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Suggested Reading for Teens



A Very Large Expanse of Sea **by Tahereh Mafi**

Mafi tackles the life of an American Muslim teenager in the wake of 9/11 in this visceral, honest novel. Jaded and cynical in the face of humanity's repeated cruelty at the sight of her hijab, Shirin only plans to get through high school as quickly as she can and let no one past her guarded exterior. It works until she meets

Ocean James, who sees more than just her headscarf and is charmingly persistent about learning who she is, from her love of music to her burgeoning skills on the break dancing team her brother starts. Eventually, the two enter into a tentative relationship. No matter how much Shirin had anticipated the backlash, she is unprepared for the events that unfold when the community finds out about the two of them.

A Whole Song and Dance by Sarvenaz Tash

A freshman at NYU's Tisch School of the Arts, Nasrin is seemingly living her dream, except her parents think she is attending business school and it gets harder and harder to keep lying to them, especially after they surprise her in New York.

All American Boys by Jason and Kiely, Brendan Reynolds

When sixteen-year-old Rashad is mistakenly accused of stealing, classmate Quinn witnesses his brutal beating at the hands of a police officer who happens to be the older brother of his best friend. Told through Rashad and Quinn's alternating viewpoints.

Brotherhood by Anne Westrick

The Civil War is over and Richmond, Virginia, is occupied by Yankee soldiers. A secret society of men and boys has begun meeting with the stated mission of protecting Confederate widows. Fourteen-year-old Shadrach Weaver follows his older brother to a gathering and ends up being initiated into the Ku Klux Klan. Shad likes the feeling of brotherhood the group provides. On an errand for his family's tailor shop to the house of a local teacher, Shad, who suffers from dyslexia, makes arrangements to trade his sewing skills for reading lessons. He is surprised when the teacher arranges for him to work with African Americans; he knows he has to keep this secret, but it's not long before the existence of the school is discovered. Shad's brother, a loyal KKK member, becomes involved in a plot to bring the school, along with its students and teachers, to a violent end. Shad must decide

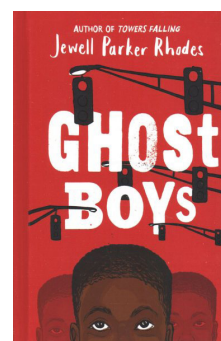
between remaining loyal to his family and the brotherhood or warning the people for whom he has developed feelings of friendship and respect. Debut author Westrick explores the implications of brotherhood and demonstrates how right and wrong can be so intricately entwined that whatever choice one makes can result in disaster.

Enter the Body by Joy McCullough

In the room beneath a theater stage, the ghosts of Juliet, Ophelia, Cordelia, and other teenage girls who died tragically in Shakespeare's plays, share their experiences and trauma and get the chance to retell the stories of their lives in their own terms.

Freak the Mighty by Rodman Philbrick

Large, awkward, learning-disabled Maxwell Kane, whose father is in prison for murdering his mother, and undersized Kevin, whose birth defect has affected his body but not his mind, are both mocked by their peers; the cruel taunting they endure is all too realistic and believable. The boys establish a friendship - and a partnership, finding that when they combine forces they make a powerful team.



Ghost Boys by Jewell Parker Rhodes

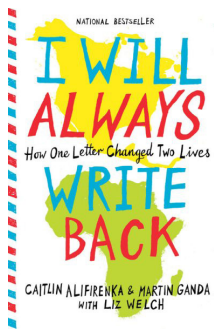
Jerome, a young black boy gunned down while playing in a park with a toy gun, invites readers to bear witness to his story, to the tragedy of being dispatched simply because of a policeman's internalized prejudice masquerading as fear. When he is shot in the back while running from the police, his soul leaves his body and he becomes one of the army of ghost boys hoping to communicate

with those still consumed with racial bias. While looking in on the preliminary court hearing, Jerome realizes that the police officer's daughter can see and talk to him, and together they try to understand how the world around them could be so cruel.

Halley's Comet by Hannes Barnard

Three teens from different backgrounds share a secret and form life-changing friendships. Pete is a 15-year-old White boy in 1986 South Africa whose father is a manager at a coal mine. One night, when out for a run, Pete crosses paths with Petrus, a Black farmhand's son who happens to be in the same area. Witnessing a crime in progress, they save Sarita, an Indian girl whose family owns a shop, from a violent sexual assault by White farmer Rudie. Over a period of months,

Rudie blackmails them, threatening violence against Pete's mother, saying he will reveal that the boys were trespassing on a territorial White landowner's property, and suggesting they were engaging in interracial gay sex. These events take place in the final years of the apartheid era as protests to bring about changes in society are increasing in urgency. Although Pete's perspective is the primary one, the bonds between the three friends open their eyes to the different realities of the segregated worlds they come from and broaden their minds to embrace new possibilities.



I Will Always Write Back: How One Letter Changed Two Lives by Martin Ganda, Caitlin Alifirenka, Liz Welch

It started as an assignment... Everyone in Caitlin's class wrote to an unknown student somewhere in a distant place. Martin was lucky to even receive a penpal letter. There were only ten letters, and fifty kids in his class. But he was the top student, so he got the first one. That

letter was the beginning of a correspondence that spanned six years and changed two lives. In this compelling dual memoir, Caitlin and Martin recount how they became best friends—and better people—through their long-distance exchange. Their story will inspire you to look beyond your own life and wonder about the world at large and your place in it.

If I Ever Get Out of Here by Eric Gansworth

Seventh-grader Lewis "Shoe" Blake from the Tuscarora Reservation has a new friend, George Haddonfield from the local Air Force base, but in 1975 upstate New York there is a lot of tension and hatred between Native Americans and Whites--and Shoe is not sure that he can rely on the friendship.

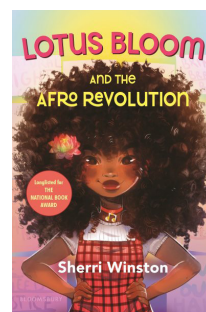
Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus by Dusti Bowling

A move to dusty, distant Arizona forces 13-year-old Aven to leave her familiar life and friends behind. Don't yawn: Bowling takes this overworked trope and spins it into gold with a skein of terrific twists. For one thing, Aven was born without arms, so the new environment—a decrepit Wild West theme park—poses special challenges. For another, thanks to loving, funny adoptive parents who have raised her to be a “problem-solving ninja” (“I’m so flexible, it would blow your mind,” she boasts), readers may repeatedly forget, despite reminders enough, that Aven is (as she puts it) “unarmed.” Moreover, when the dreary prospect of having to cope with the looks and questions at her new middle school sends her in search of an isolated place to eat her lunch, she finds and bonds with Conner, who is struggling with Tourette’s syndrome and has not been so lucky with his parents. Not only does she firmly enlist him and another new friend in investigating a mystery about the theme park’s past but, taking Conner’s involuntary vocalizations in stride (literally),

Aven drags him (figuratively) into an information-rich Tourette’s support group. Following poignant revelations about Aven’s birth family, the author lets warm but not goey sentiment wash over the close to a tale that is not about having differences, but accepting them in oneself and others

It's My Whole Life by Susan Wider

A gripping middle grade biography of Charlotte Salomon, and an ode to how art can capture both life's everyday beauty and its monumental horrors. Charlotte Salomon was a German-Jewish artist born in Berlin. She is remembered for her autobiographical series of paintings, *Life? or Theater?*, which consists of 769 individual works painted between 1940 and 1942 while she was in hiding from the Nazis in the south of France, and which has been called a painted parallel to Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* and an early graphic novel. In 1943, she entrusted her collection of paintings to a friend. In October of that year, she was captured and deported to Auschwitz, where she and her unborn child were gassed to death upon arrival. *It's My Whole Life* covers Charlotte's remarkable life from her childhood and art school days to her time as a refugee in Nazi-occupied France, where she created the largest single work of art created by a Jew during the Holocaust. Compellingly written and accompanied by vivid color photographs of Salomon's artwork, Susan Wider has crafted an illuminating portrait of an enigmatic and evanescent young artist.



Lotus Bloom and the Afro Revolution by Sherri Winston

Twelve-year-old Lotus Bloom is a free spirit with a mega-'fro she's affectionately named “the wooly mammoth.” A talented violinist, she just switched from her inner-city school to a fancy arts academy. Her best friend Rebel is quick to point out the funding disparities between schools, and urges Lotus to help her protest, but Lotus

isn't sure; if she's going to be in the spotlight, she'd rather it be for her music. But then a classroom prank – boys thinking it's hilarious to throw wads of paper into Lotus's hair – escalates after she reports it to the administration and shockingly finds herself facing suspension. Lotus must choose whether to stay quiet and risk everything she's worked so hard for, or fight back. Is this school really where she belongs?

Melissa by Alex Gino

When people look at George, they think they see a boy. But she knows she's not a boy. She knows she's a girl. George thinks she'll have to keep this a secret forever. Then her teacher announces that their class play is going to be *Charlotte's Web*. George really, really, REALLY wants to play Charlotte. But the teacher says she can't even try out for the part ... because she's a boy. With the help of her best friend, Kelly, George comes up with a plan. Not just so she can be Charlotte -- but so everyone can know who she is, once and for all.

Notable Native People: 50 Indigenous Leaders, Dreamers, and Changemakers From Past and Present

MELISSA

by Adrienne Keene

An accessible and educational illustrated book profiling 50 notable American Indian, Alaska Native, and Native Hawaiian people, from NBA star Kyrie Irving of the Standing Rock Lakota to Wilma Mankiller, the first

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female principal chief of the Cherokee Nation. Celebrate the lives, stories, and contributions of Indigenous artists, activists, scientists, athletes, and other changemakers in this illustrated collection. Also offers accessible primers on important Indigenous issues, from the legacy of colonialism and cultural appropriation to food sovereignty, land and water rights, and more. An indispensable read for people of all backgrounds seeking to learn about Native American heritage, histories, and cultures, Notable Native People will educate and inspire readers of all ages.

The 57 Bus by Dashka Slater

Tells the true story of an agender teen who was set on fire by another teen while riding a bus in Oakland, a crime that focuses on the concepts of race, class, gender, crime, and punishment.

The Night Diary by Veera Hiranandani

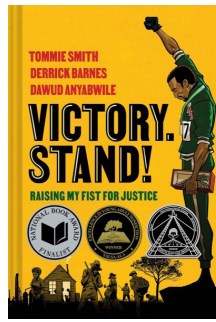
Shy twelve-year-old Nisha, forced to flee her home with her Hindu family during the 1947 partition of India, tries to find her voice and make sense of the world falling apart around her by writing to her deceased Muslim mother in the pages of her diary.

The Weight of Our Sky by Hanna Alkaf

On the evening of May 13th, 1969, racial tensions in Melati Ahmad's home city of Kuala Lumpur boil over. The Chinese and Malays are at war, and Mel and her mother become separated by a city in flames. With a 24-hour curfew in place and all lines of communication down, it will take the help of a Chinese boy named Vincent and all of the courage and grit in Melati's arsenal to overcome the violence on the streets, her own prejudices, and her djinn's surging power to make it back to the one person she can't risk losing.

Unbecoming by Jenny Downham

Three women - three secrets - one heart-stopping story. Katie, seventeen, in love with someone whose identity she can't reveal. Her mother Caroline, uptight, worn out and about to find the past catching up with her. Katie's grandmother, Mary, back with the family after years of mysterious absence and 'capable of anything', despite suffering from Alzheimers. As Katie cares for an elderly woman who brings daily chaos to her life, she finds herself drawn to her.



Victory. Stand!: Raising My Fist for Justice by Tommie Smith, Dawud Anyabwile, Derrick Barnes

A groundbreaking and timely graphic memoir from one of the most iconic figures in American sports-and a tribute to his fight for civil rights. On October 16, 1968, during the medal ceremony at the Mexico City Olympics, Tommie Smith, the gold medal winner in the

200-meter sprint, and John Carlos, the bronze medal winner, stood on the podium in black socks and raised their black-gloved fists to protest racial injustice inflicted upon African Americans. Both men were forced to leave the Olympics, received death threats, and faced ostracism and continuing economic hardships. In his first-ever memoir for young readers, Tommie Smith looks back on his childhood growing up in rural Texas through to his stellar athletic career, culminating in his historic victory and Olympic podium protest. Cowritten with Newbery Honor and Coretta Scott King Author Honor recipient Derrick Barnes and illustrated with bold and muscular artwork from Emmy Award-winning illustrator Dawud Anyabwile, *Victory. Stand!* paints a stirring portrait of an iconic moment in Olympic history that still resonates today.

We Deserve Monuments by Jas Hammonds

When seventeen-year-old Avery moves to rural Georgia to live with her ailing grandmother, she encounters decade-old family secrets and a mystery surrounding the town's racist past.

You Asked for Perfect by Laura Silverman

Ariel Stone is a senior trying to be the valedictorian and get into Harvard, and he just failed a Calculus test. Ariel asks a classmate named Amir to tutor him, and though Ariel's Jewish and Amir's Muslim, the boys fall for each other. But Ariel's not sure he can handle the pressure of yet another thing in his life. Ariel's rabbi encourages him to be gentle with himself, and over the course of the narrative, Ariel learns that imperfection is okay.

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machine**

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