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Teens' Book Recommendations: Diverse Abilities

FICTION

How We Roll – Natasha Friend

"After developing alopecia Quinn lost her friends along with her hair and former football player Jake lost his legs and confidence after an accident, but the two help each other believe in themselves and the possibility of love."

Even if we Break – Marieke Nijkamp

"For five friends, this was supposed to be one last getaway before going their separate ways—a chance to say goodbye to each other, and to the game they've been playing for the past three years. But they're all dealing with their own demons, and they're all hiding secrets. Finn doesn't trust anyone since he was attacked a few months ago. Popular girl Liva saw it happen and did nothing to stop it. Maddy was in an accident that destroyed her sports career. Carter is drowning under the weight of his family's expectations. Ever wants to keep the game going for as long as they can, at all costs. When the lines between game and reality start to blend with deadly consequences, it's a race against time before it's game over—forever."

Tornado Brain – Cat Patrick

"Things never seem to go as easily for thirteen-year-old Frankie as they do for her sister, Tess. Unlike Tess, Frankie is neurodivergent. In her case, that means she can't stand to be touched, loud noises bother her, she's easily distracted, she hates changes in her routine, and she has to go see a therapist while other kids get to hang out at the beach. It also means Frankie has trouble making friends. She did have one—Colette—but they're not friends anymore. It's complicated. Then, just weeks before the end of seventh grade, Colette unexpectedly shows up at Frankie's door. The next morning, Colette vanishes. Now, after losing Colette yet again, Frankie's convinced that her former best friend left clues behind that only she can decipher, so she persuades her reluctant sister to help her unravel the mystery of Colette's disappearance before it's too late."

A Curse so Dark and Lonely – Brigid Kemmer

"It once seemed so easy to Prince Rhen, the heir to Emberfall. Cursed by a powerful enchantress to repeat the autumn of his eighteenth year over and over, he knew he could be saved if a girl fell for him. But that was before he learned that at the end of each autumn, he would turn into a vicious beast hell-bent on destruction. That was before he destroyed his castle, his family, and every last shred of hope. Nothing has ever been easy for Harper. With her father long gone, her mother dying, and her brother barely holding their family together while constantly underestimating her because of her cerebral palsy, she learned to be tough enough to survive. But when she tries to save someone else on the streets of Washington, DC, she's instead somehow sucked into Rhen's cursed world."

Unbroken: 13 Stories Featuring Disabled Teens – Marieke Nijkamp

“This anthology explores disability in fictional tales told from the viewpoint of disabled characters, written by disabled creators. With stories in various genres about first loves, friendship, war, travel, and more, *Unbroken* will offer today’s teen readers a glimpse into the lives of disabled people in the past, present, and future.”

Cursed – Karol Ruth Silverstein

“As if her parents’ divorce and sister’s departure for college weren’t bad enough, fourteen-year-old Ricky Bloom has just been diagnosed with a life-changing chronic illness. Her days consist of cursing everyone out, skipping school—which has become a nightmare—daydreaming about her crush, Julio, and trying to keep her parents from realizing just how bad things are. But she can’t keep her ruse up forever.

Ricky’s afraid, angry, alone, and one suspension away from repeating ninth grade when she realizes: she can’t be held back. She’ll do whatever it takes to move forward—even if it means changing the person she’s become. Lured out of her funk by a quirky classmate, Oliver, who’s been there too, Ricky’s porcupine exterior begins to shed some spines. Maybe asking for help isn’t the worst thing in the world. Maybe accepting circumstances doesn’t mean giving up.”

The Degenerates – J Albert Mann

“The Massachusetts School for the Feeble-Minded is not a happy place. The young women who are already there certainly don’t think so. Not Maxine, who is doing everything she can to protect her younger sister Rose in an institution where vicious attendants and bullying older girls treat them as the morons, imbeciles, and idiots the doctors have deemed them to be. Not Alice, either, who was left there when her brother couldn’t bring himself to support a sister with a club foot. And not London, who has just been dragged there from the best foster situation she’s ever had, thanks to one unexpected, life-altering moment. Each girl is determined to change her fate, no matter what it takes.”

The Opposite of Falling Apart – Micah Good

“What’s the point of pretending nothing has changed when everything has? It’s the last summer before college, and Jonas Avery knows he should be excited. Instead, he hides out at home, avoiding his friends, his family, and everything that resembles his old life. Because nothing will be normal again—because of The Accident, when everything started falling apart. Brennan Davis knows she needs to stand up and face her anxiety—the deep, dark, debilitating dread that rules her everyday life. Because what stops her from going out into the world and just living is going to get a whole lot worse. She’s leaving for college in the fall, where she’ll be confronted with even more to worry about. When Jonas crashes into Brennan—in a harmless, albeit embarrassing fender bender—the two teens connect in ways they never expected. As friends, they help each other overcome their biggest falls and faults, and soon discover that while love can’t fix everything, it’s sometimes a place to start.”

It’s My Life – Stacie Ramey

“Jenna’s never let her cerebral palsy get her down. But when she discovers that her condition was actually caused by an injury at birth, she’s furious with her parents, who withheld the truth. And as they push her to get yet another difficult procedure, Jenna feels her control over her life starting to slip. Enter Julian, Jenna’s childhood crush. He’s just moved back to town, and he’s struggling in school, so Jenna reaches out to him—anonymously—to help. Soon, their conversations are about so much more than class. She’s falling for him all over again, hard and fast. But would Julian still be interested in her if he knew who she really was? And can she find a way to take back her own narrative before she pushes away everyone she loves?”

The State of Grace – Rachael Lucas

“Grace is autistic and has her own way of looking at the world. She’s got a horse and a best friend who understand her, and that’s pretty much all she needs. But when Grace kisses Gabe and things start to change at home, the world doesn’t make much sense to her any more. Suddenly everything threatens to fall apart, and it’s up to Grace to fix it on her own.”

I Have No Secrets – Penny Joelson

“He thought his secret was safe because Jemma can’t speak or move. But Jemma observes all kinds of things about everyone around her. His secret is just one of them. And when a new technology means she may be able to communicate and reveal all she knows, Jemma no longer feels powerless in the face of this deadly secret. It’s a race against time before the killer acts again...or tries to stop her.”

This is Kind of an Epic Love Story- Kacen Callender

"Nathan Bird doesn't believe in happy endings. Although he's the ultimate film buff and an aspiring screenwriter, Nate's seen the demise of too many relationships to believe that happy endings exist in real life. Playing it safe to avoid a broken heart has been his MO ever since his father died and left his mom to unravel—but this strategy is not without fault. His best-friend-turned-girlfriend-turned-best-friend-again, Florence, is set on making sure Nate finds someone else. And in a twist that is rom-com-worthy, someone does come along: Oliver James Hernández, his childhood best friend. After a painful mix-up when they were little, Nate finally has the chance to tell Ollie the truth about his feelings. But can Nate find the courage to pursue his own happily ever after?"

The Disturbed Girl's Dictionary – NoNieqa Ramos

"Macy's school officially classifies her as disturbed, but Macy isn't interested in how others define her. She's got more pressing problems: her mom can't move off the couch, her dad's in prison, her brother's been kidnapped by Child Protective Services, and now her best friend isn't speaking to her. Writing in a dictionary format, Macy explains the world in her own terms—complete with gritty characters and outrageous endeavors. With an honesty that's both hilarious and fearsome, slowly Macy reveals why she acts out, why she can't tell her incarcerated father that her mom's cheating on him, and why her best friend needs protection . . . the kind of protection that involves Macy's machete."

A Time to Dance – Padma Venkatraman

"Veda, a classical dance prodigy in India, lives and breathes dance—so when an accident leaves her a below-knee amputee, her dreams are shattered. For a girl who's grown used to receiving applause for her dance prowess and flexibility, adjusting to a prosthetic leg is painful and humbling. But Veda refuses to let her disability rob her of her dreams, and she starts all over again, taking beginner classes with the youngest dancers. Then Veda meets Govinda, a young man who approaches dance as a spiritual pursuit. As their relationship deepens, Veda reconnects with the world around her, and begins to discover who she is and what dance truly means to her."

Jerk, California – Jonathan Friesen

"Plagued by Tourette's syndrome and a stepfather who despises him, Sam meets an old man in his small Minnesota town who sends him on a road trip designed to help him discover the truth about his life."

Otherbound – Corinne Duyvis

"Nolan doesn't see darkness when he closes his eyes. Instead, he's transported into the mind of Amara, a girl living in a different world. Nolan's life in his small Arizona town is full of history tests, family tension, and laundry; his parents think he has epilepsy, judging from his frequent blackouts. Amara's world is full of magic and danger—she's a mute servant girl who's tasked with protecting a renegade princess. Nolan is only an observer in Amara's world—until he learns to control her. At first, Amara is terrified. Then, she's furious. But to keep the princess—and themselves—alive, they'll have to work together and discover the truth behind their connection."

Wild and Crooked – Leah Thomas

"In Samsboro, Kentucky, Kalyn Spence's name is inseparable from the brutal murder her father committed when he was a teenager. Forced to return to town, Kalyn must attend school under a pseudonym . . . or face the lingering anger of Samsboro's citizens, who refuse to forget the crime. Gus Peake has never had the luxury of redefining himself. A Samsboro native, he's either known as the disabled kid because of his cerebral palsy, or as the kid whose dad was murdered. Gus just wants to be known as himself. When Gus meets Kalyn, her frankness is refreshing, and they form a deep friendship. Until their families' pasts emerge. And when the accepted version of the truth is questioned, Kalyn and Gus are caught in the center of a national uproar. Can they break free from a legacy of inherited lies and chart their own paths forward?"

Love From A to Z – S K Ali

"A marvel: something you find amazing. Even ordinary-amazing. Like potatoes—because they make French fries happen. Like the perfect fries Adam and his mom used to make together. An oddity: whatever gives you pause. Like the fact that there are hateful people in the world. Like Zayneb's teacher, who won't stop reminding the class how "bad" Muslims are. But Zayneb, the only Muslim in class, isn't bad. She's *angry*. When she gets

suspended for confronting her teacher, and he begins investigating her activist friends, Zayneb heads to her aunt's house in Doha, Qatar, for an early start to spring break. Fueled by the guilt of getting her friends in trouble, she resolves to try out a newer, "nicer" version of herself in a place where no one knows her. Then her path crosses with Adam's. Since he got diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in November, Adam's stopped going to classes, intent, instead, on perfecting the making of things. Intent on keeping the memory of his mom alive for his little sister. Adam's also intent on keeping his diagnosis a secret from his grieving father. Alone, Adam and Zayneb are playing roles for others, keeping their real thoughts locked away in their journals. Until a marvel *and* an oddity occurs... Marvel: Adam and Zayneb meeting. Oddity: Adam and Zayneb meeting."

You're Welcome Universe – Whitney Gardner

"When Julia finds a slur about her best friend scrawled across the back of the Kingston School for the Deaf, she covers it up with a beautiful (albeit illegal) graffiti mural. Her supposed best friend snitches, the principal expels her, and her two mothers set Julia up with a one-way ticket to a "mainstream" school in the suburbs, where she's treated like an outcast as the only deaf student. The last thing she has left is her art, and not even Banksy himself could convince her to give that up. Out in the 'burbs, Julia paints anywhere she can, eager to claim some turf of her own. But Julia soon learns that she might not be the only vandal in town. Someone is adding to her tags, making them better, showing off—and showing Julia up in the process. She expected her art might get painted over by cops. But she never imagined getting dragged into a full-blown graffiti war."

The One Thing – Marci Lyn Curtis

"Maggie Sanders might be blind, but she won't invite anyone to her pity party. Ever since losing her sight six months ago, Maggie's rebellious streak has taken on a life of its own, culminating with an elaborate school prank. Maggie called it genius. The judge called it illegal. Now Maggie has a probation officer. But she isn't interested in rehabilitation, not when she's still mourning the loss of her professional-soccer dreams, and furious at her so-called friends, who lost interest in her as soon as she could no longer lead the team to victory. Then Maggie's whole world is turned upside down. Somehow, incredibly, she can see again. But only one person: Ben, a precocious ten-year-old unlike anyone she's ever met. Ben's life isn't easy, but he doesn't see limits, only possibilities. After a while, Maggie starts to realize that losing her sight doesn't have to mean losing everything she dreamed of. Even if what she's currently dreaming of is Mason Milton, the magnetic lead singer of Maggie's new favorite band, who just happens to be Ben's brother."

NON-FICTION

Strangers Assume my Girlfriend is my Nurse – Shane Burcaw

"With his signature acerbic wit and hilarious voice, twenty-something author, blogger, and entrepreneur Shane Burcaw is back with an essay collection about living a full life in a body that many people perceive as a tragedy. From anecdotes about first introductions where people patted him on the head instead of shaking his hand, to stories of passersby mistaking his able-bodied girlfriend for a nurse, Shane tackles awkward situations and assumptions with humor and grace. On the surface, these essays are about day-to-day life as a wheelchair user with a degenerative disease, but they are actually about family, love, and coming of age."

Dyslexia is my Superpower (Most of the Time) – Margaret Rooke

"In more than 100 interviews, children and young adults reveal their personal tips and tactics for honing the creative benefits of dyslexia, enabling them to thrive in school and beyond. Strategies include ways to develop confidence and self-belief. The contributors have outlined specific approaches they feel have helped them, and others that haven't. The book contains stunning illustrations by 8-18 year olds with dyslexia."

Obsessed: A Memoir of My Life with OCD – Allison Britz

"A brave teen recounts her debilitating struggle with obsessive-compulsive disorder—and brings readers through every painful step as she finds her way to the other side—in this powerful and inspiring memoir. Until sophomore year of high school, fifteen-year-old Allison Britz lived a comfortable life in an idyllic town. She was a dedicated student with tons of extracurricular activities, friends, and loving parents at home. But after awakening from a vivid nightmare in which she was diagnosed with brain cancer, she was convinced the dream had been a warning. Allison believed that she must do something to stop the cancer in her dream from becoming a reality.

It started with avoiding sidewalk cracks and quickly grew to counting steps as loudly as possible. Over the following weeks, her brain listed more dangers and fixes. She had to avoid hair dryers, calculators, cell phones, computers, anything green, bananas, oatmeal, and most of her own clothing. Unable to act “normal,” the once-popular Allison became an outcast. Her parents questioned her behavior, leading to explosive fights. When notebook paper, pencils, and most school books were declared dangerous to her health, her GPA imploded, along with her plans for the future. Finally, she allowed herself to ask for help and was diagnosed with obsessive-compulsive disorder.”