## Culturally Relevant Texts

### Teen Issue Fiction

<table>
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<th>Author</th>
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<tr>
<td>Matali Perkins</td>
<td>Rickshaw Girl</td>
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Grade 2–5—Ten-year-old Naima longs to earn money to help her poor Bangladeshi family, but her talent in painting traditional patterns, or alpanas, is no use. While considering whether she could disguise herself as a boy and try to drive her father’s rickshaw, she wrecks the vehicle and its painted tin sides on a test-drive, threatening the family’s sole livelihood. Her solution is to steal away, disguised as a boy, to a repair shop and offer her services painting decorations on the rickshaws. She is surprised to find that the owner is a woman. When Naima reveals herself, she is hired on the condition that her father will keep bringing her for training at the shop, so that her paintings will help the business. The future looks bright for the girl and her family. Short chapters, well-delineated characters, soft black-line pastel illustrations, and a child-appropriate solution enrich this easy-to-read chapter book that would also appeal to less-able middle school readers. The rich back matter includes an informative glossary of Bangla words, plus a valuable author's note that explains the process of microfinance and its results for poor women in rural markets.
Secret Keeper

When her father loses his job and leaves India to look for work in America, Asha Gupta, her older sister, Reet, and their mother must wait with Baba’s brother and his family, as well as their grandmother, in Calcutta. Uncle is welcoming, but in a country steeped in tradition, the three women must abide by his decisions. Asha knows this is temporary—just until Baba sends for them. But with scant savings and time passing, the tension builds: Ma, prone to spells of sadness, finds it hard to submit to her mother- and sister-in-law; Reet’s beauty attracts unwanted marriage proposals; and Asha's promise to take care of Ma and Reet leads to impulsive behavior. What follows is a firestorm of rebuke—and secrets revealed! Asha’s only solace is her rooftop hideaway, where she pours her heart out in her diary, and where she begins a clandestine friendship with Jay Sen, the boy next door. Asha can hardly believe that she, and not Reet, is the object of Jay's attention. Then news arrives about Baba . . . and Asha must make a choice that will change their lives forever.

The Not so Star Spangled Life of Sunita Sen

As Indian culture continues to curry the movies, music, and literature of American culture, the time is perfect to re-introduce this Indian-themed novel about a young girl's heart-felt attempt to straddle her two worlds. Like any other eighth grader, smart and spunky Sunita Sen just wants to fit in. She feels she's doing pretty well, especially as her friendship with the school’s tennis star starts to blossom into something more. But when Sunita’s grandparents come from India to stay with her family, her lifestyle changes, and Sunita suddenly becomes aware of identity issues she's never before faced. Should she hide her heritage and be like everyone else, or can she find a way to embrace it?
As part of a U.S. government crackdown on illegal immigration after 9/11, Muslim men were required to register with the government and many were arrested because their visas had long-since expired. Families who had lived and worked in this country were suddenly and forcibly reminded of their illegal status without any likelihood of changing it. For 18-year-old Aisha Hossain, this means the end of her dream of going to college to become a doctor. For 14-year-old Nadira, her younger sister and the story's narrator, it means coming out from behind the shadow of her perfect older sister to reveal her own strength and find a way to reunite her nearly shattered family.

Immigrants from Bangladesh, the Hossains have lived illegally in New York for years, their visa requests handled by a series of dishonest or incompetent lawyers and mired in the tortuous process of bureaucratic red tape. Following their father's arrest and detention, the teens put together the documentation and make a case that requires the judges to see them as individuals rather than terror suspects. The author explains their situation well, but the effect is more informational than fiction. Nadira and Aisha are clearly drawn characters, but they don't quite come alive, and their Bangladeshi-American background is more a backdrop than a way of life. Still, this is an important facet of the American immigrant experience, worthy of wider attention.
Adolescent Meggie Singh faces her complex personal history as she struggles under her genius father's demanding tutelage in this luminous second novel by Budhos that chronicles Indo-Caribbean displacement. Eight sections, each concluding with a fantastic and symbolic tale corresponding to Meggie's development, describe successive summers the Singh family spends at Meggie's aunt's house in England. Away from her Queens, N.Y., home, along with her romance-deprived Jewish mother and her Guyanese father, a philosophy professor (an ethnic pairing similar to that of the characters in House of Waiting), Meggie is surrounded by relatives and social strivers who encircle her family seeking money and status. Letters containing desperate pleas from the paternal relations in Guyana emotionally exhaust the already fragile professor ("a dreamer, a storyteller, a thinker"), who has been unable to finish his book on the subject of quantifying light. Meggie is a devoted and invaluable ally: she types her father's notes, engages him in relevant debates and tries to keep him from distractions like his gold-digging "old friends." She is unable to prevent his descent into madness, however; in dangerous symbiosis, Meggie nearly follows her father into mental breakdown. Her lonely mother, meanwhile, finds love with another man, and Meggie grieves over this betrayal as she explores romantic beginnings of her own. Many dualities are depicted in this taut psychological drama: England's stoic lucidity and the dark ancestral superstition of British Guyana, the dual nature of light as both particle and wave, the pull of burgeoning adolescent drives disarming the objectivity required for scientific thought, and the fine line between genius and madness. Budhos skillfully sustains these narrative tensions without waxing melodramatic or maudlin, and reaches a satisfying crescendo in which Meggie must reimagine everything she knows and loves in order to remain herself.
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<tr>
<th>Marina Budhos</th>
<th><strong>Tell Us We're Home</strong></th>
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<td>Jaya is from Trinidad, Maria is from Mexico, and Lola is from Slovakia. The girls couldn't be more different, except for two things: They're all the daughters of maids and nannies in their prosperous suburban town of Meadowbrook, and they all long to fit in and succeed among their more privileged peers. But when Jaya’s mother is accused of stealing some valuable jewelry from her employer, the seemingly liberal town of Meadowbrook becomes a place of ugly tensions and racism, and the girls’ friendship threatens to buckle under the strain. Once again, Marina Budhos has written a thoughtful and ambitious novel about class and the cultural differences that can both divide and unite.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Marina Budhos</td>
<td>Monsoon Summer</td>
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<td>Jasmine “Jazz” Gardner heads off to India during the monsoon season. The family trip is her mother's doing: Mrs. Gardner wants to volunteer at the orphanage that cared for her when she was young. But going to India isn’t Jazz’s idea of a great summer vacation. She wants no part of her mother’s do-gooder endeavors.</td>
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<td>What’s more, Jazz is heartsick. She’s leaving the business she and her best friend, Steve Morales, started—as well as Steve himself. Jazz is crazy in love with the guy. If only he knew!</td>
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<td>Only when Jazz reluctantly befriends Danita, a girl who cooks for her family, and who faces a tough dilemma, does Jazz begin to see how she can make a difference—to her own family, to Danita, to the children at the orphanage, even to Steve. As India claims Jazz, the monsoon works its madness and its magic.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Neesha Meminger</th>
<th>Shine Coconut Moon</th>
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<td>Sixteen-year-old Samar—aka Sam—is an Indian American teenager whose mom has kept her away from her old-fashioned family. It's never bothered Sam, who is busy with school, friends, and a demanding boyfriend. But things change after 9/11. A guy in a turban shows up at Sam’s house—and turns out to be her uncle. He wants to reconcile the family and teach Sam about her Sikh heritage. She is eager to learn, but when boys attack her uncle, shouting “Go home Osama!” Sam realizes she could be in danger—and just how dangerous ignorance is.</td>
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<th>Into the Wise Dark</th>
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<td>Time traveling Parminder--a.k.a. Pammi--must stop a power-hungry Able from the future from destroying the ancient city she visits, where Ables like her live freely. If she is unable to stop him, the city of Zanum vanishes forever, taking Pammi and all other Ables with it.</td>
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Jasbir, a.k.a. Jazz, has always been a stellar student and an obedient, albeit wise-cracking, daughter. Everything has gone along just fine—she has good friends in the "genius" program she's been in since kindergarten, her teachers and principal adore her, and her parents dote on her. But now, in her junior year of high school, her mother hears that Jazz was seen hugging a boy on the street and goes ballistic. Mom immediately implements the Guided Dating Plan, which includes setting up blind dates with "suitable," pre-screened Indian candidates. The boy her mother sets her up with, however, is not at all what anyone expects; and the new boy at school, the very UNSuitable hottie, is the one who sets Jazz's blood boiling. When Jazz makes a few out-of-the-ordinary decisions, everything explodes, and she realizes she'll need a lot more than her genius education to get out of the huge mess she's in. Can Jazz find a way to follow her own heart, and still stay in the good graces of her parents?
Walter Dean Myers

Somewhere in the Darkness

Grade 7-10-- A poignant story of motherless, 14-year-old Jimmy Little, whose convict father takes him on a search for truth, identity, and family. Whisked away from the stability of a homelife with his devoted grandmother, Mama Jean, Jimmy confronts the harsh realities of his father's life on the run. Jailed for his involvement in an armed robbery and falsely accused of killing a man, Crab escapes from prison to convince his son of his innocence. What Jimmy discovers is a man desperate to establish a relationship with his son but unable to break free of a lifestyle of stealing and moving on that leaves little room for security. On their highway odyssey, Crab becomes increasingly sick with a kidney ailment. Following a climactic encounter with the man who accused him, Crab is again arrested and hospitalized. For Jimmy, the flicker of hope that he and his father might work things out becomes a realization that love is built on trust, concern, and honesty. Through terse dialogue and characterization, Myers conveys a powerful message about the need for parent and child to believe in and respect one another. By story's end, the boy understands that to fully appreciate someone else's life you must first give meaning to your own. Whether from urban or rural backgrounds, single or double parent families, readers will find this universal journey of self-discovery gratifying.
Crystal

Grade 8-12 At 16, Crystal Brown is en route to stardom as a black fashion model. The world of money, glamour, fame, and celebrities excites and disturbs her. Her career demands increasing time away from family, friends, school, and normal adolescent concerns. As a model, Crystal confronts a temperamental photographer, sexual pressures, and a demanding agent. While Crystal's mother vicariously craves her daughter's success, her father's pride is tempered with protectiveness. In the end, Crystal is shocked into a career decision by the suicide of a once marketable model friend. In Crystal, Myers has created a beautiful but believable teenage heroine who makes a stand for personal integrity in a competitive world. Although certain characters and situations fulfill modeling world stereotypes, Myers' knack for vivid description and dialogue shatters many illusions of stardom. Adolescents who dream of modeling and who may envy Crystal's natural gifts will find in her forthright story certain realities that are often ignored.

At Her Majesty's Request

Gr. 5-8. Myers pieces together bits of history and letters to form a unique and dramatic mosaic: the life of Sarah Forbes Bonetta, a seven-year-old African (Egbado) princess saved by an English naval officer from a rival tribe's ritual sacrifice in 1850. Sarah is brought to England, where Queen Victoria puts the girl under her protection until Sarah's marriage. The queen also acted as godmother to Sarah's first child and met and corresponded with Sarah throughout her life. Through Sarah's story, Myers offers insights into Victorian attitudes and society and examines the flow of people and ideas between England and Africa during the period. The inclusion of passages from Sarah's correspondence helps bring her to life, and Sarah's photo on the jacket brings readers face-to-face with this remarkable young woman. An intriguing biography as well as an unusual source for those interested in British or African history.
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<tr>
<th>Walter Dean Myers</th>
<th>Lockdown</th>
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<td>The Beast</td>
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<td>Sunrise Over Fallujah</td>
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<td>Dope Sick</td>
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<th>Sharon M. Draper</th>
<th>The Battle of Jericho</th>
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<td>Grade 7-10-When an elite club, The Warriors of Distinction, invites Jericho and his cousin Josh to pledge, the teens look forward to wearing the black silk jacket, going to great parties, and receiving the admiring glances of the other students at their Ohio high school. Even the girl Jericho has a crush on begins to show an interest in him. The initiation process begins rather tamely with the new pledges helping with the Christmas toy drive, but as it progresses, Jericho becomes increasingly uncomfortable with what they are asked to do and the way they treat Dana, the first-ever female pledge. Adopting the group's &quot;All of us or none of us&quot; creed, the 15 inductees decide to continue. In an intense climax, pledging goes tragically wrong and the repercussions are felt throughout the community. Draper has captured the essence of teens caught up in peer pressure who must ultimately live with the results of their actions. Her characters are deeply human and the strong plot mirrors the difficult choices that young people must make as they try to reconcile their need for acceptance with their inner values. Mostly, though, this title is a compelling read that drives home important lessons about making choices.</td>
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<td>November Blues (Sequal to The Battle of Jericho)</td>
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<td>Just Another Hero (Sequal to November Blues)</td>
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Tears of a Tiger
Grade 7 Up--In the second book of Sharon M. Draper’s trilogy (Atheneum, 1994) about teens faced with grim and realistic situations in a contemporary urban high school, star basketball player Andy Jackson can't recover from the depression building in him after his drunk driving resulted in the death of his friend, Rob. About half a dozen actors share the reading of this emotionally taut narrative which unfolds in conversations, notes, reports, and other documents. Andy, his teammates, his girlfriend, his parents, and his little brother each present both their observations and their concerns as Andy moves from shock to depression and finally to suicide in the wake of his grief. The revelation of Andy's failed attempts to get help for himself is especially keen, and the relationships among these variously mature characters is insightfully genuine. While Draper's characters are distinct and well realized, the cast of readers alternate between assuming specific roles and reading full passages in a single voice without regard to its variety of characters, making it difficult for listeners to associate specific tones and rhythms with these characters.

Forged By Fire (Sequal to Tears of a Tiger)
Just Another Hero
Romiette and Julio
Darkness before Dawn
Copper Sun
Out of my Mind

Born with cerebral palsy, Melody, 10, has never spoken a word. She is a brilliant fifth grader trapped in an uncontrollable body. Her world is enhanced by insight and intellect, but gypped by physical limitations and misunderstandings. She will never sing or dance, talk on the phone, or whisper secrets to her friends. She’s not complaining, though; she’s planning and fighting the odds. In her court are family, good neighbors, and an attentive student teacher. Pitted against her is the “normal” world: schools with limited resources, cliquish girls, superficial assumptions, and her own disability. Melody’s life is tragically complicated. She is mainly placed in the special-ed classroom where education means being babysat in a room with replayed cartoons and nursery tunes. Her supportive family sets her up with a computer. She learns the strength of thumbs as she taps on a special keyboard that finally lets her “talk.” When she is transitioned into the regular classroom, Melody’s undeniable contribution enables her class to make it to the national quiz team finals. Then something happens that causes her to miss the finals, and she is devastated by her classmates’ actions. Kids will benefit from being introduced to Melody and her gutsy, candid, and compelling story. It speaks volumes and reveals the quiet strength and fortitude it takes to overcome disabilities and the misconceptions that go with them.
Deborah Ellis

I am Not a Taxi

Grade 5-8—Ellis's novel attempts to expose the strains that cocaine production and trade and the U.S War on Drugs have placed on Bolivians. Diego's parents have been wrongfully incarcerated for drug smuggling. While they serve their 16-year sentences, the 12-year-old, who would otherwise be homeless, lives in the women's prison with his mother and younger sister. He earns money as a taxi, running errands in the city for the prisoners. One day his friend convinces him that they can make easier money working for men who turn out to be involved in cocaine manufacturing. The boys are enslaved in the jungle, Diego's friend dies, and Diego barely escapes with his life. This harrowing part of the narrative is somewhat rushed and is less convincing than the rest. Nonetheless, because of its unusual setting and subject matter, and Ellis's efforts to explicate complex social, political, and economic issues, this book should find a place in larger collections.

Sacred Leaf

Sequel to “I am a Taxi”
The Bread Winner

Eleven-year-old Parvana lives with her family in one room of a bombed-out apartment building in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. Parvana’s father — a history teacher until his school was bombed and his health destroyed — works from a blanket on the ground in the marketplace, reading letters for people who cannot read or write. One day, he is arrested for the crime of having a foreign education, and the family is left without someone who can earn money or even shop for food.

As conditions for the family grow desperate, only one solution emerges. Forbidden to earn money as a girl, Parvana must transform herself into a boy, and become the breadwinner.

*The Breadwinner* is a novel about loyalty, survival, families and friendship under extraordinary circumstances. A map, glossary and author's note provide young readers with background and context. All royalties from the sale of this book will go to Women for Women, an organization that supports health and education projects in Afghanistan.

Bifocal

This book is about boys from various social groups who happened to be at the same school. It is a good, smooth read that keeps the reader interested until the end. The characters are real and well developed. Without being preachy the author does a good job educating the readers about racial and religious disparities. It's a recommended reading for all teens.
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<tr>
<th>Nujood Ali</th>
<th>I Am Nujood, Age 10 and Divorced</th>
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<td>Forced by her father to marry a man three times her age, young Nujood Ali was sent away from her parents and beloved sisters and made to live with her husband and his family in an isolated village in rural Yemen. There she suffered daily from physical and emotional abuse by her mother-in-law and nightly at the rough hands of her spouse. Flouting his oath to wait to have sexual relations with Nujood until she was no longer a child, he took her virginity on their wedding night. She was only ten years old.</td>
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<td>Unable to endure the pain and distress any longer, Nujood fled—not for home, but to the courthouse of the capital, paying for a taxi ride with a few precious coins of bread money. When a renowned Yemeni lawyer heard about the young victim, she took on Nujood’s case and fought the archaic system in a country where almost half the girls are married while still under the legal age. Since their unprecedented victory in April 2008.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Eric Walters</th>
<th>We all fall Down</th>
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<td>Today is September 10, 2001, and Will, a grade nine student, is spending the day at his father’s workplace tomorrow. As part of a school assignment, all the students in his class will be going to their parents tomorrow, but Will isn’t excited about it—he’d rather sleep in and do nothing with his friends. His father doesn’t even have an exciting job like his best friend James’s father who is a fireman. Will’s dad works for an international trading company and has to wake up early every morning to commute to his office on the eighty-fifth floor in the south building of the World Trade Center in Manhattan. Will doesn’t see his father very often because of the hours he puts in at the office. He doubts that his dad will bother making time for him tomorrow even when they are supposed to be spending the day together.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Eric Walters</td>
<td>Alexandria of Africa</td>
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<td>For Alexandria Hyatt having a fabulous life is easy: she knows what she wants and she knows how to get it. Being glamorous and rich is simply what she was born to be. When Alexandria is arrested for shoplifting, having to drag herself into court to face a judge just seems like a major inconvenience. But Alexandria has been in trouble before--and this time she can’t find a way to scheme out of the consequences. Before she knows it, she’s on a plane headed to Kenya where she has been ordered to work for an international charity. Over 7,000 miles away from home with no hot water, no cell phone reception, no friends or family, Alexandria is confronted with a land as unfamiliar as it is unsettling. Over the course of her month in Africa, Alexandria will face a reality she could never have imagined, and will have to look inside herself to see if she has what it takes to confront it.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Hidier</th>
<th>Born Confused</th>
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<td>Dimple Lala doesn't know what to think. Her parents are from India, and she's spent her whole life resisting their traditions. Then suddenly she gets to high school and everything Indian is trendy. To make matters worse, her parents arrange for her to meet a &quot;suitable boy.&quot; Of course it doesn't go well -- until Dimple goes to a club and finds him spinning a magical web. Suddenly the suitable boy is suitable because of his sheer unsuitability. Complications ensue. This is a funny, thoughtful story about finding your heart, finding your culture, and finding your place in America.</td>
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<td><strong>Flake</strong></td>
<td><strong>Money Hungry</strong></td>
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<td>Thirteen-year-old Raspberry Hill is always scheming about ways to make money. She's starved for the green stuff, and will do just about anything legal to get it - wash cars, sell rotten candy, skip lunch, and clean houses. She is obsessed with making money, having money, smelling money, and touching money. Raspberry is determined that she and her momma will never be homeless again. When they are approved for a Section 8 move to a nice house in Pecan Landings, Raspberry thinks things are looking up. But after their apartment in the projects is robbed, and protest by the rich folks in Pecan Landings force them out of their new house, Raspberry must do everything in her power to keep her world from crumbling. Grades 7-9</td>
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<th><strong>You Don’t even know who I am</strong></th>
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<td>In 9 stories and 13 poems, Sharon G. Flake gives readers insight into the minds of a diverse group adolescent African American males. There’s Tow-Kaye, getting married at age 17 to love of his life, who’s pregnant. He knows it’s the right thing to do, but he’s scared to death. James writes in his diary about his twin brother’s terrible secret, which threatens to pull James down, too. Tyler explains what it’s like to be a player with the ladies. In a letter to his uncle, La’Ron confesses that he’s infected with HIV. Eric takes us on a tour of North Philly on the Fourth of July, when the heat could make a guy go crazy. Still, he loves his hood. These and other unforgettable characters come to life in this poignant, funny and often searing collection of urban male voices.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Flake</td>
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<td>Maleeka suffers every day from the taunts of the other kids in her class. If they’re not getting at her about her homemade clothes or her good grades, it’s about her dark, black skin. When a new teacher, whose face is blotched with a startling white patch, starts at their school, Maleeka can see there is bound to be trouble for her too. But the new teacher’s attitude surprises Maleeka. Miss Saunders loves the skin she’s in. Can Maleeka learn to do the same?</td>
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<th>Magoon</th>
<th>The Rock and the River</th>
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<td>In 1968 Chicago, it’s not easy for thirteen-year-old Sam to be the son of known civil rights activist Roland Childs. Especially when his older brother, Stick, starts keeping to himself. Then, one day, Sam finds something under Stick’s bed that changes everything: literature about the Black Panthers. Suddenly, nothing feels certain anymore. And when Dr. King is shot and killed, Sam’s father’s words are no longer enough to make him believe in change....This moving, coming-of-age story gracefully encompasses the scope of the struggle between the civil rights and black power movements through an intimate and relatable lens.</td>
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<th>Sherri L. Smith</th>
<th>Flygirl</th>
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<td>All Ida Mae Jones wants to do is fly. Her daddy was a pilot, and years after his death she feels closest to him when she’s in the air. But as a young black woman in 1940s Louisiana, she knows the sky is off limits to her, until America enters World War II, and the Army forms the WASPÑWomen Airforce Service Pilots. Ida has a chance to fulfill her dream if she’s willing to use her light skin to pass as a white girl. She wants to fly more than anything, but Ida soon learns that denying one’s self and family is a heavy burden, and ultimately it’s not what you do but who you are that’s most important.</td>
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<td>Rita Williams –Garcia</td>
<td>One Crazy Summer</td>
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<td><strong>Set during one of the most tumultuous years in recent American history, One Crazy Summer is the heartbreaking, funny tale of three girls who travel to Oakland, California, in 1968 in search of the mother who abandoned them. It's an unforgettable story told by a distinguished author of books for children and teens, Rita Williams-Garcia.</strong></td>
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<th>Alan Lawrence</th>
<th>The Hoopster</th>
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<td><em>Grade 8-10-Andre Anderson spends his summer playing basketball with his pals and working at a magazine, where he is assigned to write an article dealing with race. As an African American, the teen is reluctant to take on this subject as his first assignment, but he comes to think about it more deeply and writes an explosive piece. In fact, the article stirs such passions that a group of racists assault him, smashing his hand and sending him to the hospital. At the novel's end, Andre has recovered and is lauded for his courage and talent. At its best (especially in the first part), the novel captures the details of everyday life and the sometimes rough talk of teenagers. However, the second part becomes rather didactic and fuzzy. It would have helped, for example, to know more of the content of Andre's article and what made it so controversial. And it is doubtful that the thugs who attacked him would have been so stirred by something that appeared in what seems to be a rather sophisticated magazine—the written word doesn't have much influence on that type of guy. Finally, as the novel progresses, Andre becomes less of a well-rounded character and more of a cardboard &quot;hero.&quot; It all adds up to a story that, despite some good moments, never manages to take off.</em></td>
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<td>Levitin</td>
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<td>Fifteen-year-old Desta belongs to a small, isolated mountain community of Ethiopian Jews. She and her brother and sister leave their aunt and uncle and set out on the long and dangerous trip to freedom -- an airlift from the Sudan to Israel, the Promised Land. They travel barefoot, facing hunger, thirst and bandits.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Fleischman</th>
<th>Seedfolk</th>
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<td>A vacant lot, rat-infested and filled with garbage, looked like no place for a garden. Especially to a neighborhood of strangers where no one seems to care. Until one day, a young girl clears a small space and digs into the hard-packed soil to plant her precious bean seeds. Suddenly, the soil holds promise: To Curtis, who believes he can win back Lateesha's heart with a harvest of tomatoes; to Virgil's dad, who sees a fortune to be made from growing lettuce; and even to Maricela, sixteen and pregnant, wishing she were dead.</td>
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Thirteen very different voices -- old, young, Haitian, Hispanic, tough, haunted, and hopeful -- tell one amazing story about a garden that transforms a neighborhood.

-Great short read for ESL/Spec ed etc.
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<tr>
<th>Ji-Li Jiang</th>
<th>Red Scarf Girl</th>
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<td>Grade 5-9. This autobiography details the author’s experiences as a teenager during the Cultural Revolution. Though wanting to be devoted followers of Chairman Mao, Jiang and her family are subjected to many indignities because her grandfather was once a landlord. Memoirs of the period are usually larded with murders, suicides, mass brainwashing, cruel and unusual bullying, and injustices. Red Scarf Girl is no exception. Where Jiang scores over her comrades is in her lack of self-pity, her naive candor, and the vividness of her writing. The usual catalogue of atrocities is filtered through the sensibility of a young woman trying to comprehend the events going on around her. Readers watch her grow from a follower into a thoughtful person who privately questions the dictates of the powers that be. She witnesses neighbors being beaten to death, her best friend’s grandmother’s suicide, the systematic degradation of her father, and endless public humiliations. At one point, Jiang even enters a police station to change her name in a confused attempt to dissociate herself from her branded and maligned family. She makes it very clear that the atrocities were the inevitable result of the confusion and fanaticism manipulated by unscrupulous leaders for their own petty ends. Ultimately, her resigned philosophy attaches no blame: this is what happens when power is grossly abused. The writing style is lively and the events often have a heart-pounding quality about them. Red Scarf Girl will be appreciated as a page-turner and as excellent discussion material for social studies curricula.</td>
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<td>Ting-Xing Ye</td>
<td>Share the Sky</td>
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<td>Little Fei-fei loves kites. She lives in China with her grandfather, who makes the most beautiful kites. Then a letter arrives from North America -- the time has come for her to join her parents there. She is full of questions and doubts about her new life in a country far away. Will she and Grandpa even share the same sky? On her first day at her new school, she is excited to find a rainbow-kite hanging in her classroom. And best of all, the teacher asks her to help the other students make kites.</td>
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<tr>
<th>Paul Yee</th>
<th>What Happened this Summer</th>
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<td>This collection of short stories by Governor General's Award winning author Paul Yee takes readers into the lives of Chinese teens in Canada, who must deal with their cultural backgrounds as well as battle parents over schooling, careers and peer relationships. Like all teens, they grapple daily with issues around sexuality, religion and fitting in.</td>
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<th>Garland</th>
<th>Shadow of the Dragon</th>
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<td>Grade 7-12-Danny Vo is a typical American teenager, concerned about obtaining his driver's license, finding a job, and getting a date with blonde, beautiful Tiffany Marie. At home, however, he must take the role of the elder son in a Vietnamese family. Tension increases when his older cousin Sang Le comes to stay with them in Houston. A former prisoner in a Vietnamese re-education camp and then a refugee in Hong Kong, Sang Le is overwhelmed in his new homeland. Bad grades and his inability to get a job cause him to take up with a Vietnamese gang. Just as Danny thinks he has gotten his cousin away from its members, Sang Le is tragically beaten to death by a group of white supremacist skinheads, one of whom is Tiffany Marie's brother. Garland has written a coming-of-age novel with strong characters and a sensitive portrayal of a youth rooted in two cultures. She has also deftly woven in authentic details about Vietnamese lore and customs and shown how they are adapted in a new setting.</td>
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<td>Mochizuki</td>
<td>Beacon Hill Boys</td>
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<td><strong>Like other Japanese American families in the Beacon Hill area of Seattle, 16-year-old Dan Inagaki's parents expect him to be an example of the &quot;model minority.&quot; But unlike Dan's older brother, with his 4.0 GPA and Ivy League scholarship, Dan is tired of being called &quot;Oriental&quot; by his teachers, and sick of feeling invisible; Dan's growing self-hatred threatens his struggle to claim an identity. Sharing his anger and confusion are his best friends, Jerry Ito, Eddie Kanagae, and Frank Ishimoto, and together these Beacon Hill Boys fall into a spiral of rebellion that is all too all-American.</strong></td>
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<th>Teen Issues</th>
<th>Hate List</th>
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<td><strong>Brown</strong></td>
<td><strong>Hate List</strong></td>
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<td>Five months ago, Valerie Leftman's boyfriend, Nick, opened fire on their school cafeteria. Shot trying to stop him, Valerie inadvertently saved the life of a classmate, but was implicated in the shootings because of the list she helped create. A list of people and things she and Nick hated. The list he used to pick his targets.**</td>
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Now, after a summer of seclusion, Val is forced to confront her guilt as she returns to school to complete her senior year. Haunted by the memory of the boyfriend she still loves and navigating rocky relationships with her family, former friends and the girl whose life she saved, Val must come to grips with the tragedy that took place and her role in it, in order to make amends and move on with her life.
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<th>Van Diepen</th>
<th>Snitch</th>
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<td>Lines are clearly marked at South Bay High School. It's mixed territory for the Crips and the Bloods, which means the drama never stops. Julia DiVino wants none of it. No colors, no C-Walks -- it's just not her thing. But when Eric Valienté jumps into her life, everything changes. Lines are redrawn. And then they're crossed.</td>
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<td>Allison van Diepen is a teacher in Ottawa, Canada. She is the author of <em>Street Pharm</em>, <em>Snitch</em>, and <em>Raven</em></td>
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<th>Eric Walters</th>
<th><em>Alexandria of Africa</em></th>
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<td>For Alexandria Hyatt having a fabulous life is easy: she knows what she wants and she knows how to get it. Being glamorous and rich is simply what she was born to be. When Alexandria is arrested for shoplifting, having to drag herself into court to face a judge just seems like a major inconvenience. But Alexandria has been in trouble before--and this time she can’t find a way to scheme out of the consequences. Before she knows it, she’s on a plane headed to Kenya where she has been ordered to work for an international charity.</td>
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<td>Over 7,000 miles away from home with no hot water, no cell phone reception, no friends or family, Alexandria is confronted with a land as unfamiliar as it is unsettling. Over the course of her month in Africa, Alexandria will face a reality she could never have imagined, and will have to look inside herself to see if she has what it takes to confront it.</td>
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<td>Natasha Friend</td>
<td><strong>Perfect</strong></td>
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<td>Grade 6-9—Eighth-grader Isabelle Lee describes her not-so-perfect life. She is dealing with her father’s death and her grieving mother by bingeing and purging. On the surface, everything is fine until Isabelle's younger sister catches her in the bathroom making herself throw up. &quot;Eating Disorder and Body Image Therapy Group&quot; is the consequence. Isabelle is amazed when she discovers that the most popular girl in her grade is also at the first session. Through encounters in Group and at school, she begins to realize that all is not fine, even for seemingly perfect people. As the book ends, she is not completely cured but is beginning to learn how to deal with her grief in a more positive way by journaling and talking about her feelings. Friend combines believable characters and real-life situations into a fine novel that addresses common adolescent issues. Teenagers, even reluctant readers, will find the outcome satisfying.</td>
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<th>Anonymous</th>
<th><strong>Go ask Alice</strong></th>
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<td>The torture and hell of adolescence has rarely been captured as clearly as it is in this classic diary by an anonymous, addicted teen. Lonely, awkward, and under extreme pressure from her &quot;perfect&quot; parents, &quot;Anonymous&quot; swings madly between optimism and despair. When one of her new friends spikes her drink with LSD, this diarist begins a frightening journey into darkness. The drugs take the edge off her loneliness and self-hate, but they also turn her life into a nightmare of exalting highs and excruciating lows. Although there is still some question as to whether this diary is real or fictional, there is no question that it has made a profound impact on millions of readers during the more than 25 years it has been in print. Despite a few dated references to hippies and some expired slang, Go Ask Alice still offers a jolting chronicle of a teenager's life spinning out of control.</td>
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<td>Jerusha Clark</td>
<td>Inside a Cutter's Mind</td>
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<td>Cutting is a practice that has crossed age and gender lines. Its not just depressed teens who inflict injury on themselves--it can be anyone dealing with overwhelming feelings.</td>
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<td>This book explores the complex issue of cutting without offering any pat or simple fixes. It examines the psychology of, the feelings of anger and despair behind it, and the counseling resources that can help.</td>
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<th>Patricia Mc Cormic</th>
<th>Cut</th>
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<td>&quot;A tingle arced across my scalp. The floor tipped up at me and my body spiraled away. Then I was on the ceiling looking down, waiting to see what would happen next.&quot; Callie cuts herself. Never too deep, never enough to die. But enough to feel the pain. Enough to feel the scream inside. Now she's at Sea Pines, a &quot;residential treatment facility&quot; filled with girls struggling with problems of their own. Callie doesn't want to have anything to do with them. She doesn't want to have anything to do with anyone. She won't even speak. But Callie can only stay silent for so long...</td>
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Saddened and puzzled by the suicide of a teenage neighbor, a small boy remembers the teenager playing basketball alone, feeding pigeons, and caring for a stray dog--and is sorry he did not try to make friends with him.

Grade 4 Up-In a bleak, first-person narration, a young boy tells about a friendless teenager whom he has watched from a distance. He admires the young man for his skill at basketball and his kindness to animals. The boy sees him as an outsider, ostracized by his peers. He comes close to reaching out to speak to him, but never does. One night, he is wakened by the sound of an ambulance and the sight of neighbors, "looking at you, lying there on the ground, so still," and shaking their heads in sorrow and disbelief. Greenberg's oil paintings are purposely somber in tone, moving from dark to light as the narrator gains insight and, in the only note of hope in a relentlessly heavy book, is finally pictured as part of a group playing basketball. Many of the illustrations have an unfinished look, as devoid of detail as is the narrator's knowledge of the boy he watches. It is never clearly stated, except in the CIP data, that the death is a suicide, but it is likely that young people will infer that he jumped from the roof of his city apartment building. The narrator himself lives in a sad world of resignation to his father's neglect, of loneliness as an outsider in a new neighborhood, and of regret over the lost opportunity to befriend the young man who so clearly mirrors his own isolation. Indeed, readers never know his name. This important book, which properly raises more questions than it answers, will be best used by adults with young people to evoke discussion and hopefully bring an awareness and understanding of those who are excluded by their peers.
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<th>Kashmira Sheth</th>
<th>Blue Jasmine</th>
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<td>Grade 4-7–When 12-year-old Seema moves with her parents and younger sister from India to Iowa City, she must leave her grandparents, extended family, and, most distressingly, her cousin Raju, who has been like a brother to her. Seema describes her adjustment to the newness of the U.S.–the food, clothing, weather, education–and her feelings: &quot;I was always the outsider listening in....&quot; Although she makes friends, she also encounters surprising hostility from another newcomer to her class, and ultimately learns the coping skills necessary to deal with this troubled girl. The writing is infused with evocative descriptions: &quot;...the few leaves left clinging to the trees made them look like beggars in ragged clothes&quot; or &quot;the days... stretched out like a sari.&quot; Sheth uses Seema's letters to India and a classroom assignment to transmit significant cultural information, but at times this approach takes on a didactic and unnatural air. Still, the narrative advances steadily, with many opportunities for insights into the experience of this new immigrant, plus enough tension introduced through the bully to keep readers interested.</td>
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<td><strong>Cynthia Lord</strong></td>
<td><strong>Rules</strong></td>
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<td>Grade 4-7-Twelve-year-old Catherine has conflicting feelings about her younger brother, David, who is autistic. While she loves him, she is also embarrassed by his behavior and feels neglected by their parents. In an effort to keep life on an even keel, Catherine creates rules for him (It's okay to hug Mom but not the clerk at the video store). Each chapter title is also a rule, and lots more are interspersed throughout the book. When Kristi moves in next door, Catherine hopes that the girl will become a friend, but is anxious about her reaction to David. Then Catherine meets and befriends Jason, a nonverbal paraplegic who uses a book of pictures to communicate, she begins to understand that normal is difficult, and perhaps unnecessary, to define. Rules of behavior are less important than acceptance of others. Catherine is an endearing narrator who tells her story with both humor and heartbreak. Her love for her brother is as real as are her frustrations with him. Lord has candidly captured the delicate dynamics in a family that revolves around a child's disability. Set in coastal Maine, this sensitive story is about being different, feeling different, and finding acceptance. A lovely, warm read, and a great discussion starter.</td>
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<th><strong>Erskine</strong></th>
<th><strong>Mockingbird</strong></th>
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<td>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.</td>
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<td><strong>Sharon M. Draper</strong></td>
<td><strong>Out of my Mind</strong></td>
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<td>Born with cerebral palsy, Melody, 10, has never spoken a word. She is a brilliant fifth grader trapped in an uncontrollable body. Her world is enhanced by insight and intellect, but gypped by physical limitations and misunderstandings. She will never sing or dance, talk on the phone, or whisper secrets to her friends. She’s not complaining, though; she’s planning and fighting the odds. In her court are family, good neighbors, and an attentive student teacher. Pitted against her is the “normal” world: schools with limited resources, cliquish girls, superficial assumptions, and her own disability. Melody’s life is tragically complicated. She is mainly placed in the special-ed classroom where education means being babysat in a room with replayed cartoons and nursery tunes. Her supportive family sets her up with a computer. She learns the strength of thumbs as she taps on a special keyboard that finally lets her “talk.” When she is transitioned into the regular classroom, Melody’s undeniable contribution enables her class to make it to the national quiz team finals. Then something happens that causes her to miss the finals, and she is devastated by her classmates’ actions. Kids will benefit from being introduced to Melody and her gutsy, candid, and compelling story. It speaks volumes and reveals the quiet strength and fortitude it takes to overcome disabilities and the misconceptions that go with them.</td>
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