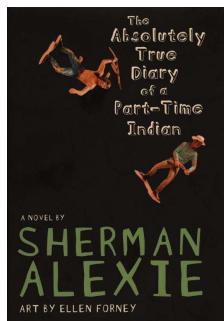




## Charter for Compassion -- Books: Grades 6-12

This listing of recommended books has been prepared by Mary Knight, Amy Stutzman and Marilyn Turkovich  
<https://www.charterforcompassion.org/grades-6-12>



**Alexie, Sherman. *The Absolutely True Autobiography of a Part-time***

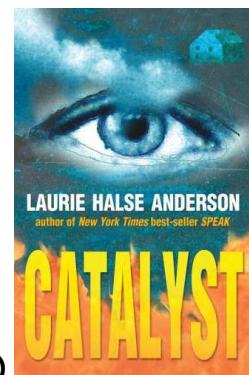
**Indian (Brown Books for Young Readers, 2009).** This 2007 Newbery Honor Book is a humorous and heartwarming debut about feeling different and finding acceptance. Now in After Words paperback!

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"---in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors.

But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?

Sherman Alexie tells the story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot. Heartbreaking, funny, and beautifully written, *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, which is based on the author's own experiences, coupled with poignant drawings that reflect the character's art, chronicles the contemporary adolescence of one Native American boy as he attempts to break away from the life he thought he was destined to live.

*The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian*, Alexie's YA debut, released in hardcover to instant success, receiving seven starred reviews, hitting numerous bestseller lists, and winning the 2007 National Book Award for Young People's Literature.

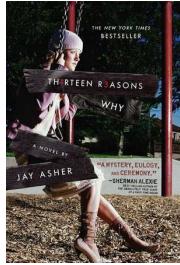


**Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Catalyst (Speak, First Edition edition, 2003)***

Chemistry honors student and cross-country runner Kate Malone is driven. Daughter of a father who is a reverend first and a parent second ("Rev. Dad [Version 4.7] is a faulty operating system, incompatible with my software.") and a dead mother she tries not to remember, Kate has one goal: To escape them both by gaining entrance to her own holy temple, MIT. Eschewing sleep, she runs endlessly every night waiting for the sacred college acceptance letter. Then two disasters occur: Sullen classmate Teri and her younger

brother, Mikey, take over Kate's room when their own house burns down, and a too-thin letter comes from MIT, signifying denial. And so the experiment begins. Can crude Teri and sweet Mikey, combined with the rejection letter, form the catalyst that will shake Kate out of her selfish tunnel vision and force her to deal with the suppressed pain of her mom's death? "If I could run all the time, life would be fine. As long as I keep moving, I'm in control." But for Kate, it's time to stop running and face the feelings she's spent her whole life racing away from.

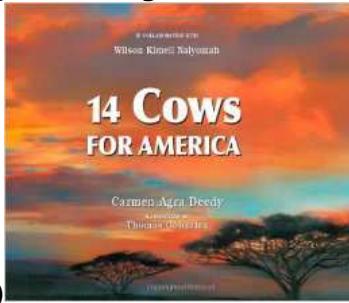
*Catalyst*, Laurie Halse Anderson's third novel for teens, is a deftly fashioned character study of a seldom explored subject in YA fiction: the type-A adolescent. Teens will identify (if not exactly sympathize) with prickly Kate instantly, and be shocked or perhaps secretly pleased to discover that life is no easier for the honor roll student than it is for the outcast. Anderson earns an A plus for this revealing and realistic take on life, death, and GPAs.



**Asher, Jay. *Thirteen Reasons Why* (Razorbill, 2006).**

Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a strange package with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers several cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker - his classmate and crush - who committed suicide two weeks earlier. Hannah's voice tells him that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life. Clay is one of them. If he listens, he'll find out why. Clay spends the night crisscrossing his town with Hannah as his guide. He becomes a firsthand witness to Hannah's pain, and learns the truth about himself-a truth he never wanted to face.

**Deedy, Carmen Agra. *14 Cows for America* (Peachtree Publishers,**



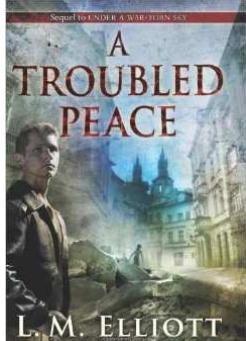
**2009.)**

In June of 2002, a very unusual ceremony begins in a far-flung village in western Kenya. An American diplomat is surrounded by hundreds of Maasai people. A gift is about to be bestowed on the American men, women, and children, and he is there to accept it. The gift is as unsought and unexpected as it is extraordinary.

A mere nine months have passed since the September 11 attacks, and hearts are raw. Tears flow freely from American and Maasai as these legendary warriors offer their gift to a grieving people half a world away. Word of the gift will travel news wires around the globe. Many will be profoundly touched, but for Americans, this selfless gesture will have deeper meaning still. For a heartsick nation, the gift of fourteen cows emerges from the choking dust and darkness as a soft light of hope and friendship.

Master storyteller Carmen Agra Deedy hits all the right notes in this elegant story of generosity that crosses boundaries, nations, and cultures. An afterword by Wilson Kimeli Naiyomah—the Maasai warrior at the center of the story—provides additional information about his tribe and their generous actions. Thomas Gonzalez's stunning paintings, which are saturated with rich hues of oranges and browns, and blues and greens, capture the modest nobility of the Maasai people and the distinctive landscape of the African plain.

**Elliot, L. M. *A Troubled Peace* (Katherine Tegen Books; Reprint edition,**

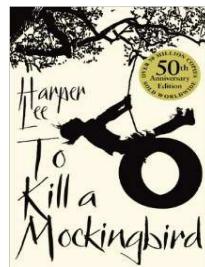


**2010).** L. M. ELLIOTT

Peace at the end of a war-peace for whom? Peace provides no easy "peace of mind" or comfort for those who have been involved in war. This book takes the reader into the troubled mind of Henry, an American pilot who was shot down over occupied France during World War II. In Under a War Torn Sky (first book), he was hunted by the Germans and lived through many adventures as he sought to get to safety. At the beginning of this book Henry is back at his home in Virginia but he faces post-traumatic stress syndrome and can't seem to find peace.

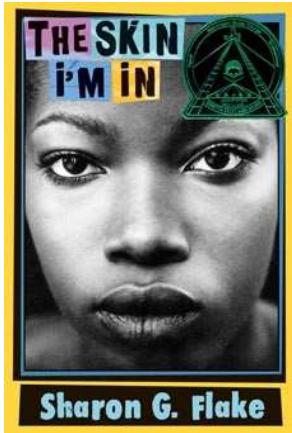
His solution is to return to France to find the people who had helped him survive. While America is celebrating peace Henry finds a world turned upside down.

This book would be a great book for history teachers to use to illustrate the dichotomy of war and peace. I can see a parallel to the "peace" in Iraq, Afghanistan, and other similar "areas of unrest." This should be a "must read" for students of history, military strategy, and policy making. This book is recommended for middle and high school readers. I think younger readers would need some support to understand all the intricate details provided in this adventure.



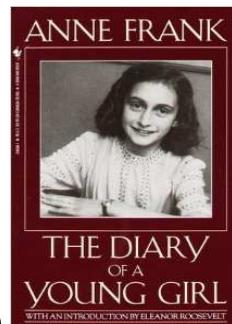
**Erksine, Kathryn. *Mockingbird* (Puffin, 2011).**

Caitlin has Asperger's. The world according to her is black and white; anything in between is confusing. Before, when things got confusing, Caitlin went to her older brother, Devon, for help. But Devon has died, and Caitlin's dad is so distraught that he is just not helpful. Caitlin wants everything to go back to the way things were, but she doesn't know how to do that. Then she comes across the word closure- and she realizes this is what she needs. And in her search for it, Caitlin discovers that the world may not be black and white after all.



**Flake, Sharon G. *The Skin I'm In* (Perfection Learning, First edition, 2007).**

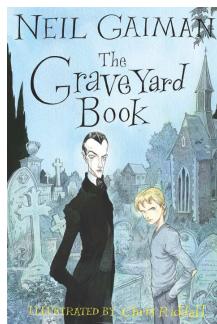
Seventh-grader Maleeka Madison is miserable when a new teacher comes to her depressed inner-city school. Miss Saunders evidently is rich, self-assured in spite of the white birthmark across her black skin, and prone to getting into kids' faces about both their behavior and their academic potential. Black and bright, Maleeka is so swamped by her immediate problems that Miss Saunders's attentions nearly capsize her stability. The girl's mother has just emerged from a two-year period of intense mourning for her dead husband, during which time her daughter has provided her with physical and moral support with no adult assistance. At school, Maleeka endures mean-spirited teasing about the darkness of her skin and her unstylish clothing. She seeks solace in writing an extended creative piece, at Miss Saunders's instigation, and also in the company of a powerful clique of nasty girls. Told in Maleeka's voice, this first novel bristles with attitude that is both genuine and alarming. The young teen understands too well that her brains aren't as valuable as the social standing that she doesn't have. In the end, she is able to respond positively to Miss Saunders; she also becomes socially anointed through the affections of the most popular boy in the school. This message rings true in spite of the fact that Maleeka's salvation isn't exactly politically correct. Young teens will appreciate Flake's authenticity and perhaps realize how to learn from Maleeka's struggle for security and self-assurance.



**Frank, Ann. *The Diary of a Young Girl* (Everyman's Library, 2010).**

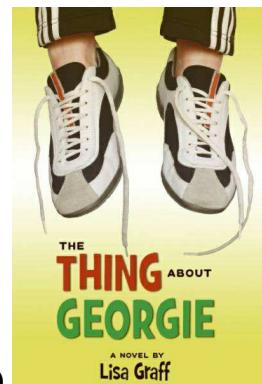
In Everyman's Library for the first time—one of the most moving and eloquent accounts of the Holocaust, read by tens of millions of people around the world since its publication in 1947. *The Diary of a Young Girl* is the record of two years in the life of a remarkable Jewish girl whose triumphant humanity in the face of unfathomable deprivation and fear has made the book one of the most enduring documents of our time.

The Everyman's hardcover edition reprints the Definitive Edition authorized by the Frank estate, plus a new introduction, a bibliography, and a chronology of Anne Frank's life and times.



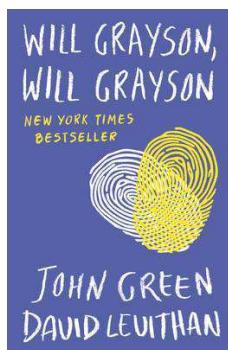
**Gaiman, Neil. *The Graveyard Book* (HarperCollins, 2011).**

Bod and the graveyard people who raise him all learn a lot about compassion and forgiveness through the process. They learn that the impossible can be possible when it comes to helping out a fellow. Some of the more compassionate moments include Mrs. Owens's willingness to raise Bod, and later Bod's quest to get a gravestone for Liza. We come away from *The Graveyard Book* with more compassion for both the living and the dead. But we also walk away with some important questions, which don't have easy answers. For example, is it possible to forgive someone who kills your family and tries to kill you? Can compassion and forgiveness help someone switch from good to evil?



**Graff, Lisa. *The Thing About Georgie* (HarperCollins, 2007).**

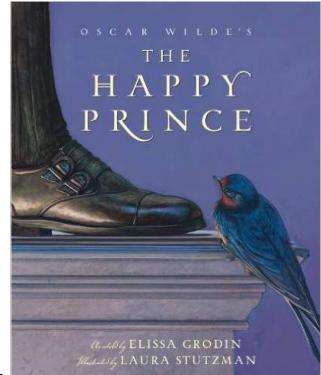
Nine-year-old Georgie has height issues. As a dwarf, he isn't likely to grow much taller than his current 42 inches. Consequently school furniture is awkward, running track or playing a musical instrument isn't possible, and he knows his soon-to-be new sibling will quickly outgrow him physically. To make matters worse, he's had a misunderstanding with his best friend, Andy, and is being forced to partner with Jeanie the Meanie for a school report. Given these circumstances, this might easily have been depressing. Instead, first novelist Graff employs a light touch, turning in a poignant, often funny exploration of what it means to celebrate one's skills rather than lamenting one's limitations. Graff makes good use of an anonymous narrator (revealed in the last chapter to be one of the book's main characters), who provides kid-friendly information about dwarfism. An upbeat and sensitive look at what it's like to be different, this novel will spark discussion.



**Green, John. *Will Grayson, Will Grayson* (Speak, 2011).**

One cold night, in a most unlikely corner of Chicago, Will Grayson crosses paths with . . . Will Grayson. Two teens with the same name, running in two very different circles, suddenly find their lives going in new and unexpected directions, and culminating in epic turns-of-heart and the most fabulous musical ever to grace the

high school stage. Told in alternating voices from two YA superstars, this collaborative novel features a double helping of the heart and humor that have won them both legions of fans.

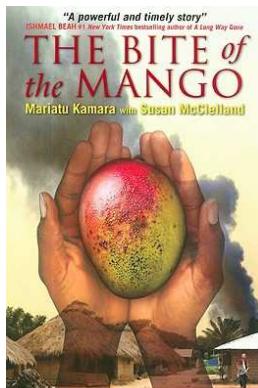


**Grodin, Elissa (Adapter). *The Happy Prince* (Sleeping Bear Press, 2006).**

While flying to a warmer climate, a little swallow stops to rest in the great city. His short stay is extended, however, when he takes refuge at, and then makes friends with, the golden statue of The Happy Prince. From high atop his pedestal in the city park The Happy Prince has a bird's-eye view of the sufferings of the people of the city. But, he is powerless to do anything.

When the Prince entreats his new friend to stay and help him, a lesson in kindness and caring is in store for the little bird.

Beloved since its original publication in 1888, the Oscar Wilde fairy tale is now set against a modern-day backdrop and written for young readers. Stunning, evocative paintings, along with a masterful retelling, breathe new life and meaning into this classic story of mindfulness and compassion for others.



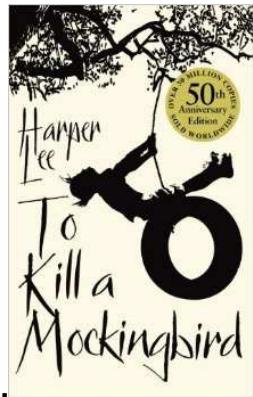
**Kamara, Mariatu and Susan McClelland. *The Bite of the Mango* (Annick Press; First Edition edition, 2008).**

*The astounding story of one girl's journey from war victim to UNICEF Special Representative.*

As a child in a small rural village in Sierra Leone, Mariatu Kamara lived peacefully surrounded by family and friends. Rumors of rebel attacks were no more than a distant worry. But when 12-year-old Mariatu set out for a neighboring village, she never arrived. Heavily armed rebel soldiers, many no older than children themselves, attacked and tortured Mariatu. During this brutal act of senseless violence they cut off both her hands.

Stumbling through the countryside, Mariatu miraculously survived. The sweet taste of a mango, her first food after the attack, reaffirmed her desire to live, but the challenge of clutching the fruit in her bloodied arms reinforced the grim new reality that stood before her. With no parents or living adult to support her and living in a refugee camp, she turned to begging in the streets of Freetown.

In this gripping and heartbreaking true story, Mariatu shares with readers the details of the brutal attack, its aftermath and her eventual arrival in Toronto. There she began to pull together the pieces of her broken life with courage, astonishing resilience and hope.

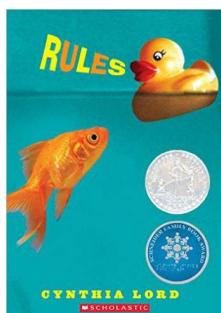


**Lee, Harper. *To Kill a Mockingbird* (Harper, 50th anniversary edition, 2010).**

"Shoot all the bluejays you want, if you can hit 'em, but remember it's a sin to kill a mockingbird."

A lawyer's advice to his children as he defends the real mockingbird of Harper Lee's classic novel—a black man charged with the rape of a white girl. Through the young eyes of Scout and Jem Finch, Harper Lee explores with rich humor and unswerving honesty the irrationality of adult attitudes toward race and class in the Deep South of the 1930s. The conscience of a town steeped in prejudice, violence, and hypocrisy is pricked by the stamina and quiet heroism of one man's struggle for justice—but the weight of history will only tolerate so much.

One of the best-loved classics of all time, *To Kill a Mockingbird* has earned many distinctions since its original publication in 1960. It has won the Pulitzer Prize, been translated into more than forty languages, sold more than forty million copies worldwide, and been made into an enormously popular movie. It was also named the best novel of the twentieth century by librarians across the country (*Library Journal*).

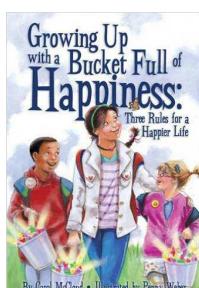


**Lord, Cynthia. *Rules* (Scholastic, 2008).**

This 2007 Newbery Honor Book is a humorous and heartwarming debut about feeling different and finding acceptance. Now in After Words paperback!

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public"---in order to head off David's embarrassing behaviors.

But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising, new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?



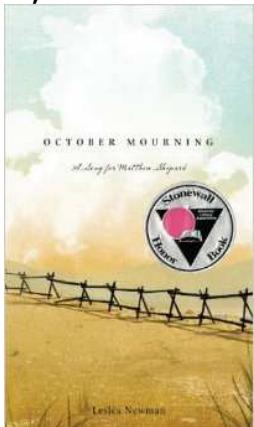
**McCloud, Carol. Illustrated by Penny Weber. *Growing Up with a Bucket Full of Happiness: Three Rules for a Happier Life* (Bucket Fillers, 2010).**

Do you know you have an invisible bucket which is filled with all of your good thoughts and feelings? If you're new to the concepts of bucket filling and bucket dipping, then this award-winning book is for you. Bucket filling

and dipping are effective metaphors for understanding the effects of our actions and words on the well being of others and ourselves

This award-winning sequel to *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?* features easy-to-read chapters, colorful illustrations, and daily questions to help readers become better bucket fillers and give them the tools to live a life filled with happiness.

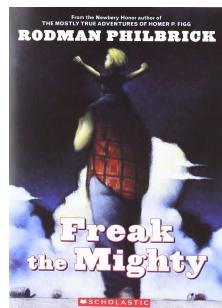
**Newman, Leslea. *October Mourning: A Song for Matthew Shepard* (Candelwick,**



**2012).**

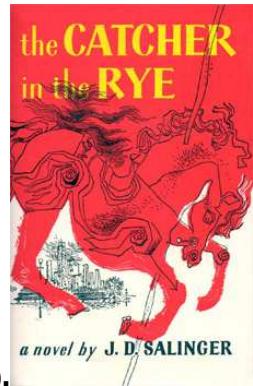
A masterful poetic exploration of the impact of Matthew Shepard's murder on the world.

On the night of October 6, 1998, a gay twenty-one-year-old college student named Matthew Shepard was lured from a Wyoming bar by two young men, savagely beaten, tied to a remote fence, and left to die. Gay Awareness Week was beginning at the University of Wyoming, and the keynote speaker was Lesléa Newman, discussing her book *Heather Has Two Mommies*. Shaken, the author addressed the large audience that gathered, but she remained haunted by Matthew's murder. *October Mourning*, a novel in verse, is her deeply felt response to the events of that tragic day. Using her poetic imagination, the author creates fictitious monologues from various points of view, including the fence Matthew was tied to, the stars that watched over him, the deer that kept him company, and Matthew himself. More than a decade later, this stunning cycle of sixty-eight poems serves as an illumination for readers too young to remember, and as a powerful, enduring tribute to Matthew Shepard's life.



**Philbrick, Rodman. *Freak the Mighty* (Scholastic, 2001).**

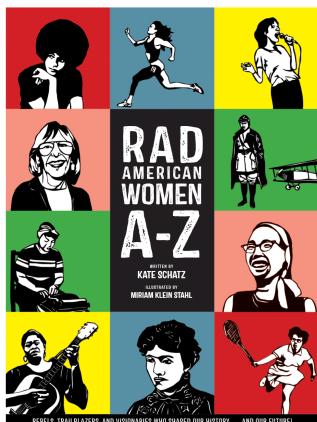
Two boys – a slow learner stuck in the body of a teenage giant and a tiny Einstein in leg braces – forge a unique friendship when they pair up to create one formidable human force. (Made into the film, *The Mighty*.) \* A wonderful story of triumph over imperfection, shame, and loss. – School Library Journal, starred review Compelling...written with energy and...humor. – The Bulletin for the Center of Children's Books



**Salinger, J.D. *The Catcher in the Rye* (Little, Brown and Company, 1991).**

Anyone who has read J.D. Salinger's New Yorker stories --- particularly A Perfect Day for Bananafish, Uncle Wiggily in Connecticut, The Laughing Man, and For Esme, With Love and Squalor, will not be surprised by the fact that his first novel is fully of children. The hero-narrator of THE CATCHER IN THE RYE is an ancient child of sixteen, a native New Yorker named Holden Caulfield. Through circumstances that tend to preclude adult, secondhand description, he leaves his prep school in Pennsylvania and goes underground in New York City for three days. The boy himself is at once too simple and too complex for us to make any final comment about him or his story. Perhaps the safest thing we can say about Holden is that he was born in the world not just strongly attracted to beauty but, almost, hopelessly impaled on it. There are many voices in this novel: children's voices, adult voices, underground voices—but Holden's voice is the most eloquent of all.

Transcending his own vernacular, yet remaining marvelously faithful to it, he issues a perfectly articulated cry of mixed pain and pleasure. However, like most lovers and clowns and poets of the higher orders, he keeps most of the pain to, and for, himself. The pleasure he gives away, or sets aside, with all his heart. It is there for the reader who can handle it to keep.



**Schatz, Kate. Illustrated by Miriam Klein Stahl. *Rad American Women A-Z: Rebels, Trailblazers, and Visionaries who Shaped Our History... and Our Future!* (CityLights/Sister Spit, 2015).**

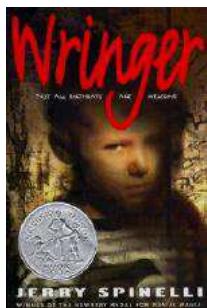
Radical women change the world. Outlining the biographies of numerous women, many activists of color, this book captures social change and movement building for justice and equality. Some of the women recognized are Angela Davis, Carol Burnett, and Dolores Huerta.

"*This is not a book. This is a guest list for a party of my heroes. Thank you for inviting us.*"--Lemony Snicket, author of A Series of Unfortunate Events books

"*I feel honored to be included in this book. Women need to take radical steps to become feminists, and to be strong to fight for their rights and those of others facing oppression and discrimination. The world needs radwomen to create a just society.*"--Dolores Huerta, Labor Leader, Civil Rights Activist

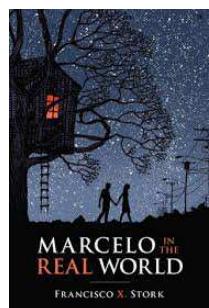
"*It's almost always with a chuckle that I view a cartoon image of myself. But to see cartoon-me positioned (alphabetically) amongst so many of my women heroes and role models . . . well, I just broke down and cried. Happy tears. I surely hope that this one-of-a-kind collection of radical American women reaches the hands of all children who want to grow up and become amazing women.*"--Kate Bornstein, author of My New Gender Workbook

"*Any alphabet book for children where 'P is for Patti' Smith and 'X is for the women whose names we don't know' is something I can recommend, especially when the book is as well written, representationally diverse and vividly illustrated as this one.*"--Francesca Lia Block, author of Dangerous Angels: The Weetzie Bat Books



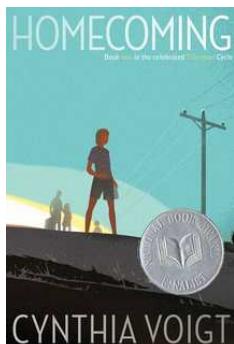
**Spinelli, Jerry. *Wringer* (HarperTeen, 2004).**

He was not aware that he ever stopped crying. In his sleep a voice echoed down the long dark barrel of a cannon: You have run out of birthdays. In the morning he awoke suddenly to a flutter of wings. Birthdays are an obsession where Palmer comes from, but if turning a year older means initiation into a violent practice he despises, he'd rather not. Unfortunately, Palmer cannot stop time any more than he can change tradition. So as this next and most important birthday approaches, Palmer knows that it's now or never. Something must be done.



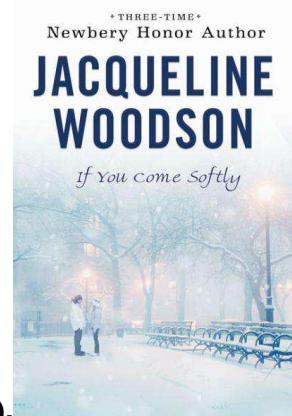
**Stork, Francisco X. *Marcelo in the Real World* (Scholastic Paperbacks, 2011).**

The paperback edition of one of the most acclaimed novels of the year -- a love story & legal drama that received five starred reviews and multiple honors. Marcelo Sandoval hears music no one else can hear--part of the autism-like impairment no doctor has been able to identify--and he's always attended a special school where his differences have been protected. But the summer after his junior year, his father demands that Marcelo work in his law firm's mailroom in order to experience "the real world."



**Voigt, Cynthia. *The Homecoming: The Tillerman Cycle* (Atheneum Books for Young Readers; Reprint edition, 2012).**

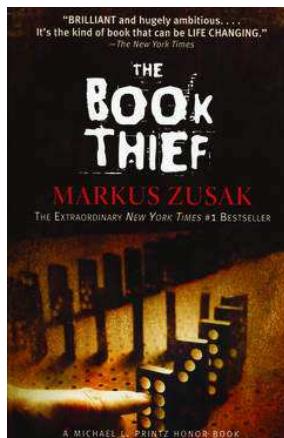
"It's still true." That's the first thing James Tillerman says to his older sister, Dicey, every morning. It's still true that their mother has abandoned the four Tillermans in a mall parking lot somewhere in the middle of Connecticut. It's still true that they have to find their own way to Great-aunt Cilla's house in Bridgeport. It's still true that they need to spend as little as possible on food and seek shelter anywhere that is out of view of the authorities. It's still true that the only way they can hope to all stay together is to just keep moving forward. Deep down, Dicey hopes they can find someone to trust, someone who will take them in and love them. But she's afraid it's just too much to hope for....



**Woodson, Jacqueline. *If You Come Softly* (Speak, 2010).**

A heartbreakingly contemporary romance from a three-time Newbery Honor winning author

Jeremiah feels good inside his own skin. That is, when he's in his own Brooklyn neighborhood. But now he's going to be attending a fancy prep school in Manhattan, and black teenage boys don't exactly fit in there. So it's a surprise when he meets Ellie the first week of school. In one frozen moment their eyes lock and after that they know they fit together -- even though she's Jewish and he's black. Their worlds are so different, but to them that's not what matters. Too bad the rest of the world has to get in their way. Reviewers have called Coretta Scott King Award-winning author Jacqueline Woodson's work "exceptional" (*Publishers Weekly*) and "wrenchingly honest" (*School Library Journal*), and have said "it offers a perspective on racism and elitism rarely found in fiction for this age group" (*Publishers Weekly*). In *If You Come Softly*, she delivers a powerful story of interracial love that leaves readers wondering "why" and "if only...."



**Zusak, Markus. *The Book Thief* (Alfred Knopf, 2007).**

A *New York Times* bestseller for seven years running that's soon to be a major motion picture, this Printz Honor book by the author of *I Am the Messenger* is an unforgettable tale about the ability of books to feed the soul.

Set during World War II in Germany, Markus Zusak's groundbreaking novel is the story of Liesel Meminger, a foster girl living outside of Munich. Liesel scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist--books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement before he is marched to Dachau.

The country is holding its breath. Death has never been busier, and will become busier still.