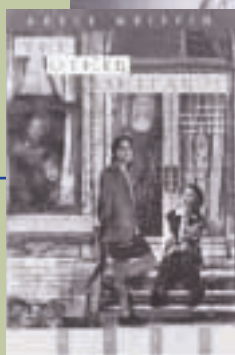
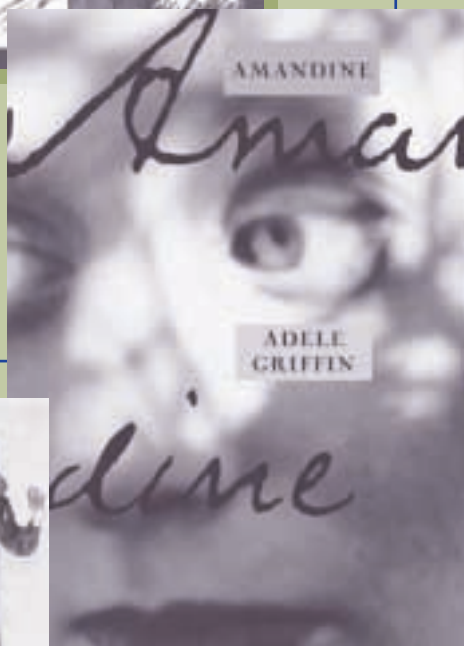
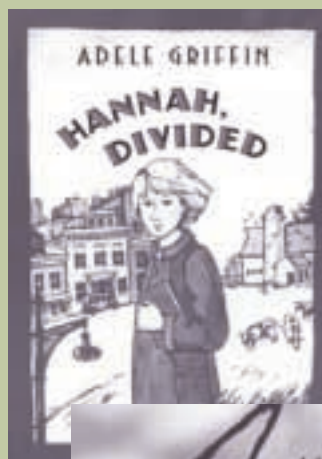




THE NOVELS OF ADELE GRIFFIN

A Reader's Companion



by ALISON HENDON

HYPERION BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

DEAR READER,

“Wa-wa.”

This is the opening line of the first book I ever read — or edited — by Adele Griffin, *Split Just Right*. This comic yet moving novel revealed Adele’s gift for creating unforgettable characters, dead-on dialogue (especially among kids and teens), and complex familial relationships.

But it couldn’t have prepared me for the next book, *Sons of Liberty* — a powerful and heartwrenching exploration of family and loyalty. Nor *The Other Shepards*, with its unusual premise and surprising ending. Most recently, I’ve been impressed with her ability to write hilarious younger fiction with a magical element (the Witch Twins books) as well as strikingly original historical fiction (*Hannah, Divided*). While always interested in the dynamics of families — nontraditional, fractured, blended — Adele reinvents herself as a writer with every book.

As the editor of nine books by Adele Griffin, I’ve read and reread her work countless times. And every time I am rewarded, whether by some fresh realization about a character or a familiar line that, once again, makes me laugh out loud. Each reading is a rediscovery of an extraordinary talent.

I hope that this reader’s guide to Adele’s novels will launch you on your own journeys of discovery.

Enjoy!

A handwritten signature in purple ink, appearing to read "Donna Bray". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "D" and "B".

Donna Bray
Executive Editor

TABLE OF CONTENTS

THE NOVELS

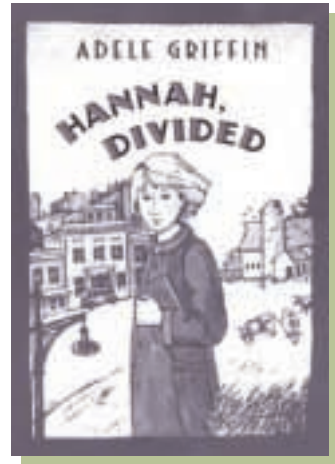
Hannah, Divided	2
Amandine	3
Dive	4
The Other Shepards	5
Sons of Liberty	7
Split Just Right	8
Rainy Season	9
Witch Twins	10
Witch Twins at Camp Bliss	10

AN INTERVIEW WITH ADELE GRIFFIN	11
--	-----------

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION	13
---------------------------------	-----------

HANNAH, DIVIDED

In 1930s Pennsylvania, it's unusual to find a country kid going to high school. Hannah has her chance to stretch her mind in a private Philadelphia school, thanks to a strange benefactor. Her extraordinary mathematical skills are at first only seen as a parlor trick. And her homesickness for her family and the farm make it hard for her to adjust to life in the city. Will she ever fit in? Will she forget her home? Will she be able to decide what's really important to her, Hannah?



1. Hannah finds comfort in numbers. On page 4, "Hannah counted seven suit buttons, eleven footsteps, and five syllables in her name. From bag to beret, Theodora Sweet seemed to be an odd-numbered, slant-sided sort of person." On page 14 we see a list of Hannah's counting on her way home from school: "Steps: 1,657; Paired breaths: 520 . . . Rocks: 170 (gray: 111; black: 53; mixed: 6) . . ." Sometimes Hannah's numbers help her. How do they get in her way?
2. Throughout the book, Hannah collects interesting facts and trivia about her favorite number, 32. What are some of the facts she discovers? Why is 32 her favorite number?
3. On page 11, we get a view of how Hannah sees letters on a page of text. Can you see letters this way? How would you describe some of the other letters on the page?
4. On page 19, Pa predicts that radio will take the place of reading. Did this happen? What did people say when television became popular at home? What are some people saying about e-books?
5. Tru, one of Hannah's two best friends in Chadds Ford, wishes Hannah well in the city: "'I do hope you meet one new friend,' she added after a thoughtful moment. 'Temporarily, while you're there, I mean. All it takes is one chum to make the world shrink to a comfortable size. Wouldn't you say?'" (p. 45). How do Hannah's experiences in the city and with Joe remind us of Tru's wish?
6. One of the contrasts we see in the story is between Hannah's busy working life at home on the farm and her luxurious life in Philadelphia. Is Hannah happier living in luxury? What appeal does life on the farm hold?

7. When Hannah first went to the city to study, it was in large part to fulfill Granddad's dream. After his death, Hannah gains new self-knowledge. How has his death changed things on the farm? What should Hannah do now?
8. At Mrs. Sweet's party, Hannah notices "a young colored man" who is introduced as Dr. Claytor. Dr. Claytor tells her about Dr. Robert Lee Moore, who will not accept "coloreds and women" at his lectures. This is the first indication Hannah has had that there might be other obstacles in her path to learning. Does this discourage Hannah? Dr. Claytor says, "A good strong push from one is a push for us all." (p. 82) How could this relate to today's opportunities and challenges for women and minorities?
9. In the end, Hannah comes to a realization about herself and her goals in life. Although she feels she will not get the scholarship this time, she decides, "Perhaps next year, when she knew more things. . . . Next time, when she was ready." (p. 146) Does this seem satisfying and realistic?
10. Hannah is spelled the same backward and forward. Hannah would have found that very interesting. The literary name for this is a "palindrome," and there are quite a few words that are palindromes. There are even whole sentences that are palindromes. <http://www.palindromes.org/> is one Web page that has compiled lists of palindromes, including palindromic poetry. It can be fun to discover new palindromes!

AMANDINE

ALA Best Book for Young Adults

Delia's desperately seeking a family. She does have a mother and father, but she feels like ugly, dumpy luggage that they drag along unwillingly on their frequent moves. And it's hard making friends in a new school—until she meets Amandine.

1. Delia collects people in an attempt to create a kind of family for herself. Mrs. Gogglio, who picks her up after school, seems to be the only adult not worrying about Delia's weight. Mrs. Gogglio tells her, "There's no shame in a natural, healthy appetite. . . . Fact is she [Delia's mother] should be proud of your nice, strong looks." (pp. 34–35). What do you think of Mrs. Gogglio's assessment?



*Page references for *Amandine* are for the hardcover edition, and may not exactly correspond to the paperback edition.

2. Mrs. G. calls Delia “Delilah.” Delilah in the Bible was the temptress who brought down Samson. Why would this be appealing to Delia?
3. Delia adds a brother to her family too, an imaginary one. Ethan is “perfect,” the handsome older brother that she’s longed for. Ethan combines her parents’ best features, not their worst, as Delia feels she does. Does this make life easier or harder for Delia? Why do you think Delia created Ethan? Did you ever wish you had a brother or sister? Why?
4. Delia’s next attempted addition is Amandine, the strange girl she meets at her new school. She could be described as a self-dramatizing poser. But she is also almost dangerously narcissistic, with very strange ideas (like drawing your Ugliest Thing). But Delia still finds her intriguing and wants her for a friend. How can we see that Delia finds Amandine both attractive and repulsive?
5. How does it make us feel when we realize that Delia has a shameful secret? Her box of treasures contains things that she’s stolen from friends. Combined with her easy invention of a brother, we begin to question the truth of her point of view. Is Delia still a likable character?
6. Mary has a real family with real family life. They eat dinner together (in contrast to Delia eating alone, apart from her parents). Delia’s family routine is so odd that even Amandine comments on it. How does Delia’s family dinner arrangement emphasize the family relationships?
7. Delia suggests that she and her parents move to Boston at the end of the book. Why does this sound like a good idea? Do you think the family will be happier? Will Delia have a chance to become more her own person?

DIVE

When Ben and his mother, Gina, joined with Lyle and his son, Dustin, to make a family, Ben finally felt at home. Gina didn’t really need a home, though, and left them to move where her spirit took her. Ben loves having a settled place with rules, but Dustin resents his father’s rules and eventually moves out to California to be with Gina. Dustin’s diving accident brings the oddly assorted family together again, inspiring Ben to reflect upon his relationship to his troubled stepbrother.



1. Dustin has difficulty complying with Lyle’s family expectations. On page 49 he tells Ben, “But you’re way better than me at being Lyle’s kid. . . .” What does it mean to be a family? Are there ways that you have to get along to make a family work?
2. Conservative Lyle seems to attract flamboyant women. We don’t learn much about his first wife, Dustin’s mother, but Gina is a free spirit with difficulty with rules. His current girlfriend, Mallory, is a glamorous television journalist who rents a red convertible on the spur of the moment. What do you think these women find attractive in Lyle (whom we know only from Ben’s description)? Have you heard the phrase “opposites attract”? Have you seen this happen in real life?
3. On page 129 Gina says, “I’ve always imagined a special bond between us, a mother-and-son bond . . . I gave birth to you, Ben. You can’t break that bond, no matter how long and far you stretch it.” Does Ben show us any memories of Gina that would make us believe in this bond?
4. Gina and Ben seem destined to have memorably terrible restaurant experiences. Why does Gina take Ben to restaurants? Can this be seen as a way of keeping from making a home?
5. At the very end of the book, we learn that something has happened to Dustin. Is it ever clear what this is? Why does Ben remember him as diving into forever and then disappearing? Water is impossible to hold, it is formless and glides through your fingers. Could this be how Ben thinks of Dustin and their relationship?

THE OTHER SHEPARDS

ALA Best Book for Young Adults, ALA Notable Book

Holland and Geneva live in the perpetual shadow of their three siblings who died before they were born — the other Shepards. Geneva in particular has nightmares, demonstrates obsessive-compulsive behavior, is afraid of many things including elevators and subways, and needs Holland to take care of her. But one day the sisters come home to find their kitchen full of light and fresh air and a strange woman called Annie, who says she has been hired to



paint a mural. The girls happily help. Annie soon becomes a welcome part of the sisters' lives, introducing them to the beauties of Manhattan from MoMA to Soho. A surprising ending may leave you questioning reality, but Holland and Geneva have certainly found the power to change.

1. On page 25, Geneva says, "It's a parent's worst nightmare, having their kids die." Where must she have heard this? How would this make you feel? Annie says that the parents were blessed and lucky to have two more kids. Is this a surprising point of view to Geneva and Holland?
2. On page 93, Holland tells us, "[Annie] does not want to hold our hands. Annie does not touch, I have noticed." And later, at the museum and on the airplane, we see people not noticing or speaking to Annie. What other clues do we get about the nature of Annie?
3. Holland puts it best on page 149, "I'm a ghost story, too. . . . Geneva and me both. And our story is so awful that it crowds out everything else about us." In some ways, the story has prevented the girls from learning about themselves as well. What other things besides the tragedy have we learned about the sisters by the end of the book? How have they become individuals, instead of "the other Shepards"?
4. Holland's sister Elizabeth seems to come closer and closer to her, as she learns more about the family from their friends the Hubbards. By the end, just looking at a picture of Elizabeth's boyfriend makes her see Elizabeth just out of range of the photograph. What do Elizabeth and Annie have in common?
5. To Holland and Geneva, the Hubbards are just the mysterious people who rent the Shepards' beach house in Saint Germaine. Holland is surprised to hear the Hubbards' grief at losing the "other Shepards"— and at their joy in meeting herself and Geneva. How does the Hubbards' delight affect the girls? How does the girls' trip help bring the families closer together?
6. Saint Germaine is a special place to the Shepards. Holland and Geneva have seen many pictures of it over the years but have never been there. It has assumed almost a magical significance to them. On page 178, Holland says, "I thought Saint Germaine would be a place that would make me wishful, make me miss the others. But instead I feel the opposite. What's the opposite of wishful?" and Geneva adds, "Somewhereness, . . . When you know you're in a place you belong." What would that place be for you? What would it be like if you actually got there?

7. Even though Annie is gone, Holland and Geneva try to keep doing the things that made life special with her in it. “We leave the kitchen window open all the time. . . . We have been to MoMA . . . we brew up a pot of coffee.” But of course Annie has done more for the girls than just these smaller things. Holland’s parents may remain in their grief, but the girls are moving beyond them. What things will they be doing in the future? How do we see them grow?

SONS OF LIBERTY

National Book Award Finalist, ALA Best Book for Young Adults

The Kindle family (Mom, Dad, Cliff, Rock, and Brontie) lives a difficult life in an unheated former summer cottage. Their father is prone to waking the boys up to perform household tasks (fixing the roof, chopping wood), even though their schoolwork suffers as a result of sleep deprivation. Their mother never leaves the house anymore, spending her days reading cookbooks. And little sister Brontie is still wetting the bed. Rock, our narrator, remains loyal to his father despite his behavior bordering on abuse. He tells Cliff that their father only wants what’s best for the family. But it’s not until Dad destroys his paper on the Revolutionary War that Rock begins to realize that there’s a problem with the way they’re living.



1. On page 1, Rock says, “Tonight would be Interrupted.” What does Rock mean? What does this come to mean to us? “Interrupted nights were a secret that the Kindles guarded safe from daytime.” (p. 24) Can keeping secrets be wrong and harmful?
2. Rock feels a deep connection to his father. “He and his dad were a lot alike. It was mystical, almost.” Cliff says on page 46, “. . . we already have one bully in the family . . . and being a bully isn’t going to be contagious in this house. . . .” Here we see the conflict between Cliff’s and Rock’s views of their father. Whose point of view should we trust, and why?

3. Rock's father finds it impossible that Rock should need glasses: "Not one Kindle in our entire family history's ever had granny eyes." (p. 11) How does this tie in with how he talks about Brontie's bedwetting on page 117 ("Dad says I can stop any time I want.")? What does this tell us about their father?
4. On page 159, Rock shares his dreams of being a historian with Cliff. Although Cliff at first gives him a negative "Dad" response, he then replies that it would be "a way better plan for you than the Marines." Who is the better father, Cliff or Dad? Which dream of Rock's is more true to himself?

SPLIT JUST RIGHT

Danny knows her father only through the stories her mother tells. She treasures the gifts he has sent, and dreams about meeting him one day. When Danny finally writes to him, unexpected things happen. She begins to question her mother's stories in a search for the truth about her father.



1. Danny says, "There are plenty of good points to being a family of just two people, just Mom and me." From what we see of Danny's family life, would you agree?
2. Sometimes Danny sounds like the mom when talking to her mother: "You should have just bagged Casa Maga knowing you have school today." (p. 26) "You shouldn't go so fast in a fifteen-mile-an-hour zone." (p. 27). How else does Danny's mother seem a bit immature?
3. Danny's mother says, "That's the greatest thing about theater. . . . People who don't belong anywhere always belong on a stage." (p. 172) How does this relate to her past, living in foster care, becoming a single mother?
4. *Split Just Right* deals with the question of what makes a family. Who is really part of Danny's family? Are they related? Does it matter?

RAINY SEASON

Lane and her brother Charlie live on the military base in the Panama Canal Zone in 1977, a time of unrest just before the United States ceded the canal to Panama. Lane worries about everyone's safety, and Charlie seems to completely disregard his own. *Rainy Season* is the story of one day in their lives; it is also the story of the secret that threatens to destroy their family.



1. On page 16, their friend Ted is looking at a family photo album and says, "Why are some of these pictures all cut up and weird looking?" Lane gives Ted an answer, but we hear more about the photographs throughout the book. What is the real significance of the photographs?
2. On page 40, Lane says to Steph, "What's a pathological liar? Someone who lies because they can't help it. For them the lie is as good as the truth." I thought about my family and wondered if this is what happened to us." Is this how you would describe the family's Rules?
3. Charlie doesn't treat the fort like a game. On page 126, he says, "It's our protection against the other side. You never know when they're planning to strike, like the Commies." How are Charlie's anger and Lane's anxiety two ways of reacting to the same problem?
4. In the hospital, Lane and Charlie break the Rule and talk about Emily and the accident. Later on, Lane finds the box of photographs and takes out two pictures with Emily in them. How does this time of historical change in Panama foreshadow a time of change in Lane's family?

WITCH TWINS

Ten-year-old witch twins Claire and Luna are growing up in a Philadelphia suburb. But even beginning witches have ordinary problems: being separated at school; and getting along with older brother Justin; and dealing with their new stepmom-to-be.

1. Claire and Luna are afraid that when their father marries his fiancée, Fluffy, she'll have a baby and insist on their moving to her native Texas. Is this a realistic fear? Or are they really just afraid that he'll have less time for them?
2. How does the "no unsupervised spells" rule affect the story?
3. What are the meanings of Claire and Luna's names? Why are these good names for the twins?



WITCH TWINS AT CAMP BLISS

Outgoing Claire is excited about going to summer camp, but quiet Luna is worried—will it be fun?

1. "Luna did not like being caught by surprise. . . . She liked to think of herself as careful. Cautious. Not zestless." (p. 7)
Does this remind you of anyone you know?
2. Why do Claire and Luna think there is a rebel witch at Camp Bliss?
3. Claire's worst enemy, Ella Edsel, eventually becomes a good friend. Do you know of characters in other books who have this same relationship?
4. Who did you think would be named Camp Bliss Girl, and why?



AN INTERVIEW WITH ADELE GRIFFIN

When did you know you wanted to be a writer?

I wrote my first book when I was seven years old, after my mother sent me to my room for refusing to turn off the television. Once I finished my temper tantrum, I found a school notebook and, in felt-tip pen, wrote a sulky and defiant version of the experience in a short story that I titled “One Poor Girl Called Linda.” Linda, like myself, had been unjustly banished to her room by her cruel mother. Unlike me, Linda escaped out the window to live with her grandmother.

The story was so validating that, even after I was forgiven and reunited with the TV, I kept going, adding illustrations and chapters, and adjusting the title. Then I got my mom to mail the complete “Aventures” (sic) of Linda to my grandmother, who called me a few days later and gave it a rave. Every year thereafter, until I reached high school, I wrote a notebook novel for my grandmother. She always believed that I’d pursue a writing career, and she has kept the notebooks, including the debut “Aventures,” in a locked drawer in her desk. Locked, I think, so that nobody else in my family can read the notebooks and issue less favorable reviews.

What authors have you read that you really loved? Who would you consider an influence?

Some novelists whose work I admire are: David Almond, Melissa Bank, Melvin Burgess, Francesca Lia Block, Michael Chabon, Michael Cunningham, Louise Erdrich, Daniel Handler, Lillian Hellman, Kazuo Ishiguro, Ha Jin, Julius Lester, Jonathan Lethem, Joyce Carol Oates, Michael Ondaatje, Cynthia Ozick, Carole Maso, Robin McKinley, Lorrie Moore, Francine Prose, Zadie Smith, and Jacqueline Woodson. It’s hard for me to pinpoint influences, and I consider myself to be a better reader than a writer. Reading is my first delight, and a hugely important part of my day.

Do you have a writing routine? A special time, a special place?

My desk is as long and wide as a single bed, and I love that it can accommodate the whole mess of my notes and pens and Post-Its. I’m at my desk all

day, but on the rare occasion that I'm elsewhere, I carry a notebook in case a particular thought that had been hiding from me decides to pop up at the bank or in the drugstore.

After I shut down the computer, I enjoy listening to music or going out to noisy public places and meeting friends because the morning and afternoon have been so thoroughly silent.

An important theme in all your books is family — good family, bad family, peculiar family. Does this tie into your own family at all?

It is hard for me to see a unifying theme that connects all of my books, but family is often an inspiration. My own family is large and close and odd, and their personalities spur the creation of many of my book characters. I feel most in touch with protagonists who are creeping toward the edge of decisions that can't be easily predicted (and I guess it could be argued that this, too, is a family trait). I also like to write about crucial, rite-of-passage experiences, a marked characteristic of books for young people.

How did Hannah's reading and math ability come to you? They're so unusual!

In *Hannah, Divided*, I wanted to underline Hannah's difficulties by putting emphasis on her aptitudes. So she can't read, but is brilliant in math. Her math-mind works in patterns and sequences, both a skill and a problem because she isn't able to stop the patterns when they become oppressive. And while Hannah has a safe and pleasant home life, she is averse to experiencing unfamiliar places and meeting new people. In *Hannah*, I always looked to destabilize a benefit with a predicament, so that she is continuously testing her limits as she faces her challenges.

Some authors say that characters start them writing; others have a story to tell. What gets you started on a novel?

Page One of any book gives me little more than a vague idea. I don't use outlines, and usually I've worked on between two and five "false start" manuscripts before the right one takes hold. I used to agonize (more) about these false starts, and my colossal, ever-growing "Unfinished" file of failed material sometimes unnerves me. It is extremely unlikely after I complete a novel that the subsequent project will take off into a smooth, resolved story. But I keep

plugging along, even after the idea has flopped, while I wait for something better. I figure there's no harm in practicing. Future projects are always exciting because I'm never too sure what they might be.

Do you have any advice for young people who are interested in writing?

My advice for young writers is: aim for The End. I know firsthand that this is easier advised than achieved, but once a short story or novel or poem or play or screenplay is done, then you can really take a look at it and see what you've got. In my opinion, a completed work is also easier to share with other people, critique and support-wise. And whatever the outcome, nothing can diminish the private, personal sense of achievement in reaching your last page. That feels great.

BIOGRAPHY OF ADELE GRIFFIN



Adele Griffin often uses family as a metaphor for our relationships with ourselves, others, and society. Some of the pictures she presents are dark, but she always shines a light of hope in a disturbed world. Her characters are unusual and memorable, and frequently it is the vision of the narrator that forms the world in her works. She presents us with vignettes from life, and though we may be left wanting to

know more about Hannah, Delia, Rock, etc., we have also seen them reach a resolution of their problems and demonstrate the strength to go on.

Adele Griffin was born on July 29, 1970, in Philadelphia. She graduated from the University of Pennsylvania and then went to work in the publishing industry in New York City. Her work as an assistant editor in children's books brought her back to reading books for children and young adults and encouraged her to write her own. In the relatively short time since she has been writing professionally, she has produced several works of literature that have garnered much acclaim.



READ ALL OF ADELE GRIFFIN'S BOOKS

Hannah, Divided

Hardcover: 0-7868-0879-9, \$15.99

Amandine

Hardcover: 0-7868-0618-4, \$15.99

Dive

Hardcover: 0-7868-0440-8, \$14.99

Paperback: 0-7868-1567-1, \$5.99

The Other Shepards

Paperback: 0-7868-1333-4, \$5.99

Rainy Season

Paperback: 0-7868-1241-9, \$5.95

Sons of Liberty

Hardcover: 0-7868-0351-7, \$14.95

Paperback: 0-7868-1300-8, \$4.95

Split Just Right

Paperback: 0-7868-1295-8, \$5.99

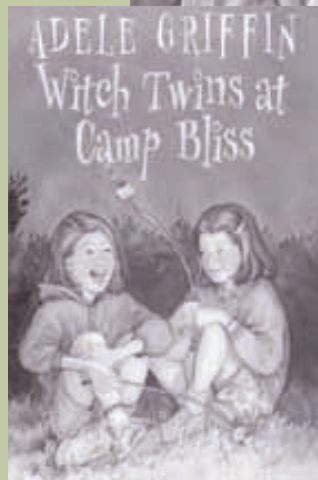
Witch Twins

Hardcover: 0-7868-0739-3, \$14.99

Paperback: 0-7868-1563-9, \$5.99

Witch Twins at Camp Bliss

Hardcover: 0-7868-0763-6, \$15.99



THE NOVELS OF ADELE GRIFFIN:

A Reader's Companion

written by Alison Hendon.

Alison Hendon is the Young Adult Materials Specialist at the Brooklyn Public Library.

HYPERION
BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

114 Fifth Avenue
New York, NY 10011