

## INTRODUCTION:

Strength, n.

1. The quality or condition of being strong. **a.** Power of action in body or limbs; ability to exert muscular force. **b.** Bodily vigour in general; efficiency of the bodily powers; esp. in contrast with the weakness due to illness, fatigue, age, immaturity, etc. **c.** Power in general, whether physical, mental, or due to the possession of resources; ability for effective action; efficiency, vigour (of mental faculties, etc.). **d.** Capacity for moral effort or endurance; firmness (of mind, character, will, purpose); power to resist temptation or fulfil a difficult duty (Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2009).

The definitions for the concepts of “strength,” “strong,” “female,” and “young woman” are all inherently subjective and relative to one’s culture, traditions, systems of values and view of the world. However, all five contributors to this issue of YA Hotline wanted to tackle the controversial and exciting new topic of “strong female characters”. If you happen to see facets of yourself or your favourite female fictional characters on the following pages, then we have succeeded in our tribute to those young adult women protagonists that continue to arrest the imagination over the centuries.

Jane Eyre, Elizabeth Bennet, Kerry Nowicki, Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Wonder Woman are just a few of the powerful icons that can inspire adolescent young women seek out their own identities, weaknesses and inner strengths. The reader of this issue will also find discussion and resources which focus on current issues among teen women today: self-esteem, self-acceptance, coping with stress and finding accurate and accessible information on sex and sexuality. We hope that this edition of YA Hotline will encourage both agreement and disagreement as to what constitutes the idea of “strength” in women today.

☀ *Jaime Griffis* for Charlotte Anderson, Mellissa Forget, Diane Zerr and Erin Mercer