

# 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.

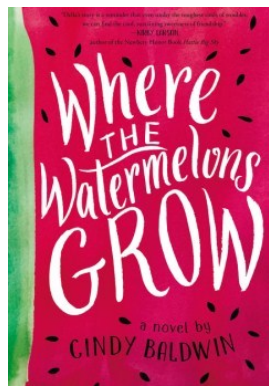
If a student needs the support of a digital copy, talk with your Learning Support Teacher, as ARC-BC is able to "rush" order digital titles they don't currently have in their collection. A very small number of the titles may also be available in an audiobook format, accessible through searching in Destiny. 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, April 2024*

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Trauma and Mental Illness (Intermediate)

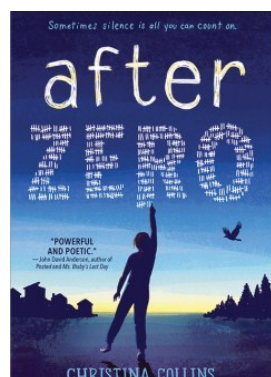
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Novels



## Where the Watermelons Grow

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

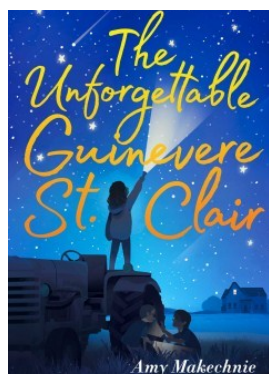
"Twelve-year-old Della Kelly of Maryville, North Carolina, tries to come to terms with her mother's mental illness while her father struggles to save the farm from a record-breaking drought." - Follett



## After Zero

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

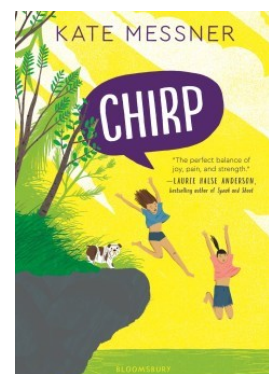
"When Elise leaves homeschooling for public school, she copes by speaking as little as possible, but soon her silence becomes an impediment to friendship and to dealing with family secrets." - Follett



## 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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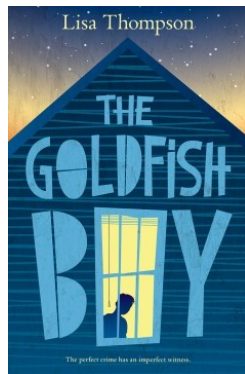
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## A Game of Fox and Squirrels

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)

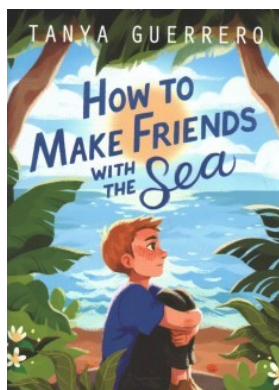
"Emotionally crippled by his obsessive-compulsive disorder, teenager Matthew Corbin rarely leaves his room on a cul-de-sac in London, and he passes the day observing and writing down his neighbors doings from his window—but when a toddler staying next door disappears Matt is the key to solving a mystery 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

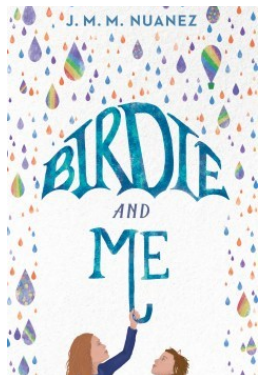
by Tanya Guerrero, c2020 (IL: 3-6, 4-7, 5-8)

"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



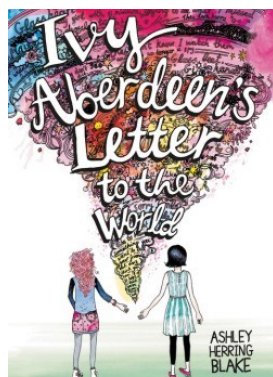
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## **Birdie and Me**

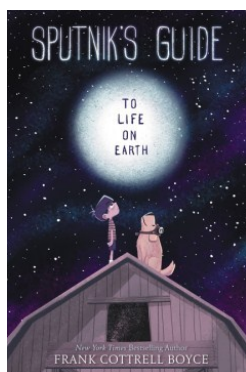
by J. M. M. Nuñez, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 7.6)  
"Ever since their free-spirited mama died ten months ago, twelve-year-old Jack and her gender creative nine-year-old brother, Birdie, have been living with their fun-loving Uncle Carl, but now their conservative Uncle Patrick insists on being their guardian 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)

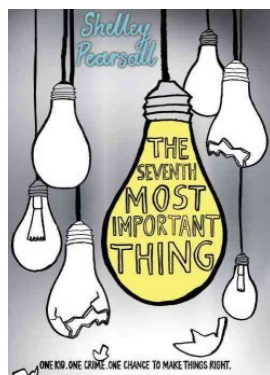
"In the wake of a destructive tornado, one girl develops feelings for another in this stunning, tender novel about emerging identity, perfect for fans of *The Thing About Jellyfish*. When a tornado rips through town, twelve-year-old Ivy Aberdeen's house is destroyed and her family of five is displaced.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



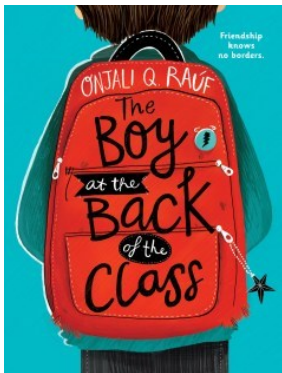
## **The Seventh Most Important Thing**

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

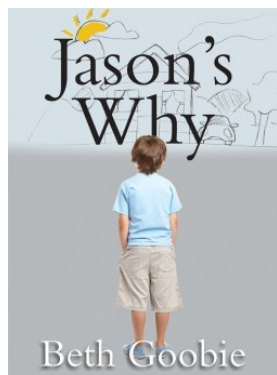
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**The Boy at the Back of the Class** \*LRC has 24  
by Pippa Curnick, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 5.4)

"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

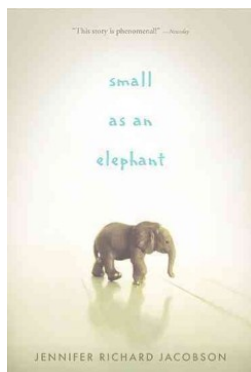


**Jason's Why**  
by Beth Goobie, c2012 (IL: 3-6, RL: 2.8)

"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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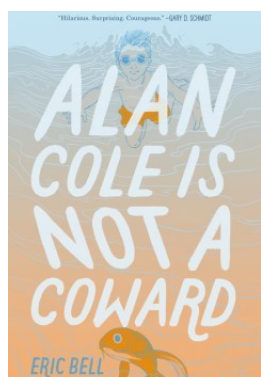
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## Blended \*LRC has 12

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

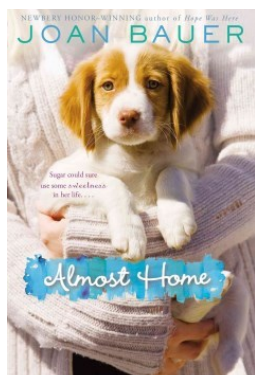
by Katherine Applegate, c2018 (IL: 3-6, 4-6; RL: 3.7)

"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)

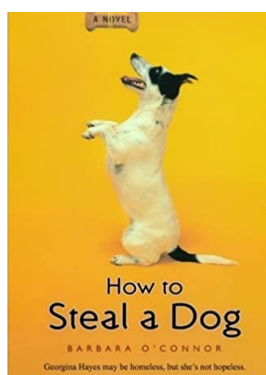
"When twelve-year-old Sugar's grandfather dies and her gambling father takes off yet again, Sugar and her mother lose their home in Missouri. They head to Chicago for a fresh start, only to discover that fresh starts aren't so easy to come by for the homeless. Nevertheless, Sugar's mother has taught 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)

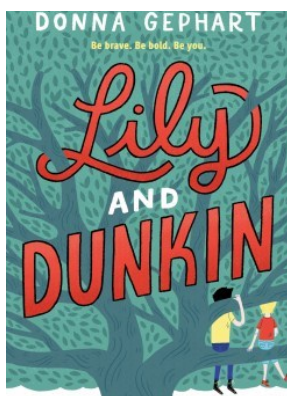
"Twelve-year-old Felix's appearance on a television game show reveals that he and his mother have been homeless for a while, but also restores some of his faith in other people." - Follett



## 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



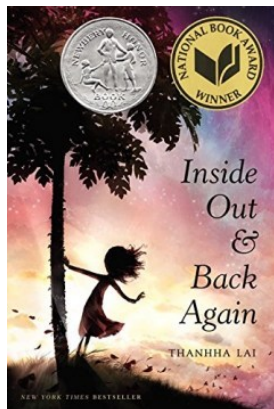
## Lily and Dunkin

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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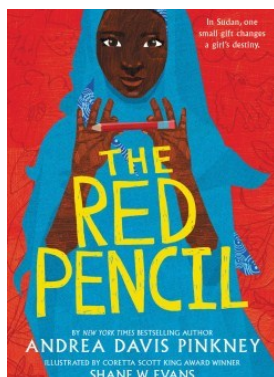
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## Inside Out and Back Again

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

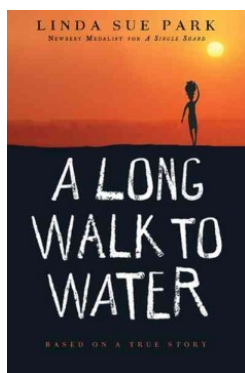
"Through a series of poems, a young girl chronicles the life-changing year of 1975, when she, her mother, and her brothers leave Vietnam and resettle in Alabama."  
- Follett



## 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

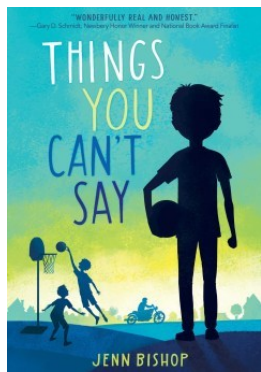
by Dan Geminhart, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.7)

"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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## Things You Can't Say

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

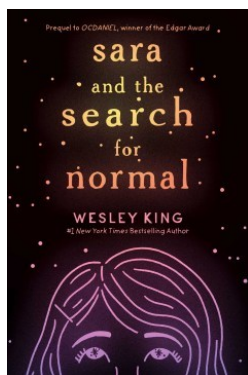
"Nothing is going right this summer for Drew. And after losing his dad unexpectedly three years ago, Drew knows a lot about things not going right. First, it's the new girl Audrey taking over everything at the library, Drew's sacred space. Then it's his best friend, Filipe, pulling away from him. But 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)

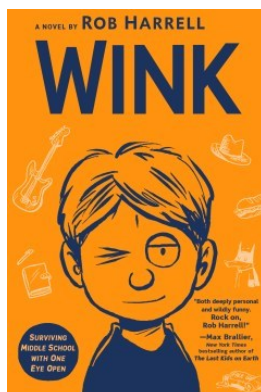
"When 10-year-old Thomas's mother, who suffers from depression, disappears, he creates a fantasy narrative in which his mother is safe and sets in motion a path of healing, not just for himself, but for his father and aunt as well." - Follett



## 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



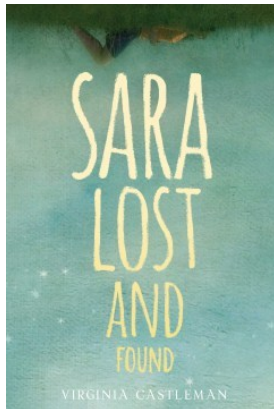
## Wink: Surviving Middle School With One Eye Open

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

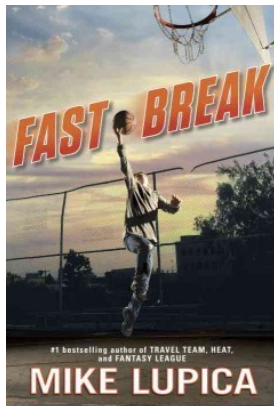
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## Sara Lost and Found

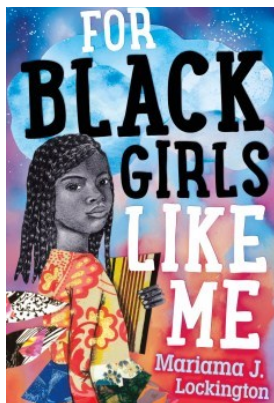
by Virginia Castleman, c2016 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.0)  
"Sara and Anna Olsen face an uncertain world...Too often, ten-year-old Sara and twelve-year-old Anna are left to fend for themselves. Then one night, three loud knocks at the door change everything: their father is in jail and social services has 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.



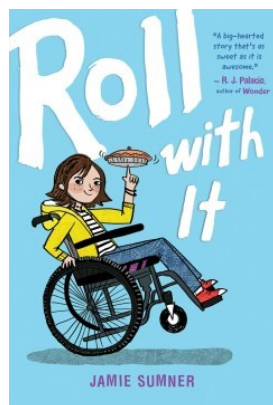
## Squint

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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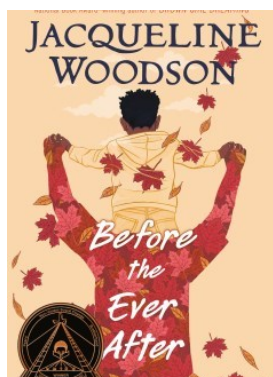
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## Roll With It

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

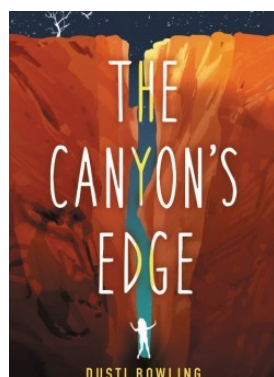
"Ellie's a girl who tells it like it is. That surprises some people, who see a kid in a wheelchair and think she's going to be all sunshine and cuddles....But when Ellie and her mom move so they can help take care of her ailing grandpa, Ellie has to start all over again in a new town at a new school. 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



## Before the Ever After

by Jacqueline Woodson, c2020 (IL: 5-8, 4+; RL: 4.8)

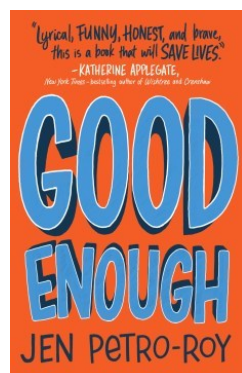
"For as long as ZJ can remember, his dad has been everyone's hero...But lately life at ZJ's house is anything but charming. His dad is having trouble remembering things and seems to be angry all the time. ZJ's mom explains it's because of all the head injuries his dad sustained during his career. ZJ can understand that—but it doesn't make the sting any less real when his own father forgets his name. As ZJ contemplates his new reality, he has to figure out how to hold on tight to family traditions and recollections of the glory days, all the while wondering what their past amounts to if his father can't remember it." - Pub.



## The Canyon's Edge

by Dusti Bowling, c2020 (IL: 3-6, RL: 4-8)

"One year after a random shooting changed their family forever, Nora and her father are exploring a slot canyon deep in the Arizona desert, hoping it will help them find peace...But when they reach the bottom of the canyon, the unthinkable happens: A flash flood rips across their path, sweeping away Nora's father and all of their supplies...If Nora is going to save herself and her father, she must conquer her fears, defeat the Beast, and find the courage to live her new life." - Pub.



## Good Enough

by Jen Petro-Roy, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.9)

"In the hospital where she is receiving treatment for anorexia, twelve-year-old Riley records her days in her journal—going to therapy, rediscovering her love of art, dealing with her rule-breaking roommate, and worrying about relapse once she returns home." - Follett



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## Everything I Know About You

by Barbara Dee, c2018 (IL: 5-8, 4-7; RL: 4.5)

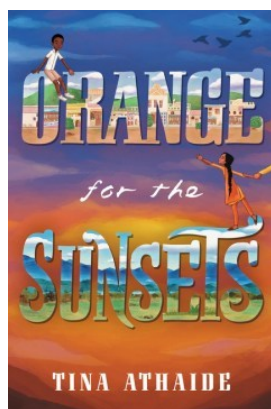
"Misfit Tally is forced to room with queen bee Ava on the seventh grade's extended field trip to Washington, D.C., and discovers several surprising things about her roommate, including the possibility of an eating disorder."  
- Follett



## Nowhere Boy

by Katherine Marsh, c2018 (IL: 5-8, RL: 5.4)

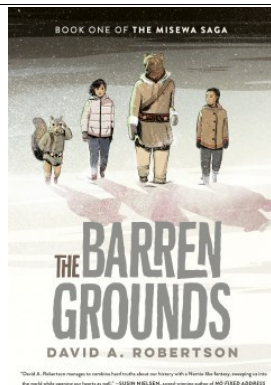
"Fourteen-year-old Ahmed, a Syrian refugee, and thirteen-year-old Max, an American boy, are bound by a secret that sets them on the adventure of a lifetime." - Follett



## Orange for the Sunsets

by Tina Athaide, c2019 (IL: 3-6, 4-7; RL: 4.6)

"In alternating voices, friends Asha and Yesofu, one Indian and one African, find their world turned upside-down when Idi Amin decides to expel Asian Indians from Uganda in 1972." - Follett



## The Barren Grounds

by David A. Robertson, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.6)

"Morgan and Eli, two Indigenous children forced away from their families and communities, are brought together in a foster home in Winnipeg, Manitoba. They each feel disconnected...and struggle to fit in at school and at their new home—until they find a secret place, walled off in an unfinished attic bedroom. A portal opens to another reality, Aski, bringing them onto frozen, barren grounds, where they meet O'chek (Fisher)...Accompanied by Arik, a sassy Squirrel...they try to save Misewa before the icy grip of winter freezes everything—including them." - Follett

# Mental Health and Well-Being: Exploring Trauma and Mental Illness (Intermediate)

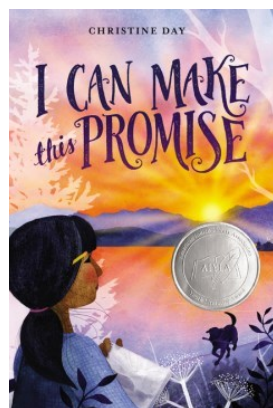
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Novels



## **Red Fox Road**

by Frances Greenslade, c2020 (IL: 5-8, RL: 4.7)

"Francie and her parents are on a spring road trip: driving from British Columbia, Canada to hike in the Grand Canyon. When a shortcut leads them down an old logging road, disaster strikes. Their truck hits a rock and wipes out the oil pan. They are stuck in the middle of nowhere. Francie can't help feeling a little excited—she'd often imagined how she'd survive if she got stranded in the bush, and now here they are. But will her survival skills—building fires, gathering dandelion leaves and fir needles for tea—be enough when hours stretch into days?" - Follett



## **I Can Make This Promise**

by Christine Day, c2019 (IL: 5-8, 3-7; RL: 6.2)

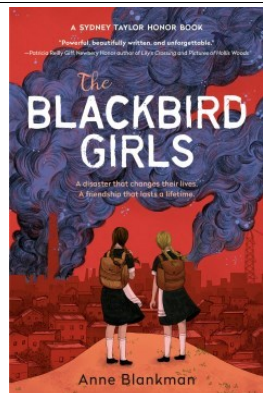
"When twelve-year-old Edie finds letters and photographs in her attic that change everything she thought she knew about her Native American mother's adoption, she realizes she has a lot to learn about her family's history and her own identity." - Follett



## **Slob**

by Ellen Potter, c2020 (IL: 3-6, RL: 5.0)

"Twelve-year-old Owen Birnbaum is the fattest kid in school. But he also invents cool contraptions—like a TV that can show the past—because there is something that happened two years ago which he needs to see if he ever hopes to unravel a dreadful mystery. But inventor or not, there is a lot Owen can't figure out. He's sure that if only he can get the TV to work, things will start to make sense. But it will take a revelation, not a cool invention, for Owen to see that the answer is not in the past, but the present." - Follett



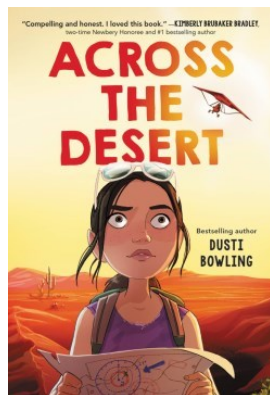
## **Blackbird Girls**

by Anne Blankman, c2020 (IL: 4-7, RL: 5.7)

"On a spring morning, neighbors Valentina Kaplan and Oksana Savchenko wake up to an angry red sky. A reactor at the nuclear power plant where their fathers work--Chernobyl--has exploded. Before they know it, the two girls, who've always been enemies, find themselves on a train bound for Leningrad to stay with Valentina's estranged grandmother, Rita Grigorievna. In their new lives in Leningrad, they begin to learn what it means to trust another person. Oksana must face the lies her parents told her all her life. Valentina must keep her grandmother's secret, one that could put all their lives in danger." - Amazon.com

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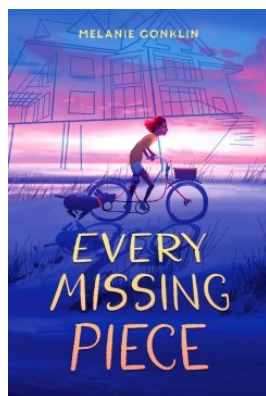
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Novels



## Across the Desert

by Dusti Bowling, c2021 (IL: 5-7, RL: 4.2)

"Twelve-year-old Jolene spends every day she can at the library watching her favorite livestream: *The Desert Aviator*, where twelve-year-old "Addie Earhart" shares her adventures flying an ultralight plane over the desert. While watching this daring girl fly through the sky, Jolene can dream of what it would be like to fly with her, far away from her own troubled home life where her mother struggles with a narcotic addiction. And Addie, who is grieving the loss of her father, finds solace in her online conversations with Jolene, her biggest--and only--fan. Then, one day, it all goes wrong: Addie's engine abruptly stops, and Jolene watches in helpless horror as the ultralight plummets to the ground and the video goes dark..." - Pub.



## Every Missing Piece

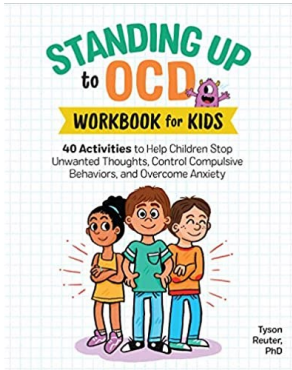
by Melanie Conklin, c2020 (IL: 5-7, RL: 4.7)

"Ever since her father died in a terrible accident, Maddy Gaines has worried a lot. She calls the police so often that she's on a first-name basis with the Sheriff. When a new boy moves to town, Maddy is convinced that he's not who he says he is--he's a boy who went missing six months ago. Maddy, her dog, her best friend, and her stepdad team up to see what he's hiding." - Pub.



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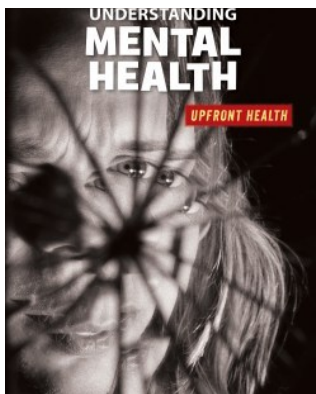
Compiled by Joan Pearce  
Non-fiction



## **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.