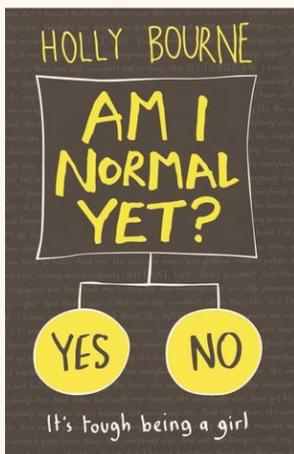


Overcoming Adversity
By



Nobody said that growing up was easy, but some people definitely have it harder than others. This month's book list theme, *Overcoming Adversity*, covers a wide range of problems that teenagers face: from the fairly common (bullying, bad parenting) to the more unusual. Imagine being a political exile, for instance... or being diagnosed with ALS and given a death sentence. Imagine having to cope with mental health issues or physical disabilities on top of all of your other problems. Many of the books on this list have been published in the last year or so and reflect the increasingly diverse scope of Young Adult literature. A couple of them – *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* and *Wonder* – are already deserved “classics” that can be enjoyed by nearly any age of reader. By reading, we can imagine lives or problems otherwise unimaginable to us. Through books, we can find identification or sympathy with characters that are actually more like us than we would have guessed.



Am I Normal Yet?

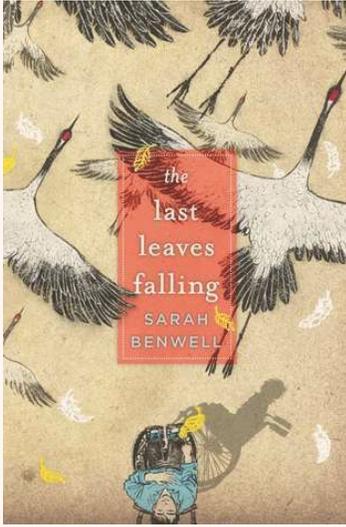
by Holly Bourne

Evie desperately wants a fresh start. After being hospitalized for a mental breakdown, caused by out-of-control OCD, Evie has got back on track. Enrolled in Sixth Form College, she has new friends and even more than one potential love interest. But being let down by one guy after another is starting to derail Evie's recovery. Even when her friends rally to her cause, Evie feels that her facade of “normal” is showing some serious cracks.

Reading and interest level: 14+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; friendship; romance; humour; feminism; mental health; OCD

This book contains references to sexuality and drugs/alcohol.

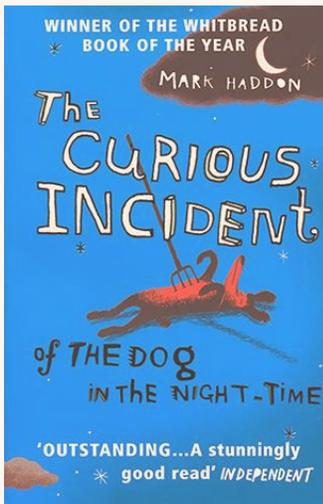


The Last Leaves Falling by Sarah Benwell

For most 17 year-olds, death is an abstract concept; for Abe Sora, it is a grim reality. After being diagnosed with ALS, Abe is trapped in his failing body and isolated in his bedroom. Longing for anonymity, he searches for connections in online chat rooms. Unexpectedly, he makes real friends there – and not just virtual ones. With the help of his friends, Abe figures out how to meet death on his own terms.

Realistic and interest level: 14+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; friendship; death; social media; ALS; Japan



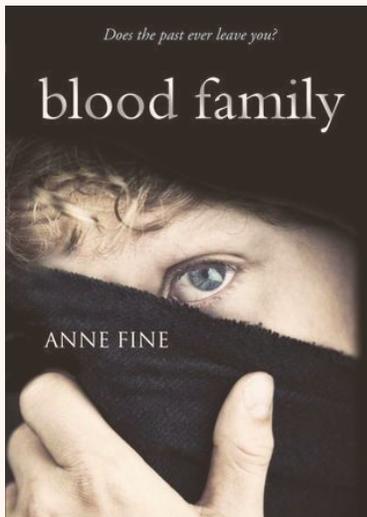
The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time by Mark Haddon

This unique book is told from the point of view of Christopher, a 15 year-old boy who has some form of autism. Although Christopher is talented at mathematical calculations, he struggle with emotions, physical contact and any deviation from his routine. When Christopher decides to investigate the murder of a neighbour's dog, he becomes drawn into a much more important disappearance. To solve this mystery, Christopher will have to take a journey that

challenges him on every level.

Reading and interest level: 12+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; mystery; humour; autism; Asperger's Syndrome; London
This book contains some strong language.



Blood Family

by Anne Fine

Eddie lost years of his childhood trapped inside a violent home. After being rescued by social services, Eddie gets another chance with a new family. But as Eddie grows older, he begins to see Harris – the man he thought of as “beast” – in his own face. His worry that Harris’s bad character is part of him becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. This compelling realistic novel poses the question of whether or not it is possible to overcome a bad beginning.

Reading and interest level: 14+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; abuse; mental health; homelessness

This emotionally disturbing novel contains scenes of violence and drugs/alcohol abuse.



Amy and Matthew: A Love Story

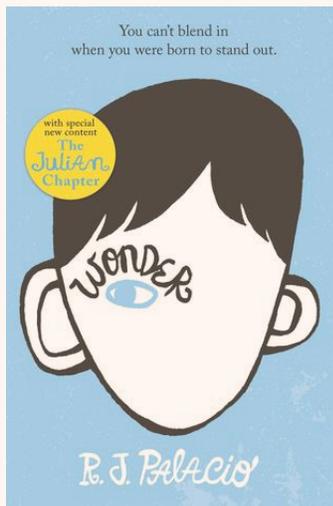
by Cammie McGovern

(published as Say What You Will in the US)

Although Amy is smart and funny, most people cannot get past her disability to notice her personality. During her last year of high school, Amy has one goal: to make some friends. When Matthew signs up to be Amy’s peer tutor, he steps way outside of his own comfort zone. Hindered by his overwhelming anxieties, Matthew understands loneliness just as well as Amy does. Amy and Matthew have little experience of friendship, and even less with romance, but their very atypical love story will be the making of both of them.

Reading and interest level: 14+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; friendship; romance; mental health; disability; OCD; cerebral palsy; teen pregnancy



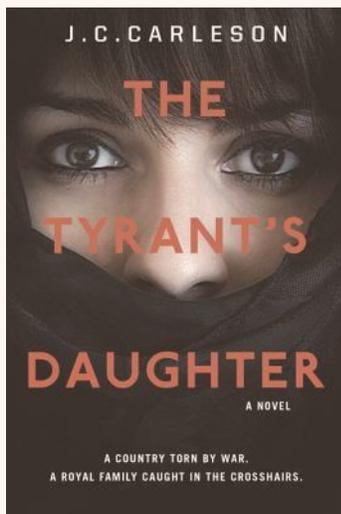
Wonder

by R.J. Palacio

If August had his way, it would be Halloween every day. When you have a face that actually frightens people, it is a relief to wear a mask. Now, after a childhood of being home-schooled, August is starting middle school. When being “different” is a huge liability, is it even possible to be seen for something other than what you look like?

Reading and interest level: 12+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; friendship; family; bullying



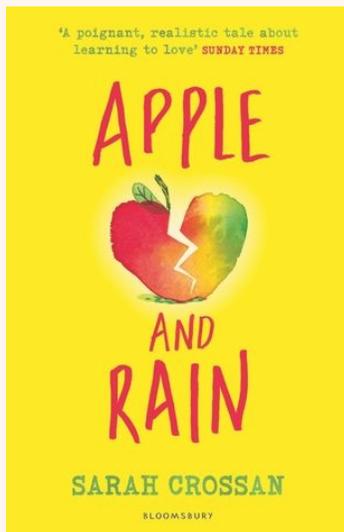
The Tyrant's Daughter

by J.C. Carleson

After 15 years as a sheltered princess in her Muslim homeland, Laila is suddenly thrust into the life of an American teenager. Rules and expectations are completely different now. The loving father that she knew has been assassinated, and as she learns more about his brutal leadership Laila begins to question her former certainties. It is difficult to differentiate friends from enemies, and everyone seems to want something from Laila – including the CIA.

Reading and interest level: 14+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; friendship; culture; political thriller



Apple and Rain

by Sarah Crossan

Apple has grown up with a large hole in her life – and heart. Living with her grandmother has been safe and predictable, but she misses the mother who abandoned her to pursue an acting career. When her mother unexpectedly returns to their seaside town, Apple thinks that everything will change for the better. Her fun, young mother is the complete opposite of her strict grandmother. But living with her mother isn't what Apple expected, and before long it is Apple who is playing mother.

Reading and interest level: 12+

Genre: realistic; contemporary; family; friendship; romance

This book contains references to drugs/alcohol.

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