

Finding Out You Survive the Apocalypse - A Lived Experience & Bibliography

By: Sarah Maddox

I think it is the experience of nearly every Canadian bookworm to find themselves, at one point or another, disheartened by the lack of Canadian representation in fiction. *I* certainly was as a teen, and sometimes I still am. There are plenty of great published Canadian authors, but whether it is published does not entirely matter if you don't know it exists in the first place.

I don't remember why exactly I was scrolling through my hometown's Wikipedia page. It's not very long, probably only a little over a thousand words. And yet, with just one sentence tucked away at the bottom, my entire world changed: "Wabush appears in the John Wyndham post-catastrophe novel *The Chrysalids* under the name of Waknuk" (Wabush 2020).

Wabush is a small mining town tucked away quite literally in middle-of-nowhere-Labrador. It takes about three hours to get to the next town over, and sometimes even other Canadians don't know we exist.

And yet, here I was, faced with the notion that somewhere out there in the world, there was a post-apocalyptic novel set in *my* hometown, published more than *fifty* years ago. And I had never heard of it.

Courtland is right in asserting that while themes and ideas of Canadian fiction might very well translate universally, there is just *something* about seeing your neck of the woods printed on the page (Courtland via McQuirter 2013).

I was even further delighted to discover that it was good. Really good. Wyndham, who had likely never stepped foot on Labrador soil, who had probably picked my small town off a map because he rather liked the name, had done what no author had ever done before: He made me feel seen.

As I followed along the journey of a young David and his friends, I found I was connecting with the story in a way that made me giddy, euphoric even. David speculates about the mountains and how they must have been carved out by giants – something my father did, and his father did, and most of my friends' fathers did every day in the local mine. They talk about towns up and down the coast, like Rigo (Rigolet) and even Newf (Newfoundland). Suddenly, I found myself imagining what life in Wabush might really be like one hundred years from now. I saw my own experience and my own home under a new light. Would the climate really change that much? Would people really wonder if we were gods, able to move so much earth and land? Is there something special about my corner of the world that I had never noticed before?

As it turns out, we *do* survive the apocalypse – we just never hear about it.

Which had me wondering why? It was exhilarating, revolutionary – so why didn't anybody know about this? And why didn't I?

In all honesty, I felt cheated; having been made to read all kinds of horrible books in high school which I felt had nothing to do with me or where I lived – I would have loved to have been able to study *The Chrysalids*! Or really any Canadian fiction, dystopian or otherwise. I was immediately upset.

So much changed the day I realized that the stories my hometown had to offer were important and could be life changing. I had a pride for my small town that I had never felt before; I wanted to do so much more to help my community; I wanted every single resident to read this book and to know that we had a place in the world that seemed to me to have forgotten about us.

We know representation is important.

But the moral of the story is that dissemination of representation is just as important.

Bibliography of Canadian Dystopian Fiction

Carrie Mac - The Triskelia Trilogy

Mac, Carrie. (2006). *The Droughtlanders*. Puffin Canada.

Mac, Carrie. (2007). *Retribution*. Puffin Canada.

Mac, Carrie. (2008). *The Droughtlanders*. Puffin Canada.

The Triskelia Trilogy consists of three books: *The Droughtlanders*, *Retribution*, and *Storm*. It takes place in a dystopian future, set in North America, where the world has been destroyed by severe weather patterns. There are the privileged Keylanders and the shunned Droughtlanders. This trilogy deals with themes like water rights and other environmental concerns like bio-war. It follows the story of two twin brothers, Seth and Eli, who are put at odds when Seth is caught fraternizing with a Droughtlander.

Cherie Dimaline - The Marrow Thieves

Dimaline, Cherie. (2017). *The Marrow Thieves*. Dancing Cat Books.

Set in a dystopian Canadian future, Indigenous people are hunted for their bone marrow - with much of the world believing it to be the cure for their dreamlessness. This story follows a fifteen-year-old hero and his friends as they attempt to escape capture at the hands of Recruiters. It deals with themes such as the loss of Indigenous culture and genocide - it also speaks on resilience in the face of adversity.

John Wyndham - The Chrysalids

Wyndham, John. (1955). *The Chrysalids*. Penguin Books.

Spoken of in the anecdote above, *The Chrysalids* takes place in a post-apocalyptic, post-nuclear Labrador, which has been driven to extreme Christian-like values in order to survive. The main doctrine being that anything anomalous is sinful and, therefore, must die. The story follows several young heroes who discover dangerous truths about themselves and the world around them - leading them to the ultimate conclusion: They must escape.

Kate Blair - Transferral

Blair, Kate. (2015). *Transferral*. Dancing Cat Books.

In a dystopian future where disease has been eradicated, the daughter of a Prime Ministerial candidate, Talia, has to come to terms with the cost of health. Through a series of events, she discovers how the displacement of disease has ruined communities and families and how her father's future plans for the country put these already vulnerable people at risk. In the end, Talia has to make a choice between family responsibility and the greater good.

References

- McQuirter Scott, Ruth. (2004). Canadian Author Study: Pre-service Teachers Engage in Assignments to Promote Awareness of Canadian Young Adult Literature. *Brock Education*, 13(2), 50.
- Wabush. (2020, December 28). Retrieved March 24, 2021, from <https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wabush>