

Transitions to Success: A Resource List for Teens & Parents

"Stories give us courage to face whatever we have to face in real life."

- *Mitali Perkins, author*

Books have the power to be both a mirror and a window. Reading fiction allows teens – and the adults in their lives – to see their own difficulties reflected in a mirror, normalizing problems that can make teens feel isolated, demonstrating alternate paths to overcome issues, and opening the door to communication. Reading fiction also allows teens and their adults to see a different world, one in which things aren't so easy – or perhaps aren't so hard. Peering through the window into that world expands the mind, increases empathy, and can foster resilience when teens see an admirable character overcoming adversity.

These books were carefully selected by Young Adult Librarian Emily Passey for their particular resonance to the transitions, stresses, and successes of 21st century teenage life. They are great reading for teens and parents alike who are curious about or are struggling with how to deal with what life can throw their way.

GRADES 6-8

At School

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Speak* – Melinda's freshman year of high school is made all the more difficult by a trauma at the end of the summer that she struggles to find words to deal with.

Detorie, Rick. *The Accidental Genius of Weasel High* – Freshman Larkin shares stories of dealing with family, friends, dating and being 14. A good pick for grown-up *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* fans.

Hicks, Faith Erin. *Friends With Boys* – Maggie has always been homeschooled, so when she decides to go to public school she must overcome social difficulties – while struggling to let go of a grief-filled past.

Howe, James. *The Misfits* – Four middle school students who have never fit in decide to run for student council to represent all the kids who have ever been called names.

Medina, Meg. *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* – When Piddy Sanchez starts a new school without her best friend, she quickly finds herself the victim of the biggest bully.

Mucha, Corinne. *Freshman: Tales of 9th Grade Obsessions, Revelations and Other Nonsense* – Follows the ups and downs of Annie's freshman year of high school, in an engaging graphic novel format.

Patterson, James. *I Funny* – Wheelchair bound comic-wannabe middle schooler Jamie endures bullying and also deals with dating, friendship, and trying to win a comedy contest.

Patterson, James. *Homeroom Diaries* – Cuckoo and her misfit friends aim to unite the factions that make up their high school in order to show everyone they have more in common than they think.

Telgemeier, Raina. *Drama* – Callie weathers ups and downs with dating, school and friends as she works on tech crew for her middle school theater.

At Home

Brashares, Ann. *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* – Four best friends spend a transformative summer growing up separate but together as they encounter first love, new family members, and more.

Han, Jenny. *To All the Boys I've Loved Before* – Lara Jean writes love letter she never sends, until they're accidentally sent one day. She must confront the conflicts that arise head on, starting at home with her sister.

Kadohata, Cynthia. *The Thing About Luck* – Summer has had a year of bad luck, and now her parents have traveled to Japan leaving her with her grandparents and little brother in her charge.

Pennypacker, Sara. *Summer of the Gypsy Moths* – Angel and Stella grow up fast and make family from nothing when their foster parent dies and they keep it a secret to avoid going back to the system

Schmidt, Gary. *Okay for Now* – The odds are against Doug, who just moved to a new town with no friends and his abusive father and who must find a way to be more than the thug he's thought to be.

Growing Through Adversity

50 cent. *Playground* – Butterball is an overweight nobody until the day he acts out violently, going from bullied to bully and finding that he must carve out a stronger identity for himself.

Henkes, Kevin. *Bird Lake Moon* – Mitch spends the summer with his mother after his parents split up and finds a new friend at their lake house with whom he shares grief and grows up.

Herrndorf, Wolfgang. *Why We Took the Car* – Mike thinks he is boring until new kid in school Tschick starts befriending him and entices him with the thrill of criminal activity leading to a humorous adventure and a lesson on growing up and making decisions.

Hijuelos, Oscar. *Dark Dude* – Cuban-American teenager Rico gets to leave tough NYC for Wisconsin, where he is surprised to find that he does not fit in and is not warmly welcomed.

Holmes, Elizabeth. *The Normal Kid* – Two kids strive to be and feel normal although events in their lives – divorce, living abroad – have left them feeling different.

Mass, Wendy. *A Mango-Shaped Space* – Mia comes of age as she deals with synesthesia which makes it difficult for her to learn, and for others to relate to her.

Myers, Walter Dean. *Darius & Twig* – Two best friends struggle with daily life as they aim for greatness and getting out of their run-down part of Harlem.

Sovern, Megan Jean. *The Meaning of Maggie* – Maggie works to balance her school aspirations and her home life which includes flighty sisters and an ailing father, all of whom it seems are her duty to take care of.

Venkatraman, Padma. *A Time to Dance* – Although Veda aspires to be an engineer, her true passion is dance and she must learn to express herself when physical disability changes her greatly.

GRADES 9-12

Roughly organized by the main subject of the story, many of these deal with multiple types of transitions and stress.

At Home

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *The Impossible Knife of Memory* – Hayley has barely known a stable life, with a PTSD-inflicted father that may not be possible. But their final move may have the power to unite them in finally conquering both of their demons.

Dessen, Sarah. *What Happened to Goodbye* – After her parents divorce, McLean and her father move from place to place. She finds herself reinventing her identity at each new school until she struggles to determine who she really is.

Hopkins, Ellen. *Perfect* – Four teens struggle with expectations and the pressure to be perfect.

Sones, Sonya. *One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies* – After the death of her mother, Ruby leaves behind everything she knows to cross the country and live with a father she has never met.

Zarr, Sarah. *How to Save a Life* – Jill and Mandy's lives are irreparably changed when, through birth and death, they are made into a new sort of family.

Friends, Enemies & Peer Pressure

Brashares, Ann. *Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants* – Four best friends spend a transformative summer growing up separate but together as they encounter first love, new family members, and more.

Brown, Jennifer. *Hate List* – Valerie must cope with the role she may have played in her boyfriend’s violent rampage at school – and the repercussions it has for her place in the social sphere.

Chbosky, Stephen. *Perks of Being a Wallflower* – Charlie, a freshman, struggles with his introverted nature, and scars from his family’s past, as he learns to make and trust in new friends.

Halpern, Julie. *Into the Wild Nerd Yonder* – When Jessie’s best friend finds a new crew at school, sophomore Jessie must discover new friends that truly share her interest and let her be herself.

Higgins, M.G. *I’m Just Me* – Muslim Nasreen and African American Mia come together to fight back against their school’s bullies.

Lyga, Barry. *The Astonishing Adventures of Fanboy and Goth Girl* – Self-described geek “Fanboy” has been bullied and feels isolated, but when “Goth Girl” Kyra reaches out the two become friends as they grow into their identities.

Maciel, Amanda. *Tease* – Offering a rare glimpse into the perspective of the bully, Tease tells the story of Sara as she confronts and struggles to accept the pain she has caused her peers.

Medina, Meg. *Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* – When Piddy Sanchez starts a new school without her best friend, she quickly finds herself the victim of the biggest bully.

Summers, Courtney. *Some Girls Are* – Popular bully Regina suddenly becomes the victim, and becomes friends with a former victim of her own, when her friends decide they no longer revere her.

Vivian, Siobhan. *The List* – The story of eight girls – from freshmen to seniors – lives after being named to a cruel list made annually at their high school naming the prettiest and ugliest girls in school.

Identity Issues

Abdel-Fattah, Randa. *Does My Head Look Big In This?* – Amal’s life at school is made more complicated when she decides to wear a *hijab*, while trying to maintain her Western teenage girl identity.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. *Wintergirls* – A gripping story of the toll that eating disorders take on two young women and their families after one dies and the other is left to pick up the pieces.

Blythe, Carolita. *Revenge of a Not-So-Pretty Girl* – Faye tries to find herself, and keep her friends, through robbery, but when one goes wrong she must confront her self-image issues.

Brenna, Beverly. *Wild Orchid* – Taylor is a young woman with Asperger’s, learning how to manage changes like living away from home, have a first job, and making friends.

Cronn-Mills, Kristin. *Beautiful Music for Ugly Children* – As teenage Gabe builds a following for his public access radio show, he struggles to share his new identity with those who have known him as Liz his whole life.

Friend, Natasha. *My Life in Black and White* – After a car accident left her disfigured, Lexi must learn to forge a new identity for herself outside of being the pretty girl in school.

Schmidt, Tiffany. *Bright Before Sunrise* – Brighton has always thought that being nice and likable was the most important thing, but when chance forces her to get to know a less-than-nice classmate, she confronts her preconceptions about getting to know people before judging – and herself.

Love & Dating

Handler, Daniel. *Why We Broke Up* – Through a long letter detailing their relationship from friends to a couple, Min tells Ed why they must break up. A true-to-life look at young love.

Keplinger, Kody. *The DUFF: Designated Ugly Fat Friend* – Bianca gets involved with notorious bad-boy Wesley to distract herself from her own issues. Through their unconventional relationship the two grow to better-understand themselves.

King, A.S. *Ask the Passengers* – Astrid deals with small-town gossip and mounting family pressure as she comes to realize she may be a lesbian.

Graduation & the Next Step

Dessen, Sarah. *The Moon & More* – Explores the tumult of Emmaline's last summer before college.

Giles, Gail. *Girls Like Us* – After graduating from their school's special needs program, intellectually disabled friends Quincy and Bidy are placed in their first apartment and navigate their first months as independent adults in a world that does not easily accept them.

Myracle, Lauren. *L8R G8R* – Seniors Zoe, Maddie & Angela navigate their changing lives as senior year brings new opportunities and the possibility of big changes.

Rowell, Rainbow. *Fangirl* – Twins Kath and Wren are inseparable until they go to college and Wren decides they can't live together. Relates the ups and downs of going away to school and getting through freshman year.

Zarr, Sarah. *Roomies* – Elizabeth and Lauren get to know each other via email over the summer before becoming roommates at college in the fall.