

# Realistic Books for Young Adults

Listed below are realistic books for young adults. These books vary in the difficulty of both the text and the content. Not all books are appropriate for all readers. (Annotations from Library of Congress).

Anderson, Laurie Halse. **Catalyst**. Eighteen-year-old Kate finds herself losing control in her senior year as she faces difficult neighbors, the possibility that she may not be accepted by the college of her choice, and an unexpected death.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. **Speak**. A traumatic event near the end of the summer has a devastating effect on Melinda's freshman year in high school.

Anderson, Laurie Halse. **Wintergirls**. Eighteen-year-old Lia comes to terms with her best friend's death from anorexia as she struggles with the same disorder.

Antle, Nancy. **Lost in the War**. Twelve-year-old Lisa Grey struggles to cope with a mother whose traumatic experiences as a nurse in Vietnam during the war are still haunting her.

Banks, Kate. **Walk Softly, Rachel**. When fourteen-year-old Rachel reads the journal of her brother, who died when she was seven, she learns secrets that help her understand her parents and herself.

Bauer, Joan. **Hope was Here**. When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor.

Beard, Philip. **Dear Zoe**. Tess DeNunzio tries to deal with the death of her younger sister, Zoe, by writing her a letter, as she moves from her mother and stepfather's family to live with her real father, and begins a romance with a boy who lives next door.

Bechard, Margaret. **Hanging on to Max**. When his girlfriend decides to give their baby away, seventeen-year-old Sam is determined to keep him and raise him alone.

Bloor, Edward. **Tangerine**. Twelve-year-old Paul, who lives in the shadow of his football hero brother Erik, fights for the right to play soccer despite his near blindness and slowly begins to remember the incident that damaged his eyesight.

Braff, Joshua. **The Unthinkable Thoughts of Jacob Green**. Jacob Green, a young Jewish boy growing up in 1970s suburban New Jersey, struggles to deal with his fear of disappointing and yearning to escape the demands and expectations of his tyrannical and narcissistic father, Abram.

Brashares, Ann. **The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants**. After trying on a pair of jeans that fit each girl perfectly, the four girls decide to form a sisterhood for the summer.

Brooks, Kevin. **Candy**. After falling in love with Candy, a drug addict, Joe becomes desperate as he tries to keep his dream of working as a musician alive while trying to save Candy from her self-destructive ways.

Brooks, Kevin. **Lucas**. On an isolated English island, fifteen-year-old Caitlin McCann makes the painful journey from adolescence to adulthood through her experiences with a mysterious boy, whose presence has an unsettling effect on the island's inhabitants.

Brooks, Martha. **True Confessions of a Heartless Girl**. A confused seventeen-year-old girl, a single mother and her young son, two elderly women, and a sad and lonely man, with their own individual tragedies to bear, come together in a small Manitoba town and find a way to a better future.

Burgess, Melvin. **Smack**. After running away from their troubled homes, two English teenagers move in with a group of squatters in the port city of Bristol and try to find ways to support their growing addiction to heroin.

Cabot, Meg. **All-American Girl**. A sophomore girl stops a presidential assassination attempt, is appointed Teen Ambassador to the United Nations, and catches the eye of the very cute First Son.

Caletti, Deb. **Honey, Baby, Sweetheart**. In the summer of her junior year, sixteen-year-old Ruby McQueen and her mother set out on a journey to reunite an elderly woman with her long-lost love and in the process learn about "the real ties that bind" people to one another.

Caletti, Deb. **The Six Rules of Maybe**. Obsessed with solving people's problems, Scarlet finds herself often pushing her own needs off to the side. When her older sister shows up married and pregnant, however, Scarlet soon finds herself causing a problem, rather than solving it, when she falls in love with her sister's husband.

Castellucci, Cecil. **Boy Proof**. Feeling alienated from everyone, Los Angeles high school senior Victoria Denton hides behind the identity of a favorite movie character until a new boy at school helps her realize that there is more to life than just the movies.

Chbosky, Stephen. **The Perks of Being a Wallflower**. A series of letters to an unknown correspondent reveals the coming-of-age trials of a high-schooler named Charlie.

Coburn, Jake. **Lovesick**. After an accident seems to end his college and athletic dreams, Ted is offered a second chance at school if he agrees to spy on a classmate and help her father monitor her bulimia.

Coburn, Jake. **Prep**. One-time tag-artist, Nick tries to come to terms with the death of a friend, to protect the brother of his would-be girlfriend, to escape the violence of wealthy New York City prep school hoods, and to figure out who he is.

Cohn, Rachel. **Gingerbread**. After being expelled from boarding school, Cyd Charisse's problems with her mother escalate after Cyd falls in love with a sensitive surfer and is sent from San Francisco to New York City to spend time with her biological father.

Coman, Carolyn. **Many Stones**. After her sister Laura is murdered in South Africa, Berry and her estranged father travel there to participate in the dedication of a memorial in her name.

Coman, Carolyn. **What Jamie Saw**. Having fled to a family friend's hillside trailer after his mother's boyfriend tried to throw his baby sister against a wall, nine-year-old Jamie finds himself living an existence full of uncertainty and fear.

Cormier, Robert. ***The Rag and Bone Shop***. Trent, an ace interrogator from Vermont, works to procure a confession from an introverted twelve-year-old accused of murdering his seven-year-old friend in Monument, Massachusetts.

Cox, Elizabeth. ***The Slow Moon***. When Sophie, a precocious high school sophomore, is raped in the woods, a crime that shocks her into a state of amnesia, her boyfriend, Crow, is tried for a crime he did not commit.

Creech, Sharon. ***Heartbeat***. Twelve-year-old Annie ponders the many rhythms of life the year that her mother becomes pregnant, her grandfather begins faltering, and her best friend (and running partner) becomes distant.

Creech, Sharon. ***Walk Two Moons***. After her mother leaves home suddenly, thirteen-year-old Sal and her grandparents take a car trip retracing her mother's route. Along the way, Sal recounts the story of her friend Phoebe, whose mother also left.

Crutcher, Chris. ***Chinese Handcuffs***. Still troubled by his older brother's violent suicide, eighteen-year-old Dillon becomes deeply involved in the terrible secret of his friend Jennifer, who feels she can tell no one what her stepfather is doing to her.

Crutcher, Chris. ***Whale Talk***. Intellectually and athletically gifted, TJ, a multiracial, adopted teenager, shuns organized sports and the gung-ho athletes at his high school until he agrees to form a swimming team and recruits some of the school's less popular students.

Dessen, Sarah. ***Just Listen***. Suddenly unpopular sixteen-year-old Annabel finds an ally in classmate Owen, whose honesty and passion for music help her to face what really happened at the end-of-the-year party that changed her life.

Dessen, Sarah. ***Someone Like You***. Halley's junior year of high school includes the death of her best friend Scarlett's boyfriend, the discovery that Scarlett is pregnant, and Halley's own first serious relationship.

Dole, Mayra Lazara. ***Down to the bone***. Laura is thrown out of her house when her mother discovers she is a lesbian, but after trying to change her heart and hide from the truth, Laura finally comes to terms with who she is and learns to love and respect herself.

Dorfman, Joaquin. ***Playing it Cool***. While tracking down the long-lost father of his best friend Jeremy, popular eighteen-year-old Sebastian calls on a network of favors and debts and begins to question his way of life.

Edwards, Kim. ***The Memory Keeper's Daughter***. In a tale spanning twenty-five years, a doctor delivers his newborn twins during a snowstorm and, rashly deciding to protect his wife from their baby daughter's affliction with Down Syndrome, turns her over to a nurse, who secretly raises the child.

Efaw, Amy. ***After***. In complete denial that she is pregnant, straight-A student and star athlete Devon Davenport leaves her baby in the trash to die, and after the baby is discovered, Devon is accused of attempted murder.

Ferris, Jean. ***Bad***. In an attempt to please her friends, sixteen-year-old Dallas goes along with their plan to rob a convenience store and when her father refuses to allow her to come home, she is sentenced to six months in the Girls' Rehabilitation Center.

Ferris, Jean. ***Eight Seconds***. Eighteen-year-old John must confront his own sexuality when he goes to rodeo school and finds himself strangely attracted to an older boy who is smart, tough, complicated, gorgeous, and gay.

Flake, Sharon. ***Bang!*** A teenage boy must face the harsh realities of inner city life, a disintegrating family, and destructive temptations as he struggles to find his identity as a young man.

Fleischman, Paul. ***Whirligig***. While traveling to each corner of the country to build a whirligig in memory of the girl whose death he causes, sixteen-year-old Brian finds forgiveness and atonement.

Frank, E.R. ***Friction***. When a new girl at the private school Alex attends starts rumors about Alex's favorite teacher, Alex and her eighth-grade classmates are not sure how to act around him or with each other.

Frank, E.R. ***Wrecked***. After a car accident seriously injures her best friend and kills her brother's girlfriend, sixteen-year-old Anna tries to cope with her guilt and grief, while learning some truths about her family and herself.

Freymann-Weyr, Garret. ***My Heartbeat***. As she tries to understand the closeness between her older brother and his best friend, fourteen-year-old Ellen finds her relationship with each of them changing.

Freymann-Weyr, Garret. ***Stay with Me***. When her sister kills herself, sixteen-year-old Leila goes looking for a reason and, instead, discovers great love, her family's true history, and what her own place in it is.

Frost, Helen. ***Keesha's House***. Seven teens facing such problems as pregnancy, closeted homosexuality, and abuse each describe in poetic forms what caused them to leave home and where they found home again.

Gantos, Jack. ***Love Curse of the Rumbaughs***. A young woman named Ivy, who made a shocking discovery in her small town when she was seven years old and learned a secret nine years later, questions whether she has inherited the Rumbaugh curse of having excessive love for one's mother.

Garden, Nancy. ***Endgame***. Fifteen-year-old Gray Wilton, bullied at school and ridiculed by an unfeeling father for preferring drums to hunting, goes on a shooting rampage at his high school.

Giff, Patricia Reilly. ***Pictures of Hollis Woods***. A troublesome twelve-year-old orphan, staying with an elderly artist who needs her, remembers the only other time she was happy in a foster home, with a family that truly seemed to care about her.

Giles, Gail. ***Right Behind You***. After spending over four years in a mental institution for murdering a friend in Alaska, fourteen-year-old Kip begins a completely new life in Indiana with his father and stepmother under a different name but has trouble fitting in.

Giles, Gail. ***Shattering Glass***. When Rob, the charismatic leader of the senior class, turns the school nerd into Prince Charming, his actions lead to unexpected violence.

Green, John. ***An Abundance of Katherines***. Having been dumped for the nineteenth time by a girl named Katherine, recent high school graduate Colin sets off on a road trip with his best friend to find some new direction in life while also trying to create a mathematical formula to explain his relationships.

Green, John. **Looking for Alaska**. Sixteen-year-old Miles' first year at Culver Creek Preparatory School in Alabama includes good friends and great pranks, but is defined by the search for answers about life and death after a fatal car crash.

Griffin, Paul. **The Orange Houses**. Tamika, a fifteen-year-old hearing-impaired girl, Jimmi, an eighteen-year-old veteran who stopped taking his antipsychotic medication, and sixteen-year-old Fatima, an illegal immigrant from Africa, meet and connect in their Bronx, New York, neighborhood, with devastating results.

Hartlinger, Brent. **Geography Club**. A group of gay and lesbian teenagers finds mutual support when they form the "Geography Club" at their high school.

Hautman, Pete. **Godless**. When sixteen-year-old Jason Bock and his friends create their own religion to worship the town's water tower, what started out as a joke begins to take on a power of its own.

Hautman, Pete. **Invisible**. Doug and Andy are unlikely best friends--one a loner obsessed by his model trains, the other a popular student involved in football and theater--who grew up together and share a bond that nothing can sever.

Hautman, Pete. **Sweetblood**. After a lifetime of being a model student, sixteen-year-old Lucy Szabo is suddenly in trouble at school, at home, with the "proto-vampires" she has met online and in person, and most of all with her uncontrolled diabetes.

Hiaasen, Carl. **Hoot**. Roy, who is new to his small Florida community, becomes involved in another boy's attempt to save a colony of burrowing owls from a proposed construction site.

Hughes, Mark Peter. **I am the Wallpaper**. Thirteen-year-old Floey Packer, jealous of her attractive and popular older sister, shares her home with two younger cousins and experiences a summer vacation filled with embarrassing events, with herself as the star.

Jacobson, Jennifer Richard. **Stained**. In Weaver Falls, New Hampshire, in 1975, seventeen-year-old Jocelyn looks for answers when her lifelong neighbor and friend, Gabe, turns up missing and she learns that, while her boyfriend has been telling everything to a priest, Gabe has been keeping terrible secrets.

Jenkins, A.M. **Damage**. Seventeen-year-old football hero Austin, trying to understand the inexplicable depression that has drained his interest in life, thinks that he has found relief in a girl who seems very special.

Jenkins, A.M. **Out of Order**. Sophomore Colt Trammel loves baseball and his girlfriend Grace, but he hates the rest of high school and maintains a tough facade to hide his feelings of inferiority.

Johnson, Angela. **Bird**. Devastated by the loss of a second father, thirteen-year-old Bird follows her stepfather from Cleveland to Alabama in hopes of convincing him to come home, and along the way helps two boys cope with their difficulties.

Jones, Patrick. **Things Change**. Sixteen-year-old Johanna, one of the best students in her class, develops a passionate attachment for troubled seventeen-year-old Paul and finds her plans for the future changing in unexpected ways.

Kass, Prina Moed. **Real Time**. Sixteen-year-old Tomas Wanninger persuades his mother to let him leave Germany to volunteer at a kibbutz in Israel, where he experiences a violent political attack and finds answers about his own past.

Klass, David. **Dark Angel**. When his older brother is released from prison, seventeen-year-old Jeff's family secret is revealed, causing upheaval in his home, school, and love life.

Koertge, Ron. **Margaux with an X**. Margaux, known as a "tough chick" at her Los Angeles high school, makes a connection with Danny, who, like her, struggles with the emotional impact of family violence and abuse.

Korman, Gordon. **Jake, Reinvented**. Rick becomes friends with the popular new boy, Jake Garrett, football player and host of superlative parties, and in the process discovers the true nature of his schoolmates and uncovers the mystery of Jake's past.

LaRochelle, David. **Absolutely, Positively Not**. Chronicles a teenage boy's humorous attempts to fit in at his Minnesota high school by becoming a macho, girl-loving, "Playboy" pinup-displaying heterosexual.

Lord, Cynthia. **Rules**. Frustrated at life with an autistic brother, twelve-year-old Catherine longs for a normal existence, but her world is further complicated by a friendship with a young paraplegic.

Lubar, David. **Sleeping Freshmen Never Lie**. While navigating his first year of high school and awaiting the birth of his new baby brother, Scott loses old friends and gains some unlikely new ones as he hones his skills as a writer.

Lynch, Chris. **Freewill**. A teenager trying to recover from the tragic death of his father and stepmother believes himself to be responsible for the rash of teen suicides occurring in his town.

Lynch, Chris. **Inexcusable**. High school senior and football player Keir sets out to enjoy himself on graduation night, but when he attempts to comfort a friend whose date has left her stranded, things go terribly wrong.

MacCullough, Carolyn. **Stealing Henry**. The experiences of high-schooler Savannah, following her decision to take her eight-year-old half brother from his abusive father and their oblivious mother, are interspersed with the earlier story of her mother, Alice, as she meets Savannah's father and unexpectedly becomes pregnant.

Mack, Tracy. **Birdland**. Fourteen-year-old Jed spends Christmas break filming a documentary about his East Village, New York City, neighborhood, where he is continually reminded of his older brother, Zeke, a promising poet who died the year before.

Mackler, Carolyn. **The Earth, My Butt, and Other Big, Round Things**. Feeling like she does not fit in with the other members of her family, who are all thin, brilliant, and good-looking, fifteen-year-old Virginia tries to deal with her self-image, her first physical relationship, and her disillusionment with some of the people closest to her.

McCormick, Patricia. **My Brother's Keeper**. Thirteen-year-old Toby, a prematurely gray-haired Pittsburgh Pirates fan and baseball card collector, tries to cope with his brother's drug use, his father's absence, and his mother dating Stanley the Food King.

Morgenroth, Kate. **Jude**. Still reeling from his drug-dealing father's murder, moving in with the wealthy mother he never knew, and transferring to a private school, fifteen-year-old Jude is tricked into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.

Murray, Jaye. **Bottled Up**. A high school boy comes to terms with his drug addiction, life with an alcoholic father, and a younger brother who looks up to him.

Na, An. **Wait for Me**. Mina yearns to find her own path in life but working at the family business, taking care of her little sister, and dealing with her mother's expectations are as stifling as the southern California heat, until she falls in love with a man who offers a way out.

Paterson, Katherine. **Jacob Have I Loved**. Feeling deprived all her life of schooling, friends, mother, and even her name by her twin sister, Louise finally begins to find her identity.

Paterson, Katherine. **The Same Stuff as Stars**. When Angel's self-absorbed mother leaves her and her younger brother with their poor great-grandmother, the eleven-year-old girl worries not only about her mother and brother, her imprisoned father, the frail old woman, but also about a mysterious man who begins sharing with her the wonder of the stars.

Patron, Susan. **The Higher Power of Lucky**. Fearing that her legal guardian plans to abandon her to return to France, ten-year-old aspiring scientist Lucky Trimble determines to run away while also continuing to seek the Higher Power that will bring stability to her life.

Perkins, Lynne Rae. **All Alone in the Universe**. Debbie is dismayed when her best friend Maureen starts spending time with ordinary, boring Glenna.

Picoult, Jodi. **Handle with Care**. Struggling to care for their daughter Willow, who was born with brittle bone disease, Charlotte and Sean O'Keefe add additional strain to their overburdened family life when they file a lawsuit against Charlotte's obstetrician.

Picoult, Jodi. **My Sister's Keeper**. Conceived to provide a bone marrow match for her leukemia-stricken sister, teenage Kate begins to question her moral obligations in light of countless medical procedures and decides to fight for the right to make decisions about her own body.

Picoult, Jodi. **Nineteen Minutes**. In the aftermath of a small-town school shooting, lawyer Jordan McAfee finds himself defending a youth who desperately needs someone on his side, while detective Patrick Ducharme works with a primary witness of the daughter of the judge assigned to the case.

Picoult, Jodi. **The Tenth Circle**. When the ghost of his murdered fourteen-year-old daughter identifies her boyfriend as her killer, an overprotective father with a secret past decides to take the law into his own hands, a choice that takes him into the wilds of the Alaskan bush.

Rapp, Adam. **33 Snowfish**. A homeless boy, running from the police with a fifteen-year-old, drug-addicted prostitute, her boyfriend who just killed his own parents, and a baby, gets the chance to make a better life for himself.

Reinhardt, Diana. **A Brief Chapter in my Impossible Life**. Sixteen-year-old atheist Simone Turner-Bloom's life changes in unexpected ways when her parents convince her to make contact with her biological mother, an agnostic from a Jewish family who is losing her battle with cancer.

Ryan, P.E. ***Saints of Augustine***. In St. Augustine, Florida, Charlie Perrin and Sam Findley, now both sixteen, realize that their friendship is the only thing that will keep them afloat when each of their worlds is turned upside down through death, divorce, and the out-of-control direction of their lives.

Sanchez, Alex. ***Bait***. Diego keeps getting into trouble because of his explosive temper until he finally finds a probation officer who helps him get to the root of his anger so that he can stop running from his past.

Scott, Elizabeth. ***Living Dead Girl***. After being abducted when she was ten and abused for five years by her kidnapper, Ray, Alice's only hope of freedom is in death, but her only way to achieve such an escape is to help Ray find the next girl for his collection.

Shaw, Susan. ***Safe***. When thirteen-year-old Tracy, whose mother died when she was three years old, is raped and beaten on the last day of school, all her feelings of security disappear and she does not know how to cope with the fear and dread that engulf her.

Sones, Sonya. ***What My Mother Doesn't Know***. Sophie describes her relationships with a series of boys as she searches for Mr. Right.

Sonnenblick, Jordan. ***Drums, Girls, and Dangerous Pie***. When his younger brother is diagnosed with leukemia, thirteen-year-old Steven tries to deal with his complicated emotions, his school life, and his desire to support his family.

Sonnenblick, Jordan. ***Notes from a Midnight Driver***. After being assigned to perform community service at a nursing home, sixteen-year-old Alex befriends a cantankerous old man who has some lessons to impart about jazz guitar playing, love, and forgiveness.

Spinelli, Jerry. ***Stargirl***. In this story about the perils of popularity, the courage of nonconformity, and the thrill of first love, an eccentric student named Stargirl changes Mica High School forever.

Strasser, Todd. ***Give a Boy a Gun***. Gary and Brendan hold their classmates hostage at a dance with rifles stolen from a neighbor.

Tharp, Tim. ***The Spectacular Now***. In the last months of high school, eighteen-year-old Sutter Keely lives in the present, staying drunk or high most of the time, but that could change when he starts working to boost the self-confidence of a classmate, Aimee.

Tolan, Stephanie. ***Surviving the Applewhites***. Jake, a budding juvenile delinquent, is sent for home schooling to the arty and eccentric Applewhite family's Creative Academy, where he discovers talents and interests he never knew he had.

Torres, Laura. ***Crossing Montana***. While looking for her grandfather who is missing, teenaged Callie examines her father's longtime absence and its damaging effects on her family.

Vizzini, Ned. ***It's Kind of a Funny Story***. A humorous account of a New York City teenager's battle with depression and his time spent in a psychiatric hospital.

Voight, Cynthia. ***A Solitary Blue***. Jeff's mother, who deserted the family years before, reenters his life and widens the gap between Jeff and his father, a gap that only truth, love, and friendship can heal.

Volponi, Paul. **Rooftop**. Still reeling from seeing police shoot his unarmed cousin to death on the roof of a New York City housing project, seventeen-year-old Clay is dragged into the whirlwind of political manipulation that follows.

Warman, Jessica. **Breathless**. At boarding school, Katie tries to focus on swimming and becoming popular instead of the painful memories of her institutionalized schizophrenic older brother.

Werlin, Nancy. **Rules of Survival**. Seventeen-year-old Matthew recounts his attempts, starting at a young age, to free himself and his sisters from the grip of their emotionally and physically abusive mother.

Wittlinger, Ellen. **Hard Love**. After starting to publish a 'zine in which he writes his secret feelings about his lonely life and his parents' divorce, sixteen-year-old John meets an unusual girl and begins to develop a healthier personality.

Wittlinger, Ellen. **Razzle**. When his retired parents buy a group of tourist cabins on Cape Cod, fifteen-year-old Kenyon Baker's days are filled with repair work until he becomes friends with an eccentric girl and makes her the subject of a series of photographs.

Wittlinger, Ellen. **Sandpiper**. When The Walker, a mysterious boy who walks constantly, intervenes in an argument between Sandpiper and a boy she used to see, their lives become entwined in ways that change them both.

Wolff, Virginia Euwer. **Make Lemonade**. In order to earn money for college, fourteen-year-old LaVaughn babysits for a teenage mother.

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Hush**. Twelve-year-old Toswiah finds her life changed when her family enters the witness protection program.

Zarr, Sara. **Story of a Girl**. In the three years since her father caught her in the back seat of a car with an older boy, sixteen-year-old Deanna's life at home and school has been a nightmare, but while dreaming of escaping with her brother and his family, she discovers the power of forgiveness.

List compiled by Diane Linenbroker

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