

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Trauma and Mental Illness 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.

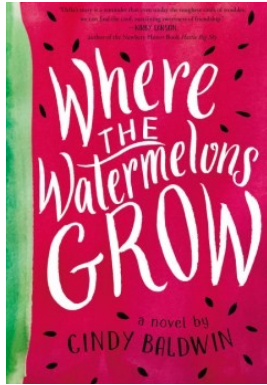
If a student needs the support of a digital copy, talk with your Learning Support Teacher, as ARC-BC is able to "rush" order digital titles they don't currently have in their collection. A very small number of the titles may also be available in an audiobook format, accessible through searching in Destiny. 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 Trauma and Mental Illness (Intermediate)

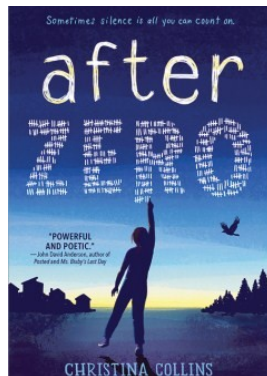
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Novels



## Where the Watermelons Grow

by Cindy Baldwin, c2018 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 7.0)

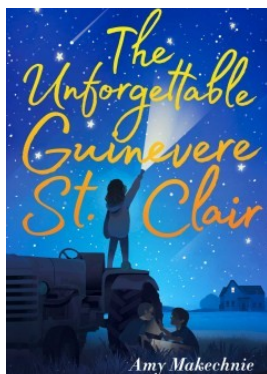
"Twelve-year-old Della Kelly of Maryville, North Carolina, tries to come to terms with her mother's mental illness while her father struggles to save the farm from a record-breaking drought." - Follett



## After Zero

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

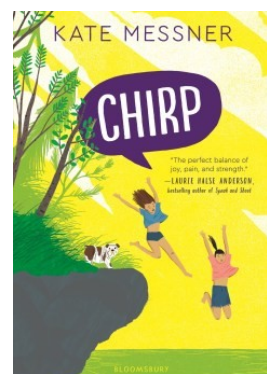
"When Elise leaves homeschooling for public school, she copes by speaking as little as possible, but soon her silence becomes an impediment to friendship and to dealing with family secrets." - Follett



## The Unforgettable Guinevere St. Clair

by Amy Makechnie, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7, 5-8; RL: 4.4)

"As ten-year-old Gwyn searches for a missing neighbor in her new town in Iowa, she learns much about her mother, who grew up there but has suffered from memory loss since Gwyn was four." - Follett



## Chirp

by Kate Messner, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.4)

"Moving to Vermont the summer after seventh grade, a young gymnast hides a secret as she makes new friends and investigates her grandmother's claim that someone is trying to destroy her cricket farm." - Follett

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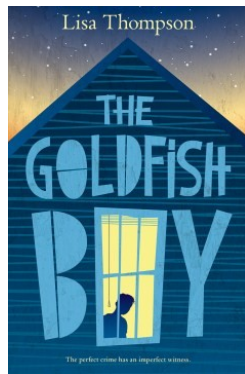
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## **A Game of Fox and Squirrels**

by Jenn Reese, c2020 (IL: 5-8)

"After an incident shatters their family, eleven-year old Samantha and her older sister Caitlin are sent to live in rural Oregon with an aunt they've never met. Sam wants nothing more than to go back to the way things were... before she spoke up about their father's anger. When Aunt Vicky gives Sam a mysterious card game called 'A Game of Fox & Squirrels,' Sam falls in love with the animal characters, especially the charming trickster fox, Ashander. Then one day Ashander shows up in ..." - Follett



## **The Goldfish Boy**

by Lisa Thompson, c2017 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.0)

"Emotionally crippled by his obsessive-compulsive disorder, teenager Matthew Corbin rarely leaves his room on a cul-de-sac in London, and he passes the day observing and writing down his neighbors doings from his window—but when a toddler staying next door disappears Matt is the key to solving a mystery and possibly saving a child's life...if he can manage to expose himself, and his secret guilt to the outside world." - 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.



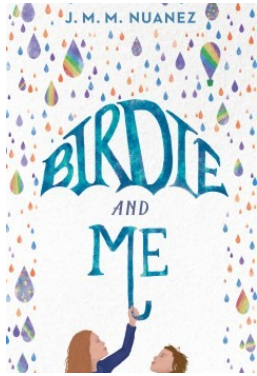
## **How to Make Friends With the Sea**

by Tanya Guerrero, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7, 5-8)

"Moving to the Philippines with his zoologist mother, twelve-year-old Pablo struggles with anxiety while his mother fosters an orphaned child with a facial anomaly." - Follett

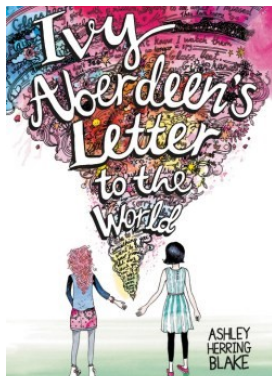
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## **Birdie and Me**

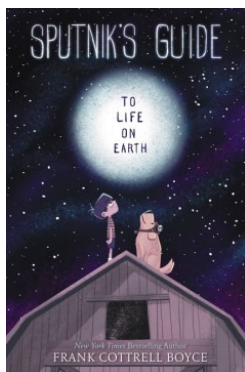
by J. M. M. Nuñez, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 7.6)  
"Ever since their free-spirited mama died ten months ago, twelve-year-old Jack and her gender creative nine-year-old brother, Birdie, have been living with their fun-loving Uncle Carl, but now their conservative Uncle Patrick insists on being their guardian which forces all four of them to confront grief, prejudice, and loss, all while exploring what 'home' really means." - Follett



## **Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World** \*LRC has 12

by Ashley Herring Blake, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.9)

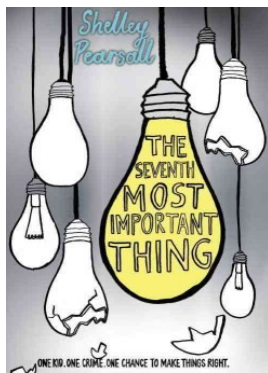
"In the wake of a destructive tornado, one girl develops feelings for another in this stunning, tender novel about emerging identity, perfect for fans of *The Thing About Jellyfish*. When a tornado rips through town, twelve-year-old Ivy Aberdeen's house is destroyed and her family of five is displaced. Ivy feels invisible and ignored in the aftermath..." - Pub.



## **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



## **The Seventh Most Important Thing**

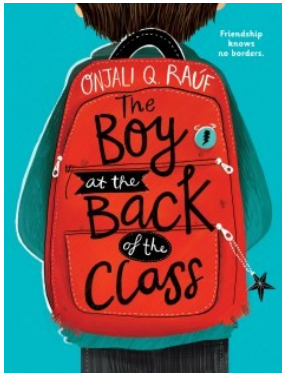
by Shelley Pearsall, c2015 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 5.1)

"In 1963, thirteen-year-old Arthur is sentenced to community service helping the neighborhood Junk Man after he throws a brick at the old man's head in a moment of rage, but the junk he collects might be more important than he suspects. Inspired by the work of American folk artist James Hampton." - Follett



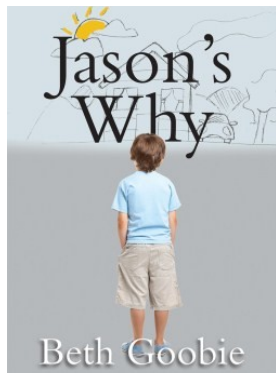
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Novels



**The Boy at the Back of the Class** \*LRC has 24  
by Pippa Curnick, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 5.4)

"When quiet, nine-year-old Ahmet arrives in their classroom, a boy and his friends fail to draw him out but try a new plan after learning he is a Syrian refugee." - Follett



**Jason's Why**  
by Beth Goobie, c2012 (IL: 3-6, RL: 2.8)

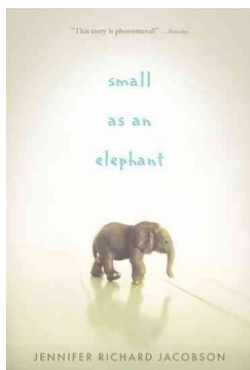
"A nine-year-old boy sent to a group home by his mother, who can't handle him any longer, learns to trust the people around him, and to talk about his fears despite his concern that his mother might not take him back." - Follett



**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..." - Pub.



**Small as an Elephant**

by Jennifer Richard Jacobson, c2013 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.3)

"Abandoned by his mother in an Acadia National Park campground, Jack tries to make his way back to Boston before anyone figures out what is going on, with only a small toy elephant for company." - Follett

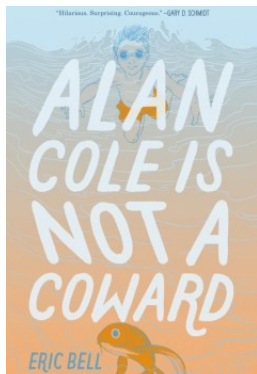
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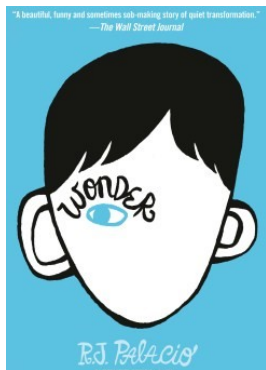
**Blended** \*LRC has 12  
by Sharon M. Draper, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.0)

"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.



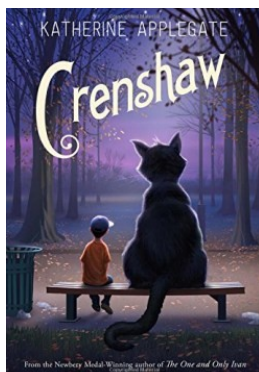
**Alan Cole is Not a Coward**  
by Eric Bell, c2017 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 5.2)

"Hoping to keep his older brother Nathan silent about his secret crush on another boy at their school, twelve-year-old Alan agrees to a ruthless sibling competition involving nearly impossible tasks—from standing up to their demanding father to getting a first kiss." - Follett



**Wonder** \*LRC has 33  
by R. J. Palacio, c2012, 2017 (IL: 3.6, 4-7, 5-8; RL: 5.1)

"Ten-year-old Auggie Pullman, who was born with extreme facial abnormalities and was not expected to survive, goes from being home-schooled to entering fifth grade at a private middle school in Manhattan, which entails enduring the taunts and fear of his classmates as he struggles to be seen as just another student." - Follett

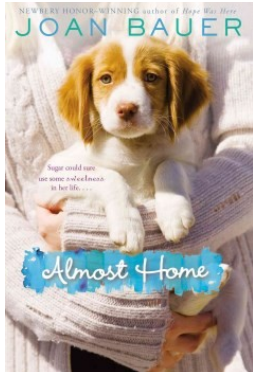


**Crenshaw** \*LRC has 12  
by Katherine Applegate, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 3.7)

"A story about a homeless boy and his imaginary friend that proves in unexpected ways that friends matter, whether real or imaginary." - Follett

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## Almost Home

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

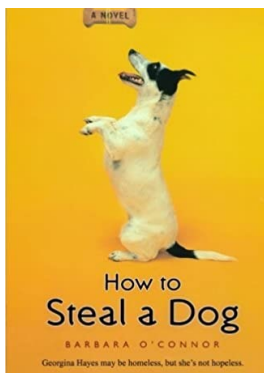
"When twelve-year-old Sugar's grandfather dies and her gambling father takes off yet again, Sugar and her mother lose their home in Missouri. They head to Chicago for a fresh start, only to discover that fresh starts aren't so easy to come by for the homeless. Nevertheless, Sugar's mother has taught her to be grateful no matter what, so Sugar does her best. With the help of a rescue dog, Shush; a foster family; a supportive teacher; a love of poetry; and her own grace and good humor, Sugar comes to understand that while she can't control the hand life deals her, she can control how she responds." - Pub.



## No Fixed Address \*LRC has 48

by Susin Nielsen, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 3.5)

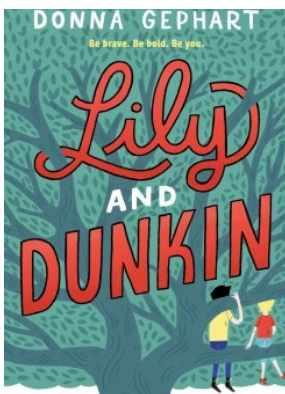
"Twelve-year-old Felix's appearance on a television game show reveals that he and his mother have been homeless for a while, but also restores some of his faith in other people." - Follett



## How to Steal a Dog \*LRC has 74

by Barbara O'Connor, c2007 (IL: 3-6, 3-7; RL: 4.0)

"Living in the family car in their small North Carolina town after their father leaves them virtually penniless, Georgina, desperate to improve their situation and unwilling to accept her overworked mother's calls for patience, persuades her younger brother to help her in an elaborate scheme to get money by stealing a dog and then claiming the reward that the owners are bound to offer." - Follett



## Lily and Dunkin

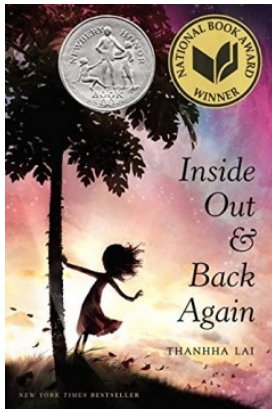
by Donna Gephart, c2016 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.3)

"Lily Jo McGrother, born Timothy McGrother, is a girl. But being a girl is not so easy when you look like a boy. Especially when you're in the eighth-grade. Norbert Dorfman, nicknamed Dunkin Dorfman, is bipolar and has just moved from the New Jersey town he's called home for the past thirteen years. This would be hard enough, but the fact that he is also hiding from a painful secret makes it even worse." - Follett



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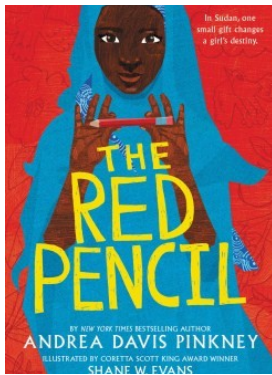
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## Inside Out and Back Again

by Thanhha Lai, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.8)

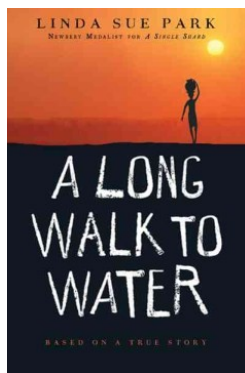
"Through a series of poems, a young girl chronicles the life-changing year of 1975, when she, her mother, and her brothers leave Vietnam and resettle in Alabama."  
- Follett



## The Red Pencil

by Andrea Davis Pinkney, c2014 (IL: 3-6, 4-8; RL: 4.6)

"After her tribal village is attacked by militants, Amira, a young Sudanese girl, must flee to safety at a refugee camp, where she finds hope and the chance to pursue an education in the form of a single red pencil and the friendship and encouragement of a wise elder."  
- Follett



## A Long Walk to Water \*LRC has 32

by Linda Sue Park, c2010 (IL: 5-8, 6-9; RL: 5.0)

"When the Sudanese civil war reaches his village in 1985, eleven-year-old Salva becomes separated from his family and must walk with other Dinka tribe members through southern Sudan, Ethiopia, and Kenya in search of safe haven. Based on the life of Salva Dut, who, after emigrating to America in 1996, began a project to dig water wells in Sudan." - Follett



## The Remarkable Journey of Coyote Sunrise \*LRC 12

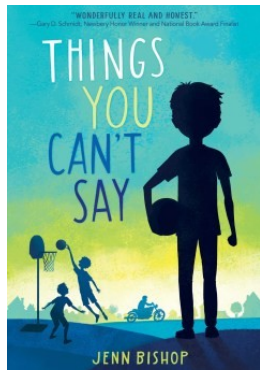
by Dan Geminhart, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.7)

"Five years. That's how long twelve-year-old Coyote and her dad, River, have lived on the road in an old school bus, criss-crossing the nation. It's also how long ago Coyote lost her mom and two sisters. Coyote hasn't been home in all that time, but when she learns that the park in her old neighborhood is being demolished--the very same park where she, her mom, and her sisters buried a treasured memory box--she devises an elaborate plan to get her dad to drive 3,600 miles back to Washington state...without him realizing it." - Pub.



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Novels



## Things You Can't Say

by Jenn Bishop, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 5-7; RL: 2.8)

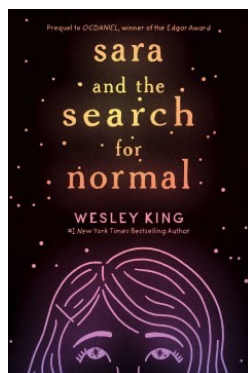
"Nothing is going right this summer for Drew. And after losing his dad unexpectedly three years ago, Drew knows a lot about things not going right. First, it's the new girl Audrey taking over everything at the library, Drew's sacred space. Then it's his best friend, Filipe, pulling away from him. But most upsetting has to be the mysterious man who is suddenly staying with Drew's family. An old friend of Mom's? Drew isn't buying that..." - Pub.



## The Space Between Before and After

Sue Stauffacher, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 5.2)

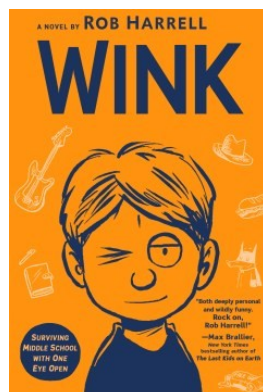
"When 10-year-old Thomas's mother, who suffers from depression, disappears, he creates a fantasy narrative in which his mother is safe and sets in motion a path of healing, not just for himself, but for his father and aunt as well." - Follett



## Sara and the Search for Normal

by Wesley King, c2020 (IL: 5-8)

"Seventh-grader Sara wants to be normal but her panic attacks and other episodes cause her to isolate herself until, in group therapy, she meets talkative and outgoing Erin, her first friend." - Follett



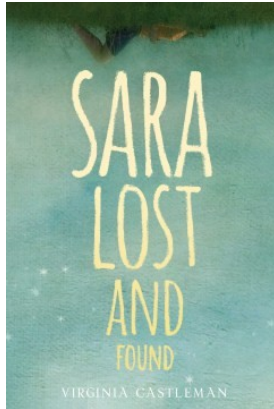
## Wink: Surviving Middle School With One Eye Open

by Rob Harrell, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7)

"After being diagnosed with a rare eye cancer, twelve-year-old Ross discovers how music, art, and true friends can help him survive both treatment and middle school." - Follett

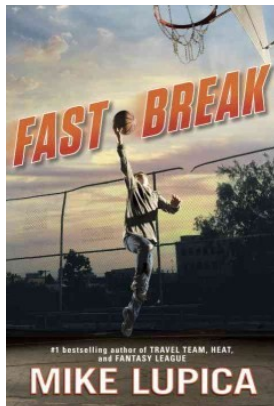
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## Sara Lost and Found

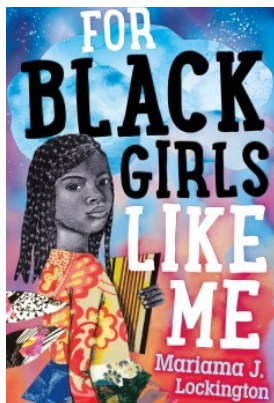
by Virginia Castleman, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.0)  
"Sara and Anna Olsen face an uncertain world...Too often, ten-year-old Sara and twelve-year-old Anna are left to fend for themselves. Then one night, three loud knocks at the door change everything: their father is in jail and social services has come to take the girls away. Rather than risk being split up, Sara and Anna decide their only option is to run away...Inspired by true events, this heartrending and hopeful novel of survival, friendship, and sisterhood, tells the tale of two sisters who must find the strength to face anything that life may throw their way." - 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." - Pub.



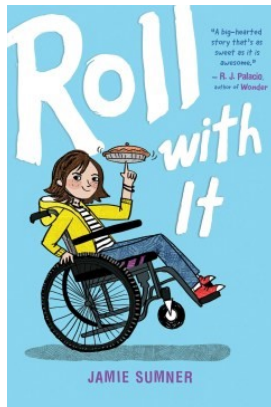
## Squint

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

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## Roll With It

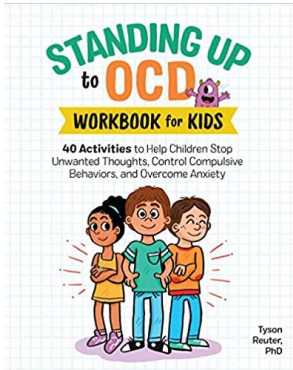
by Jamie Sumner, c2019 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.4)

"Ellie's a girl who tells it like it is. That surprises some people, who see a kid in a wheelchair and think she's going to be all sunshine and cuddles....But when Ellie and her mom move so they can help take care of her ailing grandpa, Ellie has to start all over again in a new town at a new school. Except she's not just the new kid—she's the new kid in the wheelchair who lives in the trailer park on the wrong side of town. It all feels like one challenge too many, until Ellie starts to make her first-ever friends..." - *Follett*



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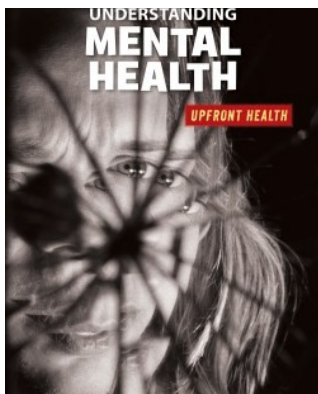
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Non-fiction



## **Standing Up to OCD: Workbook for Kids**

by Tyson Reuter, PhD, c2019

"If you worry a lot and have behaviors you can't help repeating, you're not alone—even though it can feel that way sometimes. The Standing Up to OCD Workbook for Kids has 40 fun activities to help you manage bad thoughts, say goodbye to worried feelings, and quit actions that are hard to stop—so you can get back to doing your favorite things." - Amazon.ca



## **Understanding Mental Health (Series: Upfront Health)**

By Matt Chandler, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 6.9)

"For young people, leading a healthy lifestyle requires education and empowerment. In Understanding Mental Health, readers will explore the history and social aspects of mental illness, teen mental health issues, and ways to help themselves and others. Sidebars challenge and expand readers' thinking while relating topics to 21st Century skills and themes--from creativity and innovation to financial literacy." - Pub.