

Recent issue-driven fiction for young people

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For an introduction to this list of realistic novels, written for older children and teenagers, that deal with issues that are experienced by and of concern to this specific age group, I turned to a very useful guide to teenage literature, **The ultimate teen book guide** edited by Daniel Hahn and Leonie Flynn (Black, 2006). This guide is a most useful resource for any teacher or librarian working with young people, and indeed young people themselves, with annotations to over 700 titles suitable for teenagers and suggestions for further reads if one has enjoyed a specific title. Added extras include top ten lists culled from polling teen readers themselves with the *Harry Potter*-series topping several lists from the *Book-that-changed-your-life* to the *Book-you-couldn't put-down* lists.

It also contains short essays by authors who write for teenagers, and their insights into the importance and relevance of issue-driven fiction for teenage readers are worth noting. And how reading about real empathetic characters in real situations dealing with real issues can provide a space to make sense of the world, to explore feelings, to think thoughts, to derive comfort, to be and to grow.

Catherine Robinson writes on the issue of love, sex and relationships which are themes in her books: 'If ever there is a time in your life when you could do with some reassurance that you're not alone, that whatever you're currently going through,

there is, amazingly enough, somebody else out there who's been through exactly the same thing, it's when you're in your teenage years. (Fiction can be hugely comforting for this, in a way that all the self-help books in the world, for all their practical worthiness, simply cannot)... whatever your own experience it's somehow enormously soothing to read a book that strikes a chord, that makes you break off in the middle of a sentence and stare into the middle distance and nod and think: 'Yes, that's just how it feels'. (p. 168.)

Kevin Brooks is one author who does not shy away from the grim reality and harsh challenges facing some young people. For him, '... in the teenage world the dividing line between order and chaos is so much more fragile than in the adult world, which makes it a perfect setting for journeys into chaos and confusion ... I like to read about stuff that could happen to me, but probably – and hopefully won't, because it allows me to experience all the fears and the thrills and the confusion of going off the rails without actually doing it myself.' (p.200.)

The last word will be given to Matt Whyman who says that making sense of the world is how one becomes an adult and books can work wonders in this process, for 'A really good one won't end with the full stop ... If a story strikes a chord, it can leave a ques-

tion mark hanging over your head. You're left to think about what you've just read, and how it relates to your growing sense of identity'. (p.296.) Importantly, he also says that a 'book works best when it stirs up your heart and mind' and it doesn't matter whether that book be a realistic one or a fantasy or an adventure. How the book makes you feel is what matters the most.

ABUSE

Atkins, Catherine. **When Jeff comes home.**- Puffin, 2001.
Blezard, TA. **Secrets.**- Livewire, 2002.
Crutcher, Chris. **The secrets.**- Macmillan, 1996.
Dessen, Sarah. **Dreamland.**- Hodder, 2002.
Gantos, Jack. **Joey Pigza swallowed the key.**- Corgi Yearling, 2000.
Howe, James. **The watcher.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 1999.
Johnson, Anthony. Kwamleh. **Bamboo girl.**- Macmillan, 2004.
Konigsburg, Elaine Lobl. **Silent to the bone.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 2002.
Laird, Elizabeth. **Jake's tower.**- Macmillan, 2002.
Singleton, John. **Star.**- Puffin, 2004.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Lola Rose.**- Doubleday, 2003.
Wilson, Nancy Hope. **Mountain pose.**- Scholastic, 2002.

ADOPTION

Johnson, Angela. **Heaven.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 2000.
Wulf, Linda Press. **The night of the burning.**- Bloomsbury, 2007.

ALBINISM

Gibbons, Alan. **The dark beneath.**- Dolphin, 2003.
Robson, Jenny. **Because pula means rain.**- Tafelberg, 2000.

ALCOHOLISM

Block, Francesca Lia. **I was a teenage fairy.**- HarperCollins, 2000.
Carter, Alden. R. **Up country.**- Scholastic, 1998.
Cassidy, Cathy. **Sundae girl.**- Puffin, 2007.
Hobbs, Valerie. **How far would you have gotten if I hadn't called you back?**- Scholastic, 2003.
Saksena, Kate. **Love, Shelley.**- Bloomsbury, 2003.
Sanford, Doris. **I know the world's worst secret.**- Multnomah P, 1987.
Swindells, Robert. **Wrecked.**- Puffin, 2001.

ASSERTIVENESS

Pellegrino, Marjorie White. **Too nice.**- Magination P, 2002.

AUTISM / ASPERGER SYNDROME

Choldenko, Gennifer. **Al Capone does my shirts.**- Bloomsbury, 2004.
Dowd, Siobhan. **The London Eye mystery.**- Fickling, 2007.
Kemp, Gene. **Seriously weird.**- Faber, 2003.
Kochka. **The boy who ate stars.**- Egmont, 2004.
Ogaz, Nancy. **Buster and the amazing Daisy.**- Kingsley, 2003.

BULLYING

Brindley, John. **Rhino boy.**- Dolphin, 2000.
Brooks, Kevin. **Lucas.**- Chicken House, 2003.
Deans, Sis. **Racing the past.**- Hodder, 2003.

Forde, Catherine. **Fat boy swim.**- Egmont, 2003.
Gibbons, Alan. **Hold on.**- Dolphin, 2005.
Gowar, Mick. **The gang.**- Watts, 1995.
Howe, James. **The misfits.**- Walker Bks., 2002.
Johnson, Pete. **The protectors.**- Puffin, 2002.
Johnson, Pete. **Traitor.**- Corgi Yearling, 2002.
McKay, Hilary. **Indigo's star.**- Hodder, 2004.
Page, Katherine Hall. **Club Meds.**- Simon Pulse, 2006.
Pielichaty, Helena. **Getting rid of Kareenna.**- Oxford UP, 2001.
Rees, Celia. **The Bailey game.**- Macmillan, 1994.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Bad girls.**- Doubleday, 1996.

CAR ACCIDENT

Gibbons, Alan. **The lost boys' appreciation society.**- Dolphin, 2004.
MacPhail, Catherine. **Wheels.**- Puffin, 2003.
Orr, Wendy. **Peeling the onion.**- Allen & Unwin, 1996.
Pearson, Maggie. **Shadow of the beast.**- Hodder, 2002.
Weatherly, Lee. **Kat got your tongue.**- Corgi Bks., 2007.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Vicky Angel.**- Corgi Yearling, 2001.

CRIME

Carter, Alden. R. **Up country.**- Scholastic, 1998.
Coleman, Michael. **Going straight.**- Orchard Bks., 2003.

CULTS

Ashworth, Sherry. **Blinded by the light.**- CollinsFlamingo, 2003.
Hathorn, Libby. **Rift.**- Hodder, 1999.
Keaney, Brian. **Bitter fruit.**- Orchard Bks., 1999.

DEATH AND DYING

Anderson, Rachel. **Pizza on Saturday.**- Hodder, 2004.
Baskin, Nora Raleigh. **What every girl (except me) knows.**- Walker Bks., 2002.
Bo, Amo. **I must tell you something.**- Bloomsbury, 1996.
Boyce, Frank Cottrell. **Millions.**- Macmillan, 2004.
Brooks, Bruce. **All that remains.**- Simon Pulse, 2002.
Coman, Carolyn. **Many stones.**- Young Picador, 2003.
Deans, Sis. **Racing the past.**- Hodder, 2003.
DiCamillo, Kate. **The tiger rising.**- Walker Bks., 2002.
Doherty, Berlie. **Granny was a buffer girl.**- Puffin, 2004.
Downham, Jenny. **Before I die.**- Fickling, 2007.
Gibbons, Alan. **The lost boys' appreciation society.**- Dolphin, 2004.
Henkes, Kevin. **Sun and Spoon.**- Greenwillow, 1997.
Keaney, Brian. **Bitter fruit.**- Orchard Bks., 1999.
Lloyd, Carole. **The Charlie Barber treatment.**- Walker Bks., 1997.
Newman, Marjorie. **Steve.**- Watts, 1995.
Nolan, Han. **Dancing on the edge.**- Harcourt, 2007.
Pearson, Maggie. **Shadow of the beast.**- Hodder, 2002.
Plaisted, Caroline. **No way am I living with her.**- Piccadilly, 2004.
Tanner, Jane. **Ride with me.**- Penguin Viking, 2006.
Ure, Jean. **Becky Bananas – this is your life!**- Collins, 2001.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Vicky Angel.**- Corgi Yearling, 2001.
Wood, Abigail. **Mpumi goes missing.**- Heinemann, 2005.
Woods, Ron. **The hero.**- Dell Yearling, 2003.
Woodson, Jacqueline. **Locomotion.**- Puffin, 2003.

DISABILITIES

- Asare, Meshack. **Sosu's call.**- Sub-Saharan Pub., 1997. (Cripple).
 Ashworth, Sherry. **Paralysed.**- Simon, 2005.
 Coleman, Michael. **Going straight.**- Orchard Bks., 2003. (Blindness)
 Davidow, Shelley. **Let's play one bounce.**- Macmillan, 2001. (Polio)
 Gantos, Jack. **Joey Pigza swallowed the key.**- Corgi Yearling, 2000. (ADHD)
 Hale, Natalie. **Oh brother!**- Magination P, 2004.
 Hunter, Jana. **Read my lips.**- Walker Bks., 2002. (Polio)
 Keaney, Brian. **Falling for Joshua.**- Orchard Bks., 2001. (Epilepsy)
 MacPhail, Catherine. **Wheels.**- Puffin, 2003.
 Matlin, Marlee. **Deaf child crossing.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 2004. (Deafness)
 Ogaz, Nancy. **Buster and the amazing Daisy.**- J. Kingsley, 2003.
 Orr, Wendy. **Peeling the onion.**- Allen & Unwin, 1996.
 Page, Katherine. Hall. **Club Meds.**- Simon Pulse, 2006. (ADHD)
 Roberts, Mark. **Night riders.**- Andersen P., 2001. (Down's Syndrome)
 Robb, Diane Burton. **The alphabet war.**- Whiteman, 2004. (Dyslexia)
 Roos, Stephen. **The gypsies never came.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 2002.
 Sachar, Louis. **Small steps.**- Bloomsbury, 2006. (Cerebral palsy)
 Smith, Gail. **Wheels!**- Tafelberg, 1996. (Stuttering)

DIVORCE

- Baskin, Nora Raleigh. **Almost home.**- Walker Bks., 2004.
 Caletti, Deb. **Wild roses.**- Scholastic, 2006.
 Codell, Esmé Raji. **Sahara special.**- Hodder, 2004.
 Mendes, Valerie. **Girl in the attic.**- Simon, 2002.
 Newbery, Linda. **Break time.**- Orchard Bks., 2001.
 Pearson, Maggie. **Shadow of the beast.**- Hodder, 2002.
 Saksena, Kate. **Love, Shelley.**- Bloomsbury, 2003.
 Townson, Hazel. **The invisible boy.**- Andersen P., 2002.
 Wilson, Jacqueline. **Clean break.**- Doubleday, 2005.
 Wittlinger, Ellen. **Hard love.**- Simon, 2004.

DRUG ABUSE

- Bugler, Suzanne. **Meet me at the boathouse.**- Hodder, 2007.
 Dessen, Sarah. **Dreamland.**- Hodder, 2002.
 Hopkins, Ellen. **Crank.**- Simon Pulse, 2004.
 Sanford, Doris. **I can say no.**- Multnomah P, 1987.
 Vigna, Judith. **My big sister takes drugs.**- Whiteman, 1990.

EATING DISORDERS

- Bell, Julia. **Massive.**- Young Picador, 2002.
 Blackman, Malorie. **Dead gorgeous.**- Corgi, 2003.
 Burton, Rebecca. **Leaving Jetty Road.**- Angus, 2004.
 Forde, Catherine. **Fat boy swim.**- Egmont, 2003.
 Hautzig, Deborah. **Second star to the right.**- Walker Bks., 2001.
 Welford, Sue. **Secrets.**- Mammoth, 1996.
 Wilson, Jacqueline. **Girls under pressure.**- Corgi Yearling, 1999.

FACIAL DISFIGUREMENT

- Crutcher, Chris. **The secrets of Sarah Byrnes.**- Macmillan, 1996.
 Marsden, John. **So much to tell you.**- Julia Macrae Bks., 1989.
 Zephaniah, Benjamin. **Face.**- Bloomsbury, 2003.

FOSTERING/ FOSTER HOMES

- Hendry, Diana. **You can't kiss it better.**- Red Fox, 2003.
 Johnston, Julie. **Adam and Eve and pinch-me.**- Orchard Bks., 1996.
 Wilson, Jacqueline. **The story of Tracy Beaker.**- Corgi Yearling, 1992.
 Wilson, Jacqueline. **The dare game.**- Corgi Yearling, 2001.
 Wilson, Jacqueline. **Dustbin baby.**- Corgi Yearling, 2002.
 Woodson, Jacqueline. **Locomotion.**- Puffin, 2003.

GANGS

- Brooks, Kevin. **Lucas.**- Chicken House, 2003.
 Davids, Ml. **III Colleen Court.**- New Africa Bks., 2005.
 Hathorn, Libby. **Rift.**- Hodder, 1999.
 Howarth, Lesley. **Drive.**- Puffin, 2004.
 Joose, Barbara. **Stars in the darkness.**- Chronicle Bks., 2002.
 MacPhail, Catherine. **Worse than boys.**- Bloomsbury, 2007.
 Martin, Nora. **A perfect snow.**- Bloomsbury, 2003.
 Masters, Anthony. **The drop.**- Orchard Bks., 2004.
 Myers, Walter Dean. **Autobiography of my dead brother.**- Harper Tempest, 2006.
 Nightingale, CZ. **Grass.**- Penguin, 2003.
 Rai, Bali. **The whisper.**- Corgi, 2005.
 Rai, Bali. **The crew.**- Corgi, 2003.
 Rapola, Zachariah. **Stanza on the edge.**- Maskew Miller Longman, 2001.
 Whyman, Matthew. **The wild.**- Hodder, 2005.
 Wooding, Chris. **Catchman.**- Scholastic, 2004.

GAY/ SEXUAL ORIENTATION / GENDER ISSUES

- De Oliveira, Eddie. **Lucky.**- Push, 2004.
 Howe, James. **Totally Joe.**- Aladdin, 2007.
 Howe, James. **The misfits.**- Walker Bks., 2002.
 Levithan, David. **Boy meets boy.**- HarperCollins, 2006.
 Wittlinger, Ellen. **Hard love.**- Simon, 2004.
 Wood, Abigail. **Mpumi goes missing.**- Heinemann, 2005.

HOMELESSNESS

- Arrigan, Mary. **Hard luck.**- Barrington Stoke, 2007.

INCEST

- Lawrence, Iain. **The lightkeeper's daughter.**- Delacorte P, 2004.
 Oldham, June. **Escape.**- Hodder, 1996.
 Rosoff, Meg. **How I live now.**- Penguin, 2005.

MEDICAL CONDITION

Anderson, Rachel. **This strange new life.**- Oxford U.P., 2006. (Chronic fatigue syndrome)
Hamilton, Virginia. **Bluish.**- Scholastic Signature, 2002. (Leukemia)
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Lola Rose.**- Corgi Bks., 2004. (Cancer)

MENTAL ILLNESS

Caletti, Deb. **Wild roses.**- Scholastic, 2006.
Johnson, Angela. **Humming whispers.**- Orchard Bks., 1996. (Schizophrenia)
Nolan, Han. **Dancing on the edge.**- Harcourt, 2007.
Sones, Sonya. **Stop pretending.**- Dolphin, 2002.
Tan, Shaun. **The red tree.**- Lothian, 2001. (Depression)
Tashjian, Janet. **Multiple choice.**- Scholastic, 2001. (Obsessive compulsive disorder)

MURDER

Coman, Carolyn. **Many stones.**- Young Picador, 2003.
Doyle, Malachy. **Georgie.**- Bloomsbury, 2001.

PREGNANCY

Bertagna, Julie. **The opposite of chocolate.**- Young Picador, 2003.
Robinson, Catherine. **Celia.**- Scholastic, 2002.

PREJUDICE/ RACISM / TOLERANCE

Nightingale, CZ. **Grass.**- Penguin, 2003.
Sachar, Louis. **Small steps.**- Bloomsbury, 2006.
Woods, Ron. **The hero.**- Dell Yearling, 2003.
Wulf, Linda Press. **The night of the burning.**- Bloomsbury, 2007.

PRISON

MacPhail, Catherine. **Bad company.**- Bloomsbury, 2001.

REFUGEES / IMMIGRANTS

Gibbons, Alan. **The dark beneath.**- Dolphin, 2003.
Hobbs, Will. **Crossing the wire.**- HaperTrophy, 2007.
Smith, Gail. **Someone called Lindiwe.**- Macmillan, 2003.

SELF MUTILATION

McCormick, Patricia. **Cut.**- Push, 2002.

SEX

Bugler, Suzanne. **Meet me at the boathouse.**- Hodder, 2007.
Burgess, Melvin. **Doing it.**- Andersen P., 2003.
Hobbs, Valerie. **How far would you have gotten if I hadn't called you back?**-Scholastic, 2003.

SEXUAL ABUSE

Anderson, Laurie Halse.- **Speak.**- Hodder, 2001.
Block, Francesca Lia.- **I was a teenage fairy.**- HarperCollins, 2000.
Marshall, Anita. **Township tales.**- Progressive Minds, 2002.
Oldham, June. **Escape.**- Hodder, 1996.
Sanford, Doris. **I can't talk about it.**- Multnomah P., 1986.
Sanford, Doris. **Something must be wrong with me.**- Gold 'n' honey Bks., 1993.
Ure, Jean. **Bad Alice.**- Hodder, 2003.
Wachter, Oralee. **No more secrets for me.**- Little, 2002.

SINGLE PARENT

Keaney, Brian. **Falling for Joshua.**- Orchard Bks., 2001.
Moon, Pat. **Do not read this book.**- Orchard Bks., 2001.
Roos, Stephen. **The gypsies never came.**- Aladdin Paperbacks, 2002.
Saksena, Kate. **Love, Shelley.**- Bloomsbury, 2003.
Townson, Hazel. **The invisible boy.**- Andersen P., 2003.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **The illustrated mum.**- Corgi Yearling, 2000.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **Lola Rose.**- Corgi Yearling, 2004.
Wilson, Jacqueline. **The worry website.**- Corgi Yearling, 2003.

STEPFAMILIES

Cohn, Rachel. **Two steps forward.**- Schuster, 2006.
Cohn, Rachel. **The steps.**- Simon, 2004.
Plaisted, Caroline. **No way am I living with her.**- Piccadilly, 2004.

I don't like people who have never fallen or stumbled. Their virtue is lifeless and it isn't of much value. Life hasn't revealed its beauty to them.

Boris Pasternak
Doctor Zhivago (1958)