

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Family Life and Relationships Through the Reading of Novels (Intermediate)

Note:

The interest and reading levels listed in this bibliography are those given by the publishers. If the reviewing journals gave a different interest level(s) for a title then this was indicated after the publisher's interest level. I find the interest levels given by the reviewing journals to be more accurate.

The summaries, which are also from the publishers, are to give you a quick overview of each title. Note that some of the titles fit the theme loosely and others more tightly. The titles also range from "light-hearted" to more serious in nature.

If a student needs the support of a digital copy, talk with your Learning Support Teacher, as ARC-BC is able to "rush" order digital titles they don't currently have in their collection. A very small number of the titles may also be available in an audiobook format, accessible through searching in Destiny. Your Teacher-Librarian can help you check for this.

If the LRC has 10+ copies of a title this was listed beside the title to provide you with the further flexibility of bringing in some titles to be used in a lit circle format.

Joan Pearce, December 2020

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Family Life & Relationships (Int.)

Compiled by Joan Pearce
Novels



No Fixed Address *LRC has 48
by Susin Nielsen, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.5)

"Twelve-year-old Felix's appearance on a television game show reveals that he and his mother have been homeless for a while, but also restores some of his faith in other people." - Follett



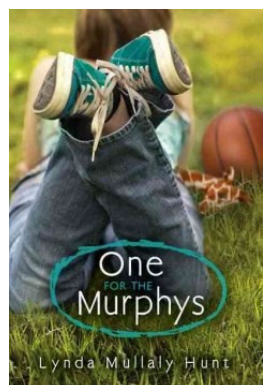
The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise
by Dan Gemeinhart, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.7)

"Twelve-year-old Coyote and her father rush to Poplin Springs, Washington, in their old school bus to save a memory box buried in a park that will soon be demolished." - Follett



The List of Things That Will Not Change
by Rebecca Stead, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; Lexile: 680)

"Despite her parents' divorce, her father's coming out as gay, and his plans to marry his boyfriend, ten-year-old Bea is reassured by her parents' unconditional love, excited about getting a stepsister, and haunted by something she did last summer at her father's lake house." - Follett



One for the Murphys *LRC has 12
by Lynda Mullaly Hunt, c2012 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.5?)

"Carley uses humor and street smarts to keep her emotional walls high and thick. But the day she becomes a foster child, and moves in with the Murphys, she's blindsided. This loving, bustling family shows Carley the stable family life she never thought existed, and she feels like an alien in their cookie-cutter-perfect household. Despite her resistance, the Murphys eventually show her what it feels like to belong--until her mother wants her back..." - Pub.

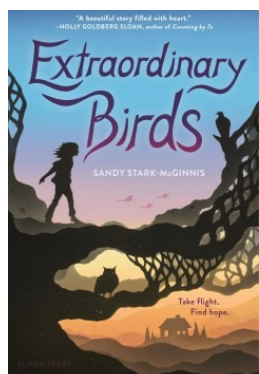
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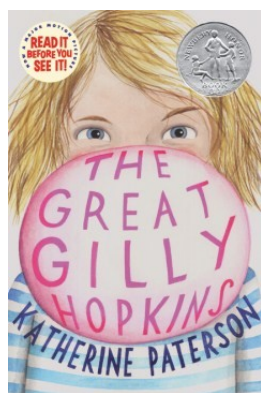
Blended *LRC has 12
by Sharon M. Draper, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.0)

"Piano-prodigy Isabella, eleven, whose black father and white mother struggle to share custody, never feels whole, especially as racial tensions affect her school, her parents both become engaged, and she and her stepbrother are stopped by police" - Pub.



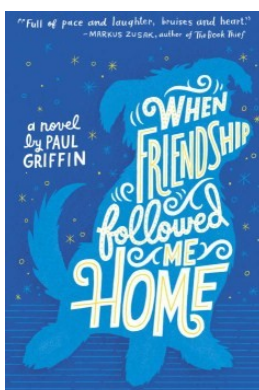
Extraordinary Birds
by Sandy Stark-McGinnis, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 3.4)

"December believes she is a bird. The scar on her back is where her wings will sprout, and one day soon, she will soar away. It will not matter that she has no permanent home. Her destiny is in the sky. But then she's placed with foster mom Eleanor, a kind woman who volunteers at an animal rescue and has secrets of her own. December begins to see that her story could end a different way..." - Pub.



The Great Gilly Hopkins
by Katherine Paterson, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.6)

"Eleven-year-old Gilly has been stuck in more foster families than she can remember, and she's disliked them all. She has a reputation for being brash, brilliant, and completely unmanageable, and that's the way she likes it. So when she's sent to live with Mrs. Trotter and William Ernest—by far the strangest family yet—she knows it's only a temporary problem." - Pub

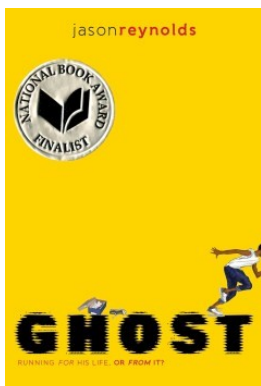


When Friendship Followed Me Home
by Paul Griffin, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.1)

"Seventh-grader Ben, always an outsider, is led into a deep friendship with Halley, who is being treated for cancer, by the special dog he and his adoptive mother take in." - Follett

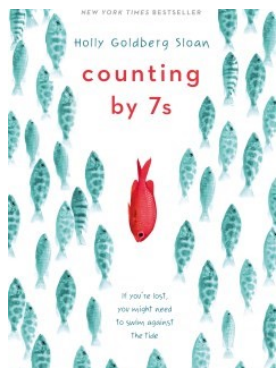
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Ghost *LRC has 12
by Jason Reynolds, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.6)

"Ghost, a naturally talented runner and troublemaker, is recruited for an elite middle school track team. He must stay on track, literally and figuratively, to reach his full potential." - Pub.



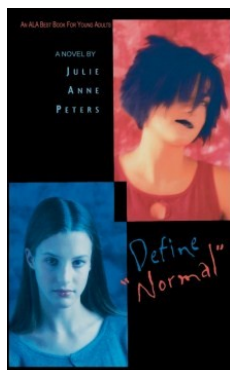
Counting by 7s *LRC has 12
by Holly Sloan, c2013 (IL: 5-8, 7-10; RL: 5.3)

"Twelve-year-old genius and outsider Willow Chance must figure out how to connect with other people and find a surrogate family for herself after her parents are killed in a car accident." - Follett



Crenshaw *LRC has 12
by Katherine Applegate, c2015 (IL: 3-6, RL: 3.7)

"Jackson and his family have fallen on hard times. There's no more money for rent. And not much for food, either. His parents, his little sister, and their dog may have to live in their minivan. Again. Crenshaw is a cat. He's large, he's outspoken, and he's imaginary. He has come back into Jackson's life to help him. But is an imaginary friend enough to save this family from losing everything?" - Pub.

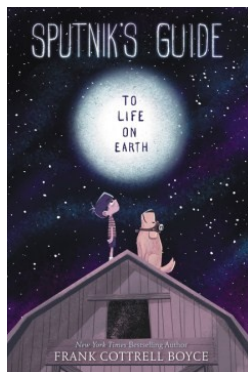


Define Normal *LRC has 22
by Julie Peters, c2000 (IL: 5-8, 6-8, 7-10; RL: 5.3)

"When she agrees to meet with Jasmine as a peer counselor at their middle school, Antonia never dreams that this girl with the black lipstick and pierced eye-brow will end up helping her deal with the serious problems she faces at home and become a good friend." - Follett

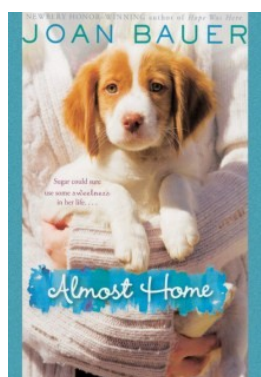
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Sputnik's Guide to Life on Earth *LRC has 12
by Frank Cottrell, c2017 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.0)

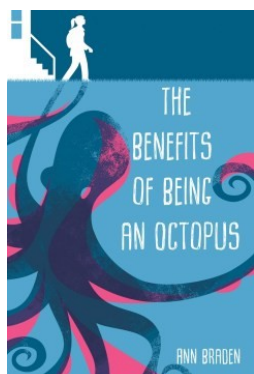
"When Prez's grandfather is diagnosed with dementia, he's sent to live in a foster home, but when he meets a talking dog named Sputnik, together, they come up with a plan to save the world." - Follett



Almost Home

by Joan Bauer, c2013 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.7)

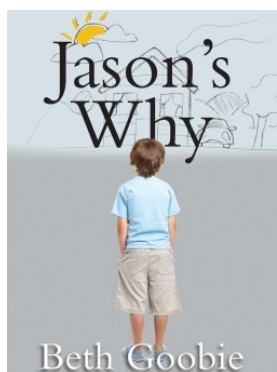
"Meet sixth-grader Sugar Mae Cole, who has learned from her grandfather that sometimes a kid has to act older than she is. Even the ebullient Sugar finds that hard to do, though, after she and her mom Reba lose their house, move to Chicago for a job that doesn't materialize, and end up in a shelter. Severe depression hospitalizes Reba, and Sugar is placed in foster care. Clinging desperately to her puppy, Sugar wonders "if God is paying attention"..." - Booklist



The Benefits of Being an Octopus

by Ann Braden, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.9)

"Seventh-grader Zoey Albrow focuses on caring for three younger siblings and avoiding rich classmates at school until her fascination with octopuses gets her on the debate team and she begins to speak out." - Follett



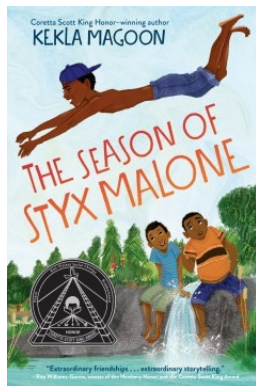
Jason's Why

by Beth Goobie, c2012 (IL: 3-6, RL: 2.8)

"A nine-year-old boy sent to a group home by his mother, who can't handle him any longer, learns to trust the people around him, and to talk about his fears despite his concern that his mother might not take him back." - Follett

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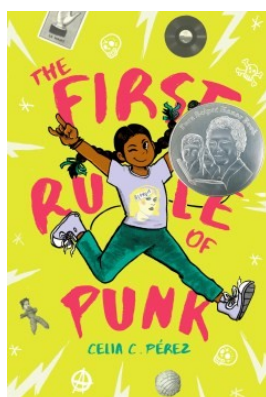
The Season of Styx Malone *LRC has 12
by Kekla Magoon, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 3.8)

"Caleb Franklin and his younger brother, Bobby Gene, spend an extraordinary summer with their new, older neighbor, Styx Malone, a foster boy from the city."
- Pub.



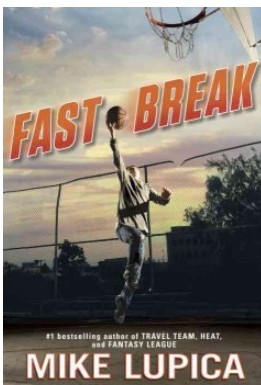
Hurricane Season
by Nicole Melleby, c2019 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.3)

"Eleven-year-old Fig enrolls in an art class to better understand her father, a composer and pianist whose mental illness she tries to conceal from classmates, neighbors, and social services." - Follett



The First Rule of Punk *LRC has 12
by Celia Perez, c2017 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 4.5)

"Twelve-year-old Maria Luisa O'Neill-Morales (who really prefers to be called Malu) reluctantly moves with her Mexican-American mother to Chicago and starts seventh grade with a bang—violating the dress code with her punk rock aesthetic and spurning the middle school's most popular girl in favor of starting a band with a group of like-minded weirdos." - Follett



Fast Break
by Mike Lupica, c2015 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.1)

"Since his mother's death, Jayson, twelve, has focused on basketball and surviving but he is found out and placed with an affluent foster family of a different race, and must learn to accept many changes, including facing his former teammates in a championship game."
- Follett

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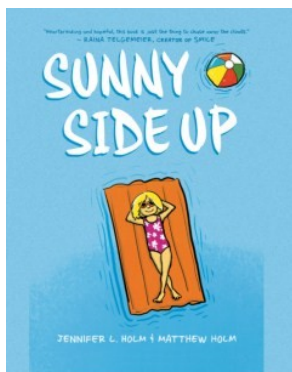
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Rules for Stealing Stars

by Corey Ann Haydu, c2015 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 4.9)

"Four sisters rely on each other—and a bit of mysterious magic—to cope with their mother's illness."
- Pub.



Sunny Side Up

by Jennifer L. Holm, c2015 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 2.8)

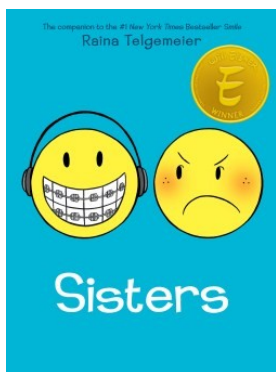
"After her older brother starts acting strangely, Sunny Lewin is shipped off to Florida to spend the summer with her grandfather. She makes a friend her age and tries to enjoy her stay but, other than Buzz, everyone is really old. Besides, Sunny just knows her parents sent her away because she somehow made her brother the way he is. She just wants things to go back to how they were before." - Follett



Anne of Green Gables

by Lucy Maud Montgomery, c1908, 2014 (IL:5-8, RL:6.9)

"When Marilla Cuthbert and her brother, Matthew, decide to adopt a child from a distant orphanage, they don't get quite what they bargained for. The child who awaits them at the tiny Bright River train station is not the strapping young boy they'd imagined--someone to help Matthew work the fields of their small farm--but rather a freckle-faced, redheaded girl named Anne (with an e, if you please)." - amazon.ca



Sisters

by Raina Telgemeier, c2014 (IL: 3-6, 4-8; RL: 2.8)

"Raina Telgemeier's #1 New York Times bestselling, Eisner Award-winning companion to *Smile!* Raina can't wait to be a big sister. But once Amara is born, things aren't quite how she expected them to be. Amara is cute, but she's also a cranky, grouchy baby, and mostly prefers to play by herself. Their relationship doesn't improve much over the years, but when a baby brother enters the picture and later, something doesn't seem right..." - Pub.

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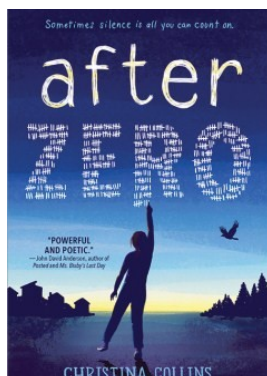
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Planet Earth is Blue

by Nicole Panteleakos, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7)

"Twelve-year-old Nova is eagerly awaiting the launch of the space shuttle Challenger--it's the first time a teacher is going into space, and kids across America will watch the event on live TV in their classrooms. Nova and her big sister, Bridget, share a love of astronomy and the space program. They planned to watch the launch together. But Bridget has disappeared, and Nova is in a new foster home." - Pub.



After Zero

by Christina Collins, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.1)

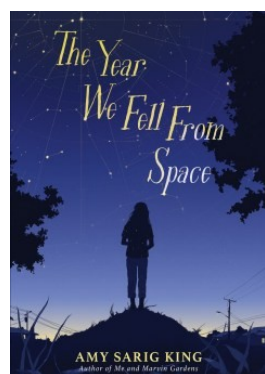
"When Elise leaves homeschooling for public school, she copes by speaking as little as possible, but soon her silence becomes an impediment to friendship and to dealing with family secrets." - Follett



Hurricane Child

by Kacen Callender, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.3)

"Born on Water Island in the Virgin Islands during a hurricane, which is considered bad luck, twelve-year-old Caroline falls in love with another girl—and together they set out in a hurricane to find Caroline's missing mother." - Follett



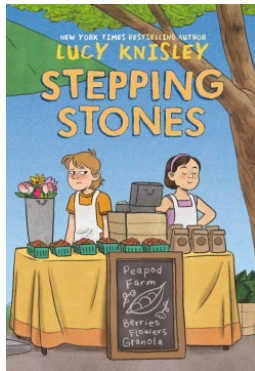
The Year We Fell From Space

by Nina Goffi, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 5-7; RL: 4.4)

"Middle schooler Liberty likes to make her own maps of the stars, in fact she is obsessed with them, especially since her family is falling apart; her parents are getting divorced, her nine-year-old sister will barely leave the house and carries a stuffed tiger at all times, her father is suffering from depression, but will not talk about it, and the brothers down the street, once friends, have turned into bullies—so when a tiny meteorite literally falls in her lap it is like a sign, but a sign of what?" - Follett

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Stepping Stones

by Lucy Knisley, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-6)
(graphic novel)

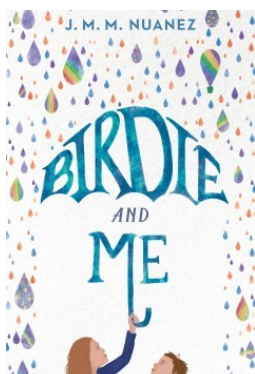
"Jen moves out to the country and has to put up with her mom and her mom's new boyfriend, as well as his kids. Suddenly part of a larger family in a new place, Jen isn't sure there is a place for her in this different world." - Follett



Dear Sweet Pea

by Julie Murphy, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.1)

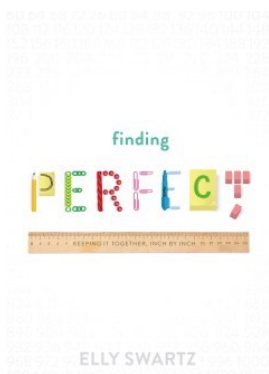
"Thirteen-year-old Patricia, widely known as Sweet Pea, navigates her parents' unconventional divorce and finds herself in the unlikely role of her town's advice columnist" - Follett



Birdie and Me

by J. M. M. Nuñez, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 7.6)

"Ever since their free-spirited mama died ten months ago, twelve-year-old Jack and her gender creative nine-year-old brother, Birdie, have been living with their fun-loving Uncle Carl, but now their conservative Uncle Patrick insists on being their guardian which forces all four of them to confront grief, prejudice, and loss, all while exploring what 'home' really means." - Follett



Finding Perfect

by Elly D. Swartz, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 3.7)

"When Molly's mom leaves their family to take a job in another country, 12-year-old Molly is certain she'll be back in one year, as promised. Her older sister isn't so sure. To make matters worse, Molly's relationship with her best friend is starting to feel strained just as she's nervously preparing for an upcoming poetry slam. Suddenly, Molly's world feels like it's spinning out of control. Counting, measuring, and organizing help Molly feel more in control. But in time, her coping mechanism becomes its own problem. But with some help from her siblings and friends, Molly is able to face her OCD ... " - Pub.

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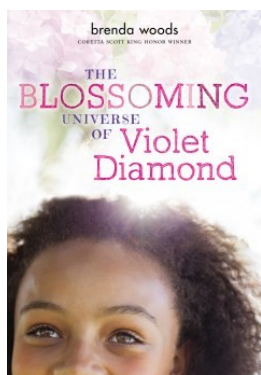
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Stand up, Yumi Chung!

by Jessica Kim, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4.7; RL: 5.6)

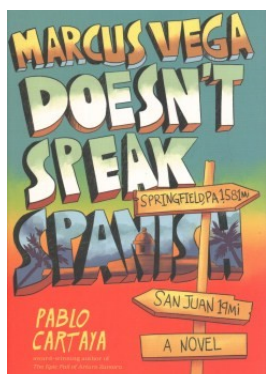
"...Instead of spending the summer studying her favorite YouTube comedians, Yumi is enrolled in test-prep tutoring to qualify for a private school scholarship, which will help in a time of hardship at the restaurant. One day after class, Yumi stumbles on an opportunity that will change her life: a comedy camp for kids taught by one of her favorite YouTube stars. The only problem is that the instructor and all the students think she's a girl named Kay Nakamura--and Yumi doesn't correct them..." - Pub.



The Blossoming Universe of Violet Desmond

by Brenda Woods, c2014 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.6)

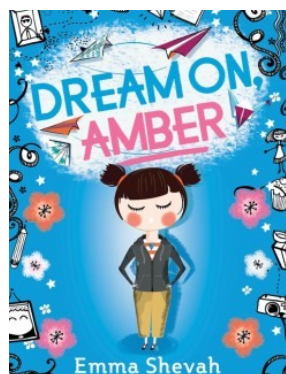
"Violet is a smart, funny, brown-eyed, brown-haired girl in a family of blonds. Her mom is white, and her dad, who died before she was born, was black. She attends a mostly white school where she sometimes feels like a brown leaf on a pile of snow. She's tired of people asking if she's adopted. Now that Violet's eleven, she decides it's time to learn about her African American heritage. And despite getting off to a rocky start trying to reclaim her dad's side of the family, she can feel her confidence growing as the puzzle pieces of her life finally start coming together." - Pub.



Marcus Vega Doesn't Speak Spanish

by Pablo Cartaya, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.9)

"After a fight at school leaves Marcus facing suspension, Marcus's mother takes him and his younger brother, who has Down syndrome, to Puerto Rico to visit relatives they do not remember or have never met, and while there Marcus starts searching for his father, who left their family ten years ago and is somewhere on the island." - Follett



Dream on Amber

by Emma Shevah, c2014 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.5)

"There are some things in Amber Alessandra Leola Kimiko Miyamoto's life that she can't change. Like her mixed half-Japanese, half-Italian heritage, or her ridiculously long name. But the hardest thing about being Amber is that a part of her is missing: her dad. He left when she was little and he isn't coming back. So Amber will just have to figure out a way to fill that void for herself and her little sister—and she has a big imagination." - Pub.

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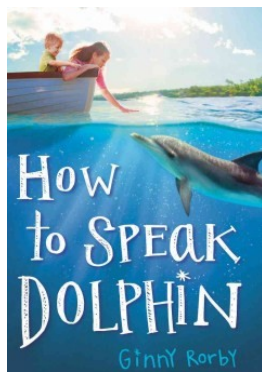
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Raymie Nightingale

by Kate DiCamillo, c2018 (IL: 5-8, 4.7; RL: 4.2)

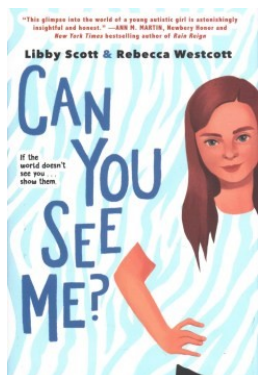
"Hoping that if she wins a local beauty pageant her father will come home, Raymie practices twirling a baton and performing good deeds as she is drawn into an unlikely friendship with a drama queen and a saboteur." - Follett



How to Speak Dolphin

by Ginny Rorby, c2015 (IL: 3-6, 4.7; RL: 4.7)

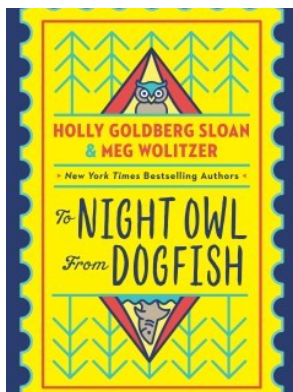
"Since her mother died, twelve-year-old Lily has struggled to care for her severely autistic half-brother, Adam, in their Miami home, but she is frustrated and angry because her oncologist step-father, Don, expects her to devote her time to Adam, and is unwilling to admit that Adam needs professional help--but when Adam bonds with a young dolphin with cancer Lily is confronted with another dilemma: her family or the dolphin's freedom." - Follett



Can You See Me?

by Libby Scott, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-8; RL: 4.6)

"Eleven-year-old Tally is starting sixth grade at Kingswood Academy and she really wants to fit in, which means somehow hiding her autism, hypersensitivity to touch, and true self, and trying to act "normal" like her former best friend, Layla, who is distancing herself from Tally and her fourteen-year-old sister, Nell, who is always angry with Tally for being different; but as she records her thoughts and anxieties in her coping diary, Tally begins to wonder—what is "normal" anyway? - Follett



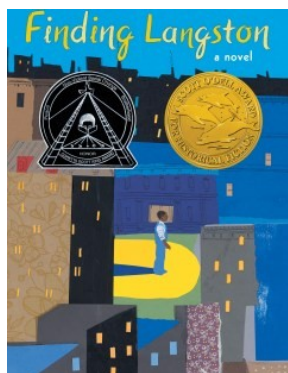
To Night Owl From Dogfish

by Holly Goldberg, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.6)

"Avery Bloom, who's bookish, intense, and afraid of many things, particularly deep water, lives in New York City. Bett Devlin, who's fearless, outgoing, and loves all animals as well as the ocean, lives in California. What they have in common is that they are both twelve years old, and are both being raised by single, gay dads. When their dads fall in love, Bett and Avery are sent, against their will, to the same sleepaway camp." - Pub.

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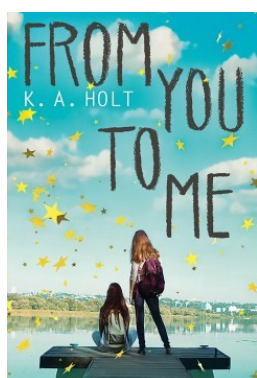
Finding Langston

by Lesa Cline-Ransome, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 3.2)
"When 11-year-old Langston's mother dies in 1946, he and his father leave rural Alabama for Chicago's brown belt as a part of what came to be known as the Great Migration. It's lonely in the small apartment with just the two of them, and at school Langston is bullied. But his new home has one fantastic thing. Unlike the whites-only library in Alabama, the local public library welcomes everyone. There, hiding out after school, Langston discovers another Langston, a poet whom he learns inspired his mother enough to name her only son after him." - Pub.



Not if I Can Help It

by Carolyn Mackler, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 5.4)
"Willa lives on the upper West Side of Manhattan with her divorced father and her younger brother and attends fifth grade with her best friend Ruby, and she likes things to be a certain way, because it makes life manageable even with her Sensory Processing Disorder; she certainly does not like surprises, and her father has just thrown her a big one: he has been dating Ruby's mother, and suddenly Willa's life seems to be spiraling out of her control--and part of the trouble is that she cannot even explain why she thinks this is a horrible idea, when everyone else thinks that it is wonderful" - Follett



From You to Me

K.A. Holt, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 7.0)

"On the first day of eighth grade Amelia finds a letter that her older sister Clara wrote to herself before she drowned, and it contains a list of the things Clara planned to do in her own eighth grade year--so Amelia, with the help of her best friend Taylor, resolves to complete the list, in the hope that it will bring some closure and ease her still raw emotions." - Follett

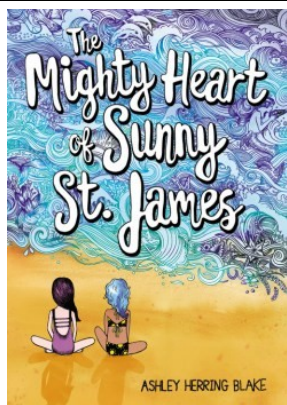


The Brave

by James Bird, c2020 (IL: 5-8)
"Collin can't help himself. He has a unique condition that finds him counting every letter spoken to him. It's a quirk that makes him a prime target for bullies, and a continual frustration to the adults around him, including his father. When Collin asked to leave yet another school, his dad decides to send him to live in Minnesota with the mother he's never met. She is Ojibwe, and lives on a reservation. Collin arrives in Duluth with his loyal dog, Seven, and quickly finds his mom and his new home to be warm, welcoming, and accepting of his condition..." - Pub.

Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Family Life & Relationships (Int.)

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Novels



The Mighty Heart of Sunny St. James

by Ashley Herring Blake, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.3)

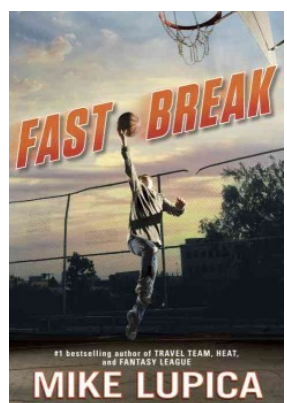
"When Sunny St. James receives a new heart, she decides to set off on a "New Life Plan": 1) do awesome amazing things she could never do before; 2) find a new best friend; and 3) kiss a boy for the first time. Her "New Life Plan" seems to be racing forward, but when she meets her new best friend Quinn, Sunny questions whether she really wants to kiss a boy at all. With the reemergence of her mother, Sunny begins a journey to becoming the new Sunny St. James." - Pub.



We Dream of Space

by Erin Entrada Kelly, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7)

"The Thomas children exist in their own orbits, circling a tense and unpredictable household, with little in common except an enthusiastic science teacher named Ms. Salonga. As the launch of the Challenger approaches, Ms. Salonga gives her students a project—they are separated into spacecraft crews and must create and complete a mission. When the fated day finally arrives, it changes all of their lives and brings them together in unexpected ways." - Pub.



Fast Break

by Mike Lupica, c2015 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.1)

"Since his mother's death, Jayson, twelve, has focused on basketball and surviving but he is found out and placed with an affluent foster family of a different race, and must learn to accept many changes, including facing his former teammates in a championship game." - Follett



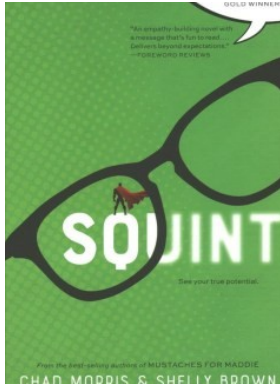
For Black Girls Like Me

by Mariama Lockington, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.2)

"Eleven-year-old Makeda dreams of meeting her African American mother, while coping with serious problems in her white adopted family, a cross-country move, and being homeschooled." - Follett

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Squint

by Chad Morris, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 5-7; RL: 4.1)

"Flint Minett has keratoconus, an eye disease, but desperately wants to win a comic book art contest so that he and his new friend McKell Panganiban will be better accepted at middle school." - *Follett*