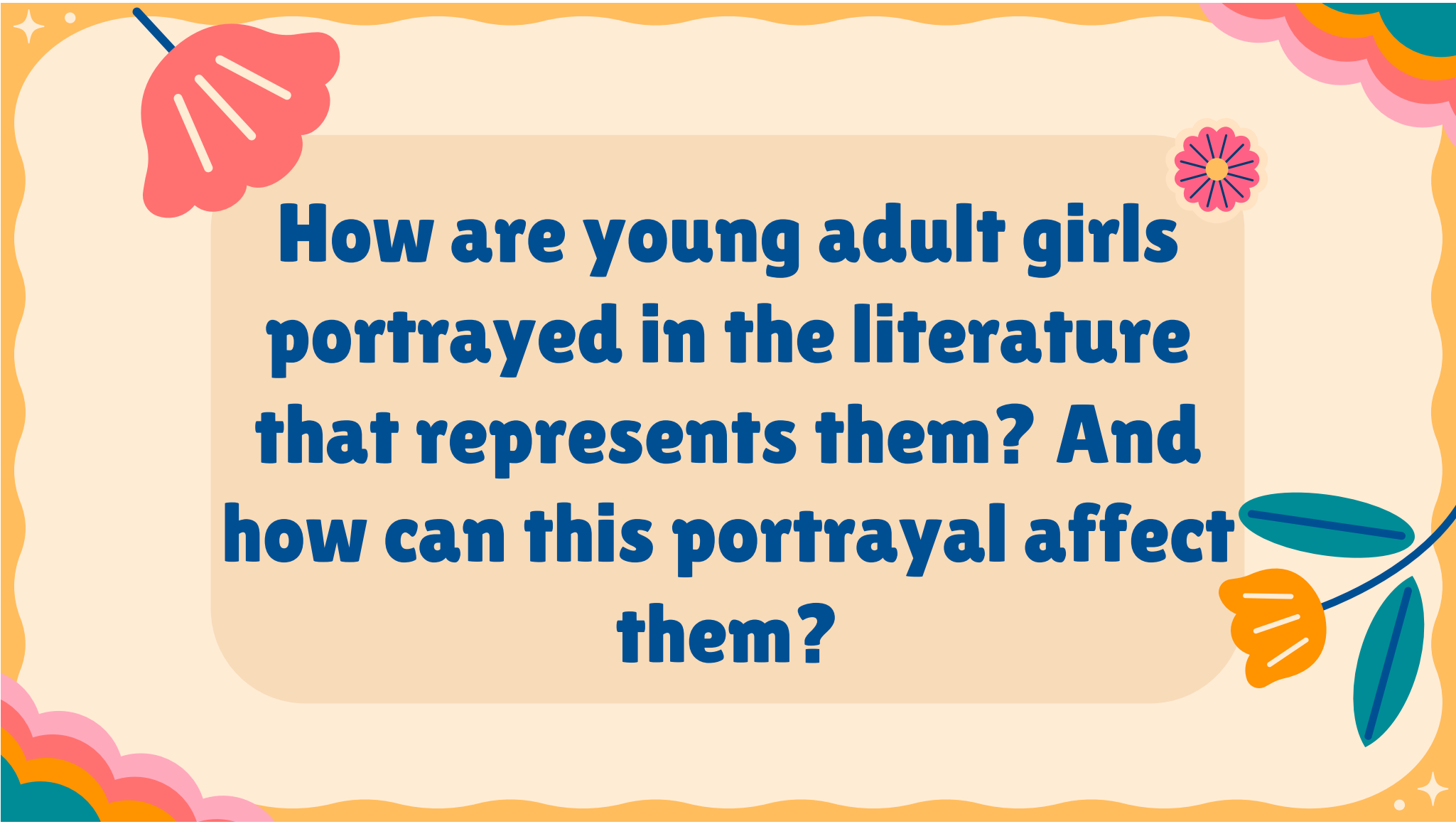
"Silly, Annoying" Girls

The Portrayal of the Young Adult Girl in 21st-Century Young Adult Literature

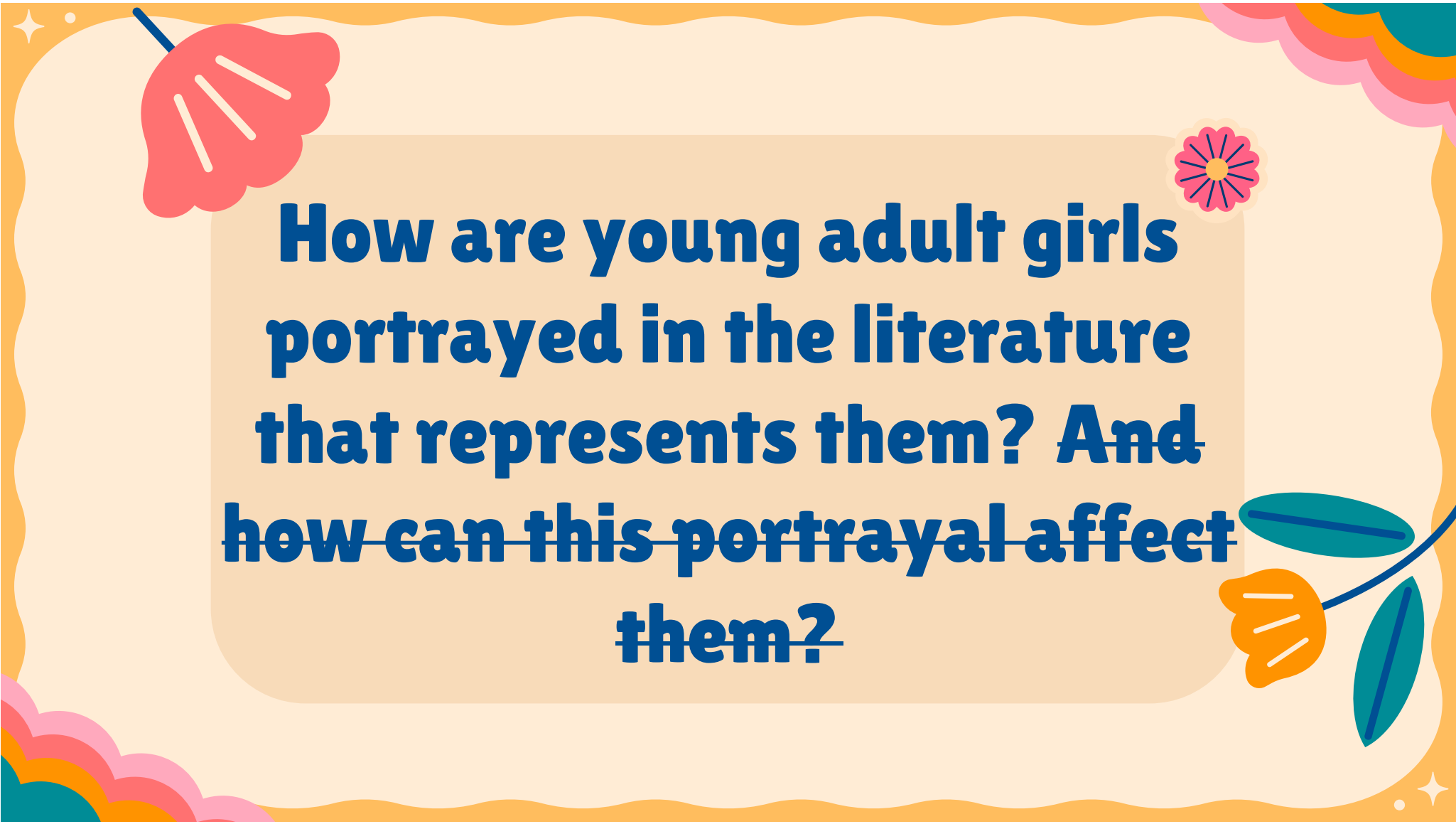


Savannah Price

The illustration features two young women with long hair, one with dark hair and one with reddish-brown hair, both smiling and holding a large, light-colored oval frame. The woman on the left is wearing a teal top and a blue skirt, while the woman on the right is wearing a teal jacket over a white shirt and blue pants. The background is a warm, orange-yellow color with stylized pink and orange flowers, green leaves, and radiating lines. The entire scene is framed by a decorative, wavy border in shades of pink and orange.

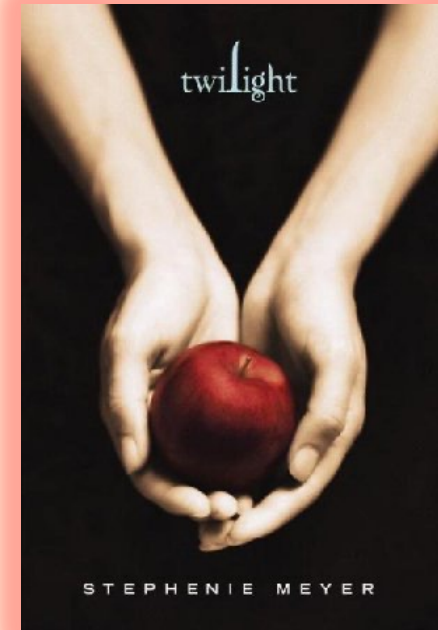
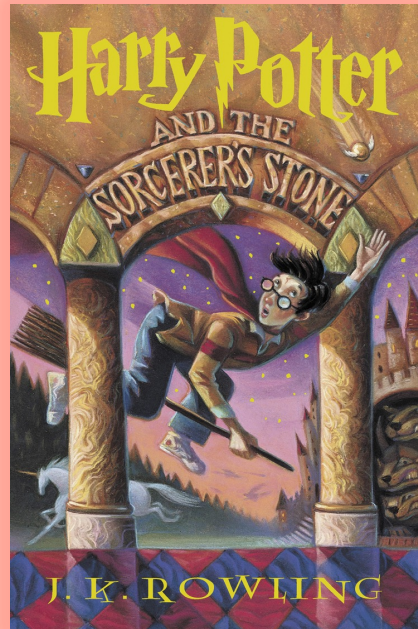
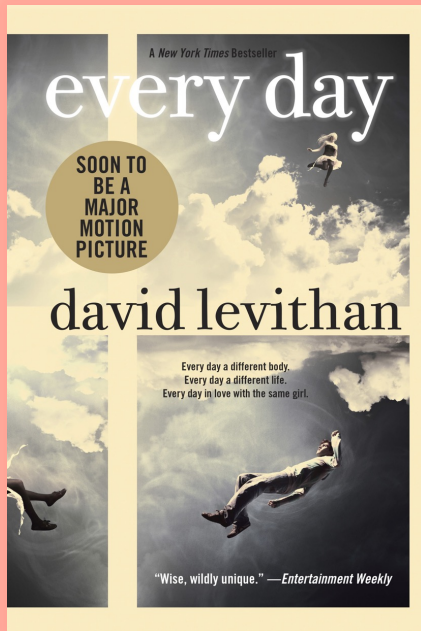


**How are young adult girls
portrayed in the literature
that represents them? And
how can this portrayal affect
them?**

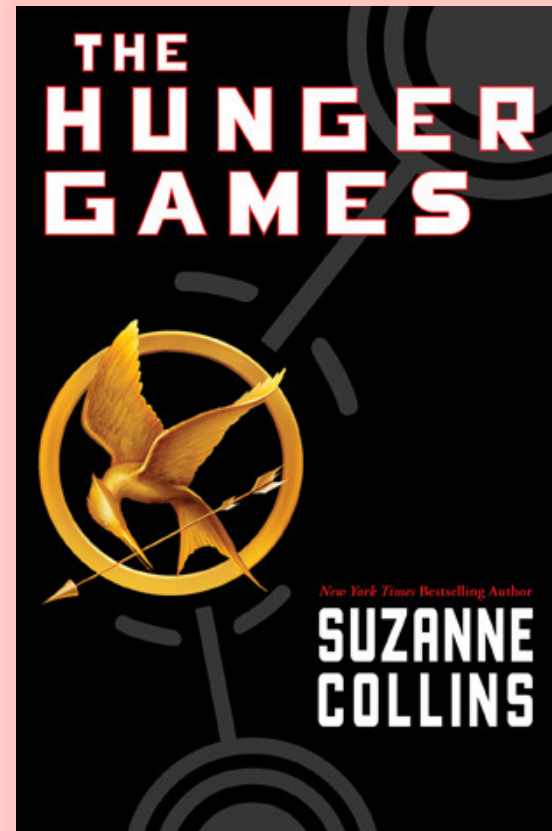
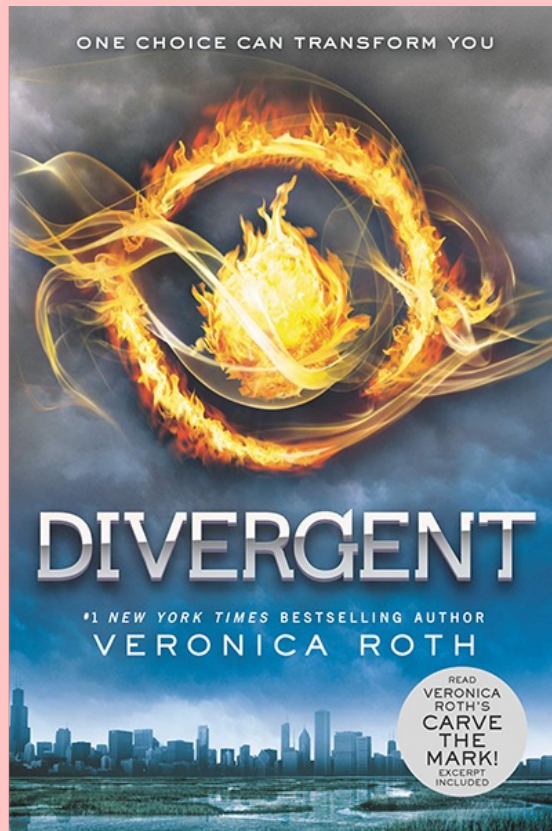


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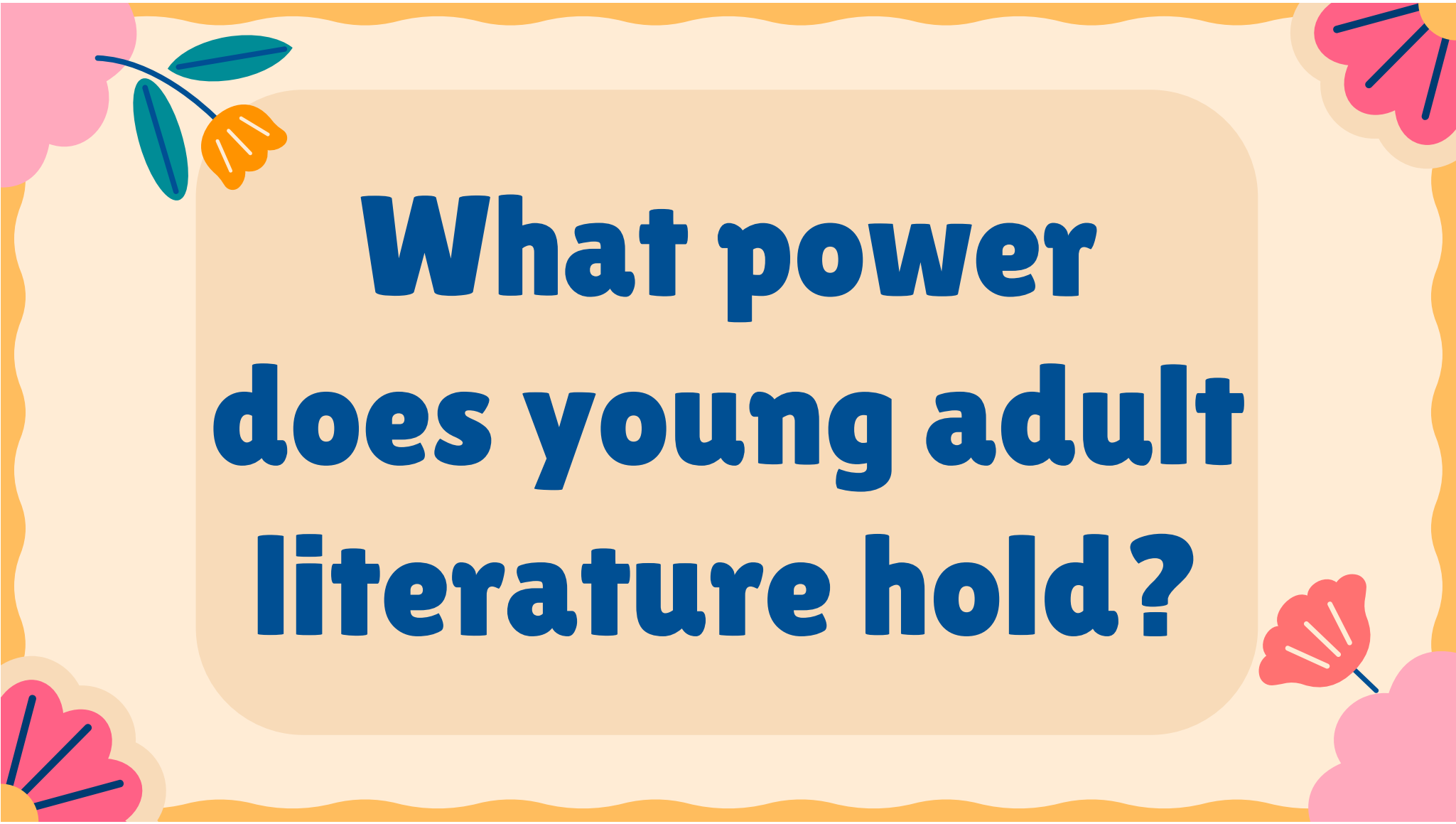
Texts Researched:



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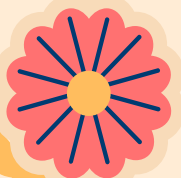


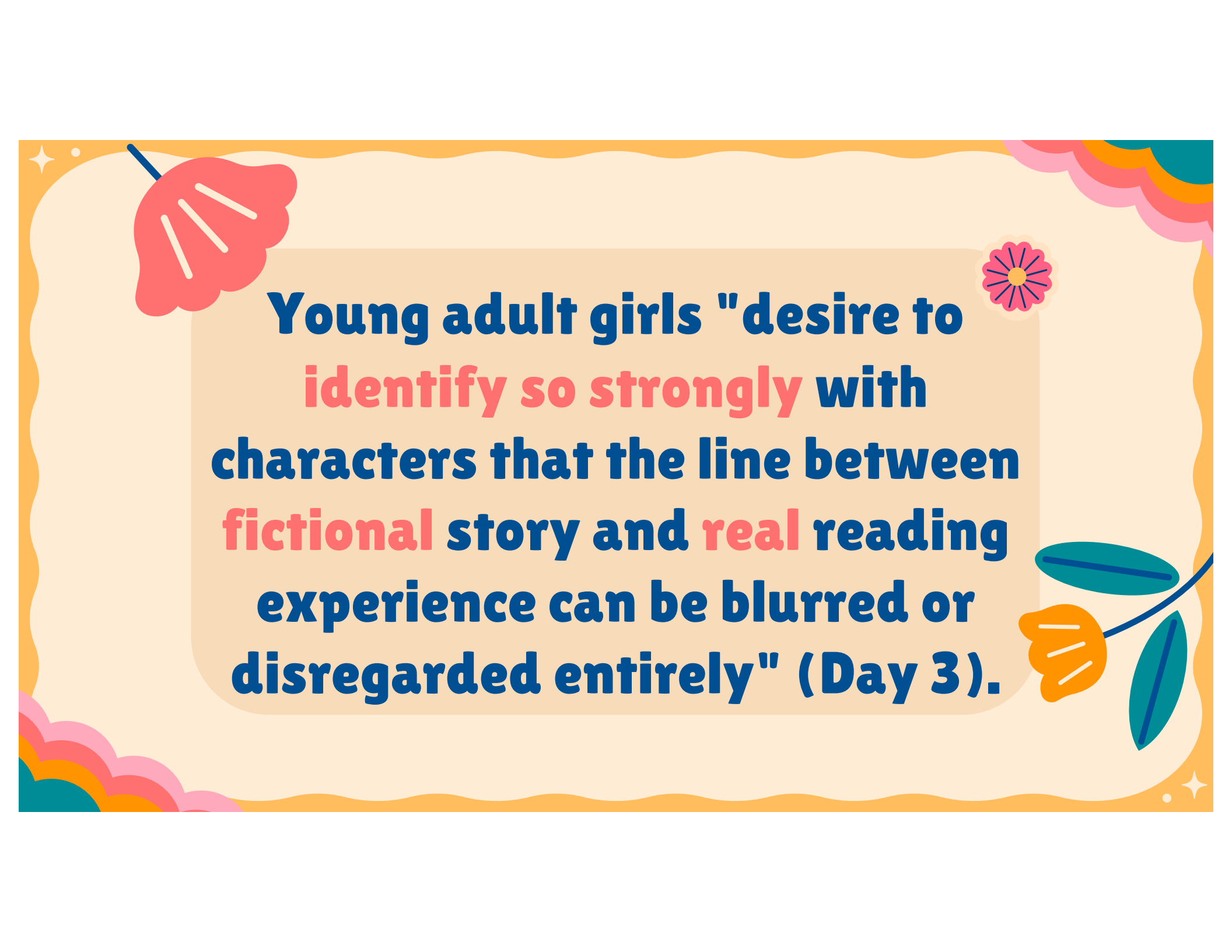
A decorative border surrounds the central text area. It features stylized pink flowers with blue outlines and green leaves in the corners. A yellow flower with a blue outline is also visible in the top-left corner.

**What power
does young adult
literature hold?**

What power does YA Lit. hold?

- Young adults are still “figuring out their place in society” and “searching for [their] identity,” and they look to young adult literature to help them in this search (Bodden 90, 20).
 - Shows young adult girls where they belong in society, how they should behave, and how they should present themselves.
- Young adult girls “cast fictional characters as peers, relatives, and especially friends” (Day 3).





**Young adult girls "desire to
identify so strongly with
characters that the line between
fictional story and real reading
experience can be blurred or
disregarded entirely" (Day 3).**

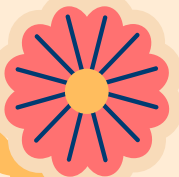
A decorative border surrounds the central text area. It features stylized pink flowers with blue outlines and green leaves in the corners. A yellow flower with a blue outline is positioned near the top left. The background is a light orange color with a wavy, scalloped border.

**How are young
adult girls
portrayed?**

How are young adult girls portrayed?

Young adult girls are believed to be:

- “affectionate, cheerful, **childlike**, avoiding harsh language, **eager to soothe** harsh feelings, **flatterable**, gentle, gullible, loving children, loyal, **sensitive** to the needs of others, **shy**, soft-spoken, sympathetic, **tender**, understanding, warm, and **yielding**” (Kokesh and Sternadori 141).



How are young adult girls portrayed?

The 3 extreme portrayals:

- 1) The insecure, dependent damsel, who needs the validation of the male
- 2) The sensual, conceited, and, therefore, selfish bitch, who is unlikeable because she is attractive
- 3) The 'masculine' girl who is forced to mask her natural traits with accepted feminine ones





Extreme Portrayal 1



The Insecure, Dependent Damsel





Kristen Stewart



Levithan's *Everyday*

Main love interest: Rhiannon

- “[T]ransparent in her emotions—tentative and expectant, nervous and adoring” (Levithan 4).
- “No one else would have this reaction to [Justin], so unsteady in his presence” (Levithan 4).
- “She’s looking at the floor, at her inked-in Converse” (Levithan 4).



Levithan's *Everyday*

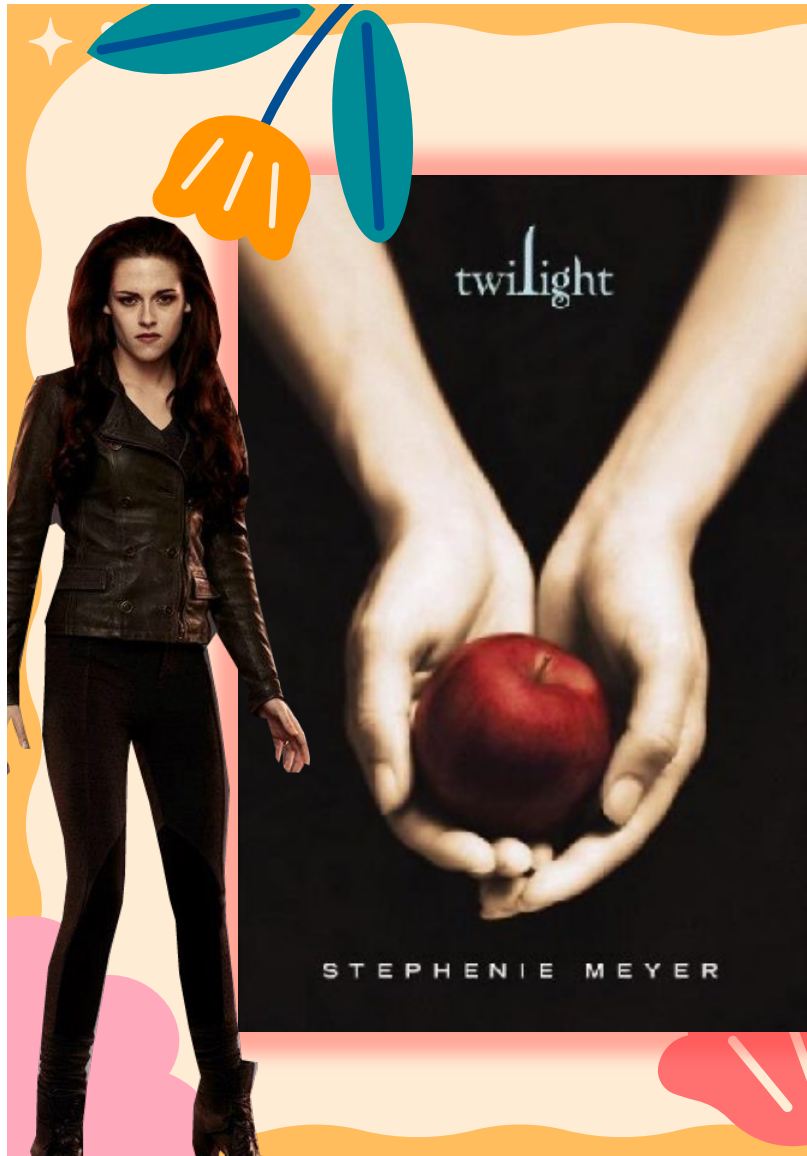
- “She’s pretty, but **she doesn’t see it**. She’s **hiding** behind her hair, happy to see me [Justin] and unhappy to see me at the same time” (Levithan 4).
- “She is **so lost in her sadness** that **she has no idea** how visible it is” (Levithan 5).
- “It’s there in her body language. When she is around him, **she makes herself small**” (Levithan 5).



Levithan's *Everyday*

- Just by the **fifth** page, Levithan has met nearly **every one** of the stereotypically female traits.
- Rhiannon is “affectionate,” “eager to soothe harsh feelings, **flatterable**, gentle,” “loyal, sensitive to the needs of others, **shy**, soft-spoken, sympathetic, **tender**, understanding, warm, and **yielding**” (Kokesh and Sternadori 141).

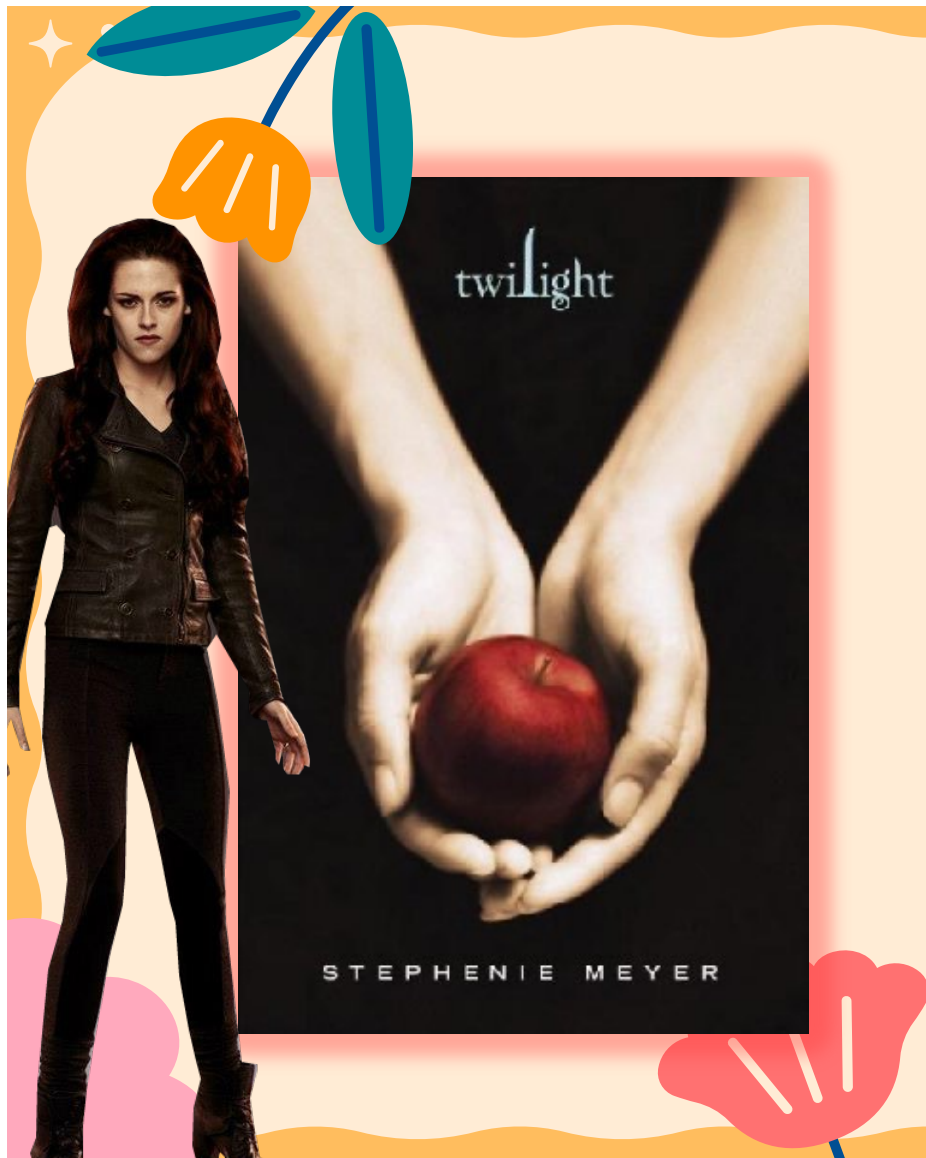




Meyer's *Twilight*

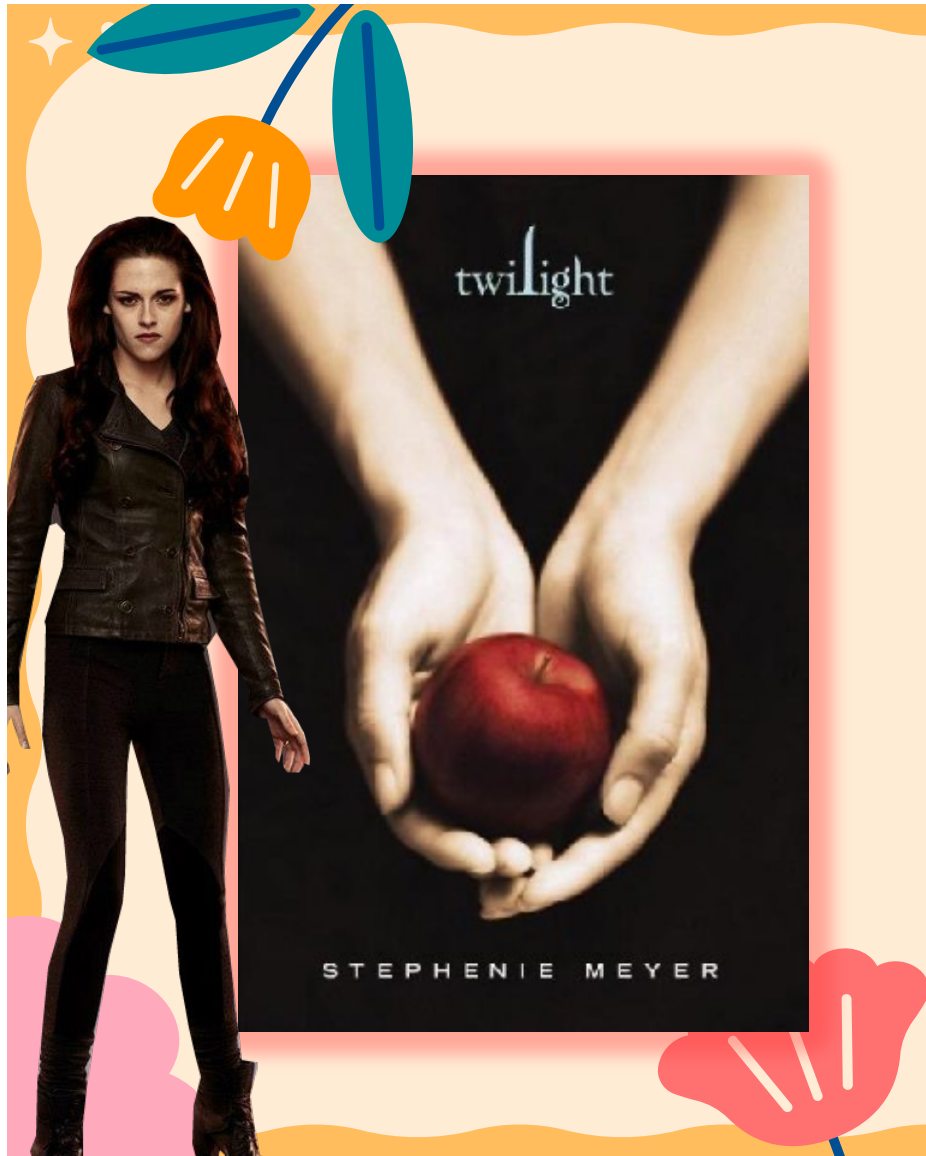
Female protagonist: Bella Swan

- She has “always been a **bad liar**” (Meyer 4).
- “physically” never fitting “in anywhere” (10)
- never “relat[ing] well to people [her] age” or to “people, period” (Meyer 10)
- “obviously not an athlete” (Meyer 10)
 - “crippling clumsiness” (Meyer 55), she admits that she makes “the Cowardly Lion look like the terminator” (Meyer 30).
- “**shy**” (Meyer 23).



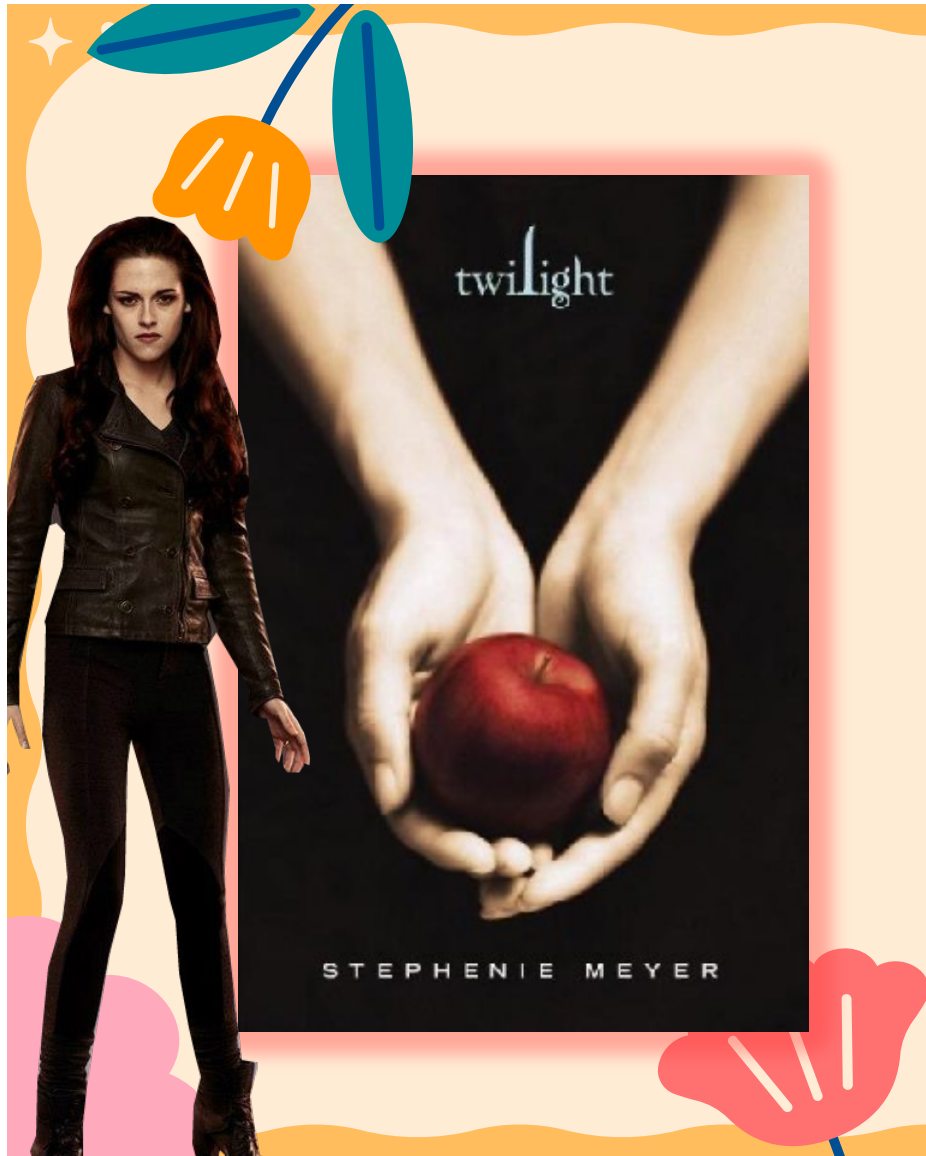
Meyer's *Twilight*

- Bella describes herself in a negative way, **wishing** she were “tan, sporty, [and] blond” (Meyer 10). **Instead**, she feels that her “ivory,” “translucent” skin appears “sallo[w]” and “unhealthy” (Meyer 10)
- She is “more than a little **obsessed** with Edward Cullen” (Meyer 67).
- Edward starts to “**consume**” her entire identity (Meyer 67).
- Yet Meyer’s portrays Bella **questioning** this obsession...



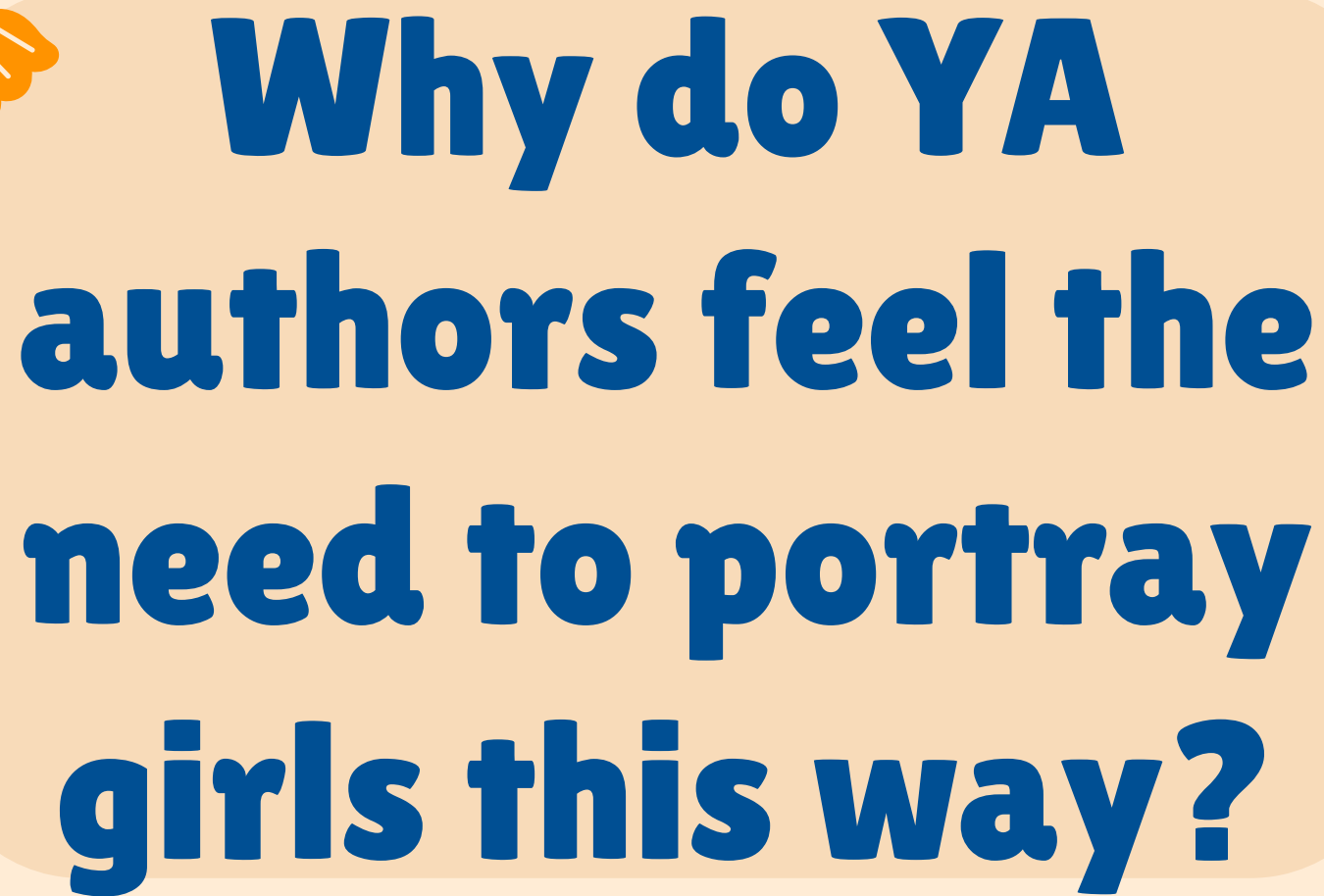
Meyer's *Twilight*

- When Bella first admits that she is both **obsessed** and **consumed** with Edward, she subsequently calls herself “**Stupid, stupid, stupid**” (Meyer 67).
- Later, when she finds that her mood is largely affected by Edward’s presence or absence, which usually results in a sudden **loss of her appetite** (Meyer 86), at school, she chastises herself for “allow[ing] him to **have this level of influence** over [her]” and that it is both “**pathetic**” and “**unhealthy,**” (Meyer 74).



Meyer's *Twilight*

- Bella admits that her own life seems to surround Edward.
 - Time, in Forks, Washington flows in a disjointed way, “passing in a blur at times, with single images standing out **more clear** than others. And then, at other times, **every second was significant, etched in [her] mind**” (Meyer 118).
- She knows “exactly what cause[s] the difference” in this disjointed flow of time: **Edward** (Meyer 118). Surprisingly, she admits that this focus on Edward “**disturb[s]** [her]” (Meyer 118)

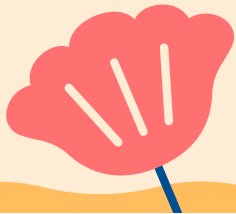
A decorative border surrounds the central text area, featuring stylized pink and orange flowers with green leaves. The border is composed of several floral elements: a pink flower with a green leaf in the top-left, a pink flower with a green leaf in the top-right, a pink flower with a green leaf in the bottom-left, and a pink flower with a green leaf in the bottom-right. The central text is enclosed in a light orange rounded rectangle.

**Why do YA
authors feel the
need to portray
girls this way?**

Conclusion

- Young adult literature has a powerful effect on young adult girls.
- There are 3 extreme portrayals.
- One of the most prevalent is the insecure, dependent damsel.
 - Bella and Rhiannon
- YA authors need to reflect on why they feel the need to feed into the stereotype.
- We need to prepare YA girl readers for what damaging portrayals they will encounter.

**Questions?
Comments?**



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