

TOUGH TOPICS

Inspiring Conversations in Difficult Times

Kindergarten
through
Grade 2

Adoption

Gaston

By Kelly DiPuccio, Illus. by Christian Robinson
Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2014. 40p.

Gaston is a bulldog puppy who doesn't look quite right in his poodle pack, but learns that love is what makes a family.

Home at Last

By Vera B. Williams,
Illus. by Chris Raschka and Vera B. Williams
HarperCollins, 2016. 32p.

Lester is happy when he is adopted by Daddy Albert and Daddy Rich, however at night he finds he cannot fall asleep because he is alone and wonders when he will feel truly at "home."

Just Right Family: An Adoption Story

By Silvia Lopez, Illus. by Ziyue Chen
Albert Whitman & Company, 2018. 32p.

Meili thinks that getting a puppy would be better than a little sister. The whole family prepares for the new baby to arrive, and when she does, she's just right—like their family.

A Most Unusual Day

By Sydra Mallery, Illus. by E.B. Goodale
Greenwillow Books, 2018. 40p.

Everything is just a bit off for Caroline as she anxiously makes her way through an important day, the day her new adopted sister arrives.

Anxiety and Depression

The Color Thief: A Family's Story of Depression

By Andrew & Polly Peters, Illus. by Karin Littlewood
Albert Whitman, 2015. 24p.

A child describes the black and white world his father experiences when he falls

into depression and the color that returns gradually as he undergoes counseling.

Emily's Blue Period

By Cathleen Daly, Illus. by Lisa Brown
Roaring Brook Press, 2014. 56p.

Emily struggles with the depression and sadness she feels after her parents separate, making a connection between this difficult moment in her life and Picasso's Blue Period.

I Used to Be Afraid

By Laura Vaccaro Seeger
Roaring Books Press, 2015. 40p.

A little girl describes all the things she used to be afraid of, but is not anymore. A relatable look at the fears young children have and how to face them.

Me and My Fear

By Francesca Sanna
Flying Eye Books, 2018. 40p.

Fear follows us everywhere. Sometimes it grows so big it gets in the way of everyday things. When we share our feelings, they grow smaller and more manageable.

Body Image/Self Esteem

Giraffe Problems

By Jory John, Illus. by Lane Smith
Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018. 42p.

Giraffe doesn't feel good about his neck. It's too long, too bendy, too patterned, and everyone stares at it. Then he meets an admiring turtle who shows him how great differences can be.

My Hair is a Garden

By Cozbi A. Cabrera
Albert Whitman and Company, 2018. 32p.

After being teased by her classmates about her unruly hair, a young girl learns that

the best way to care for her hair and keep it beautiful and healthy is to treat it like a garden.

One of a Kind Like Me/Único como yo

By Lauren Mayeno Illus. by Robert Liu-Trujillo
Blood Orange Press, 2016. 31p.

Danny is determined to create the perfect purple princess costume for himself with Mama's help and despite the criticism of doubters.

Wild About Us!

By Karen Beaumont, Illus. by Janet Stevens
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. 32p.

Told by Warty Warthog, all the animals in the zoo look different or have unique things about themselves in this celebration of individualism.

Bullying

Eddie the Bully

By Henry Cole
Little Bee Books, 2016. 32p.

This young bully gets a second chance at making friends when the new student Carla shows him some kindness.

Lila and the Crow

By Gabrielle Grimmard
Annick Press, 2016. 32p.

Lila has just moved to a new town where she is teased about the color of her hair and skin. An encounter with a crow helps her to embrace her true self.

I Walk with Vanessa: A Story About a Simple Act of Kindness

By Kerascoët
Schwartz & Wade, 2018. 40p.

Troubled after seeing a classmate being bullied, a young girl takes simple but courageous action in this inspiring, wordless picture book.

Red

By Jan De Kinder, Tr. by Laura Watkinson
Eerdmans, 2015. 32p.

A girl and her friends laugh when a classmate blushes on the playground. When one student takes the teasing and bullying too far, the girl must make a critical decision.

Super Manny Stands Up

By Kelly DiPucchio, Illus. by Stephanie Graegin
Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2017. 40p.

Every day, Manny battles imaginary hordes of giants, cloud monsters and zombie bears. When he's faced with a bully in the school cafeteria, will he have the courage to do what he knows is right?

Body Safety

I Said No! A Kid-to-Kid Guide to Keeping Private Parts Private, 3rd ed.

By Kimberly and Zack King, Illus. by Sue Ramá
Boulden Publishing, 2016. 38p.

Zack and his mom have a conversation about proper and improper touching, and different ways to handle "red flag" situations. Open-ended questions for discussion make this a versatile resource.

Miles is the Boss of His Body

By Samantha Kurtzman-Counter and Abbie Schiller
The Mother Company, 2014. 32p.

On his 6th birthday, Miles' family respects his personal boundaries when he decides that he has had enough pinching, hugging and tickling.

Some Secrets Should Never Be Kept

By Jayneen Sanders, Illus. by Craig Smith
Educate2Empower Publishing, 2015. 32p.

Alfred got along with Lord Henry really well until one day Lord Henry began to tickle him in a way that made him uncomfortable. Alfred learns that some secrets should never be kept.

Divorce/Single Parent

I Love You More Than...

By Taye Diggs, Illus. by Shane W. Evans
Feiwel & Friends, 2018. 32p.

Portraying the separation of a child from a parent, the story reinforces the message of love and reassurance.

Monday, Wednesday, and Every Other Weekend

By Karen Stanton
Feiwel & Friends, 2014. 40p.

Traveling between his mother's house and his father's house causes confusion for Henry Cooper and his dog, Pomegranate. Which is "home"?

Walk With Me

By Jairo Buitrago, Illus. by Rafael Yockteng
House of Anansi Press, 2017. 35p.

Although her father no longer lives at her home, a little girl moves about her day encouraged by his enduring presence.

Weekends with Max and His Dad

By Linda Urban, Illus. by Katie Kath
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2016. 150p.

Third-grader Max adapts to his parents' recent divorce. During their visits, Max and his loving and humorous father play spies, work on homework, sing, and eat lots of pizza together.

Grief

Blue

By Laura Vaccaro Seeger
Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 40p.

This story celebrates the bond of friendship between a boy and his dog, and sensitively portrays the difficult emotions of dealing with the dog's death.

Death is Stupid

By Anastasia Higginbotham
The Feminist Press at CUNY, 2016. 64p.

In a candid look at death, this book acknowledges the anger, fear and confusion that we all feel when confronted with the fragility of life.

The Pond

By Nicola Davies, Illus. by Cathy Fisher
Graffeg, 2017. 32p.

Told from the perspective of a young boy

dealing with the loss of his father, this story communicates the experience of grief in a touching and loving manner while centering on the evolution of a small pond.

The Rabbit Listened

By Cori Doerrfeld
Dial Books, 2018. 40p.

A young boy deals with loss by talking to all of the stuffed animals in his house. Each of the animals tries to "fix" the problem for him, but in the end, the rabbit just listens, and helps the boy most of all.

A Stone for Sascha

By Aaron Becker
Candlewick, 2018. 48p.

A beloved family dog passes away and through a stone of grief cast by a little girl, travels through the cosmos to time immortal.

Where Do They Go?

By Julia Alvarez, Illus. by Sabra Field
Triangle Square, 2016. 20p.

In poetic form, this book provides answers to many tough questions children have about death.

Home Situation Change

Far Apart, Close in Heart: Being a Family When a Loved One is Incarcerated

By Becky Birtha, Illus. by Maja Kastelic
Albert Whitman & Company, 2017. 32p.

With a diverse cast of characters, the story validates the complex emotions of children who have a parent in jail, ultimately sharing the message of parental love.

Mabel and Sam at Home

By Linda Urban, Illus. by Hadley Hooper
Chronicle Books, 2018. 60p.

This book celebrates imaginative play as two children adjust to a move to a new home. The collection of three stories follows the children as they explore their new home through imagination and play.

Still a Family: A Story about Homelessness

By Brenda Reeves Sturgis, Illus. by Jo-Shin Lee
Albert Whitman and Company, 2017. 32p.

Even though they are separated into different homeless shelters, a girl and her parents maintain their loving bond.

Yard Sale

By Eve Bunting, Illus. by Lauren Castillo
Candlewick, 2015. 32p.

With her family downsizing from a house to a small apartment, a young girl reminisces about the items she is saying goodbye to at their yard sale.

Illness (Catastrophic)

Cancer Hates Kisses

By Jessica Reid Sliwerski, Illus. by Mika Song
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017. 40p.

A child sees her Mama fight cancer like a superhero, and joins in the fight with kisses, hugs and love.

The Remember Balloons

By Jessie Oliveros, Illus. by Dana Wulfekotte
Simon & Schuster, 2018. 48p.

Through metaphor, this sensitive picture book explains memory loss associated with aging and diseases such as Alzheimer's.

Immigration

Carmela Full of Wishes

By Matt de la Pena, Illus. by Christian Robinson
G.P. Putnam's Sons Books for Young Readers, 2018. 40p.

Carmela has lots of wishes on her birthday, but her most important wish is for her father to get his immigration papers so he can come home.

Dreamers

By Yuyi Morales
Neal Porter Books, 2018. 40p.

The author illustrates the story of how she and her son arrived in the United States as immigrants, showing her appreciation for the part the public library played in their transformation and the making of a new home.

The Journey

By Francesca Sanna
Nobrow Press, 2016. 48p.

"Last year our lives changed forever" so begins one family's heartbreaking journey as refugees. This is one family's story, and yet it is also a universal story of leaving, losing, and ultimately hoping for a better future.

A Piece of Home

By Jeri Watts; Illus. by Hyewon Yum
Candlewick Press, 2016. 32p.

Hee Jun and his family are slowly adjusting to their new home in America but it is difficult when everything is different and new. Learning that a Rose of Sharon is the same as a Korean mugunghwa blossom ties their two lives together and helps to make things just a little bit easier.

Natural Disaster

Flood

By Alvaro F. Villa
Capstone, 2013. 32p.

This wordless picture book shows the devastation caused by a natural disaster, as well as the resilience and hopefulness of a family whose home has been destroyed.

Hurricane Heroes in Texas (Magic Tree House Series)

By Mary Pope Osborne; Illus. by AG Ford
Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018. 112p.

Jack and Annie are transported back in time to the 1900 hurricane in Galveston, Texas where wind, rain and flooding threaten the city.

Two Bobbies: A True Story of Hurricane Katrina, Friendship, and Survival

By Kirby Larson and Mary Nethery, Illus. by Jean Cassels
Bloomsbury, 2013. 32p.

The story of a dog and a cat left behind during the evacuation of New Orleans when Hurricane Katrina ravaged the city. The amazing friendship of the two animals provides a hopeful perspective to a devastating natural disaster.

Resilience

After the Fall

By Dan Santat
Roaring Brook, 2017. 40p.

Humpty Dumpty's traumatic fall from the wall won't stop him from pursuing his passion although he must find a way to conquer his fears.

The Breaking News

By Sarah Lynne Reul
Roaring Brook, 2018. 48p.

When bad news leaves her parents scared and worried, a little girl finds that small acts of kindness can help in a big way.

The Invisible Boy

By Trudy Ludwig, Illus. by Patrice Barton.
Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2013. 40p.

A shy young boy who feels invisible uses art and drawing to keep from feeling lonely, until a new student to class befriends him.

What Do You Do With a Problem?

By Kobi Yamada, Illus. by Mae Besom
Compendium Books, 2016. 40p.

A child has a problem and is afraid to confront it; when he finally does, he learns it is not exactly what was expected.

Trauma/Violence/War

The Day War Came

By Nicola Davies, Illus. by Rebecca Cobb
Candlewick, in association with Help Refugees, 2018. 32p.

The war that comes to a young girl's town not only leaves it in rubble, it leaves her trying to find a place and people that war hasn't reached - both physically and emotionally.

The Forgiveness Garden

By Laura Thompson, Illus. by Christy Hale
Feiwel and Friends, 2012. 32p.

Two children, weary of generations of fighting and violence between their villages, take a courageous step toward peace by building a garden together. Inspired by the Garden of Forgiveness in Beirut, Lebanon.

Resources for Adults

Books

Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences: A Whole-Staff Approach

By Victoria E. Romero, Ricky Robertson, and Amber Warner
Corwin, 2018. 248p.

Covering topics including poverty, divorce, neglect, homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence and parent incarceration, this workbook style resource for K-12 educators shows how the school community

can work together to assist children impacted by these issues.

Tender Topics: Picture Books About Childhood Challenges

By Dorothy Stoltz, Elaine Czarnecki, and Buff Kahn
Huron Street Press/ALA, 2013. 176 p.

Grouped by topics such as life lessons, divorce, and trauma, this listing of more than 300 picture books with annotations are recommended to get adults and children talking about the subjects.

Articles

What Makes a Good Picture Book about Loss?

By Thom Barthelmess
Horn Book Magazine 89, no. 5 (Sept./Oct. 2013): 56-62
www.hbook.com/2013/09/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/what-makes-a-good-picture-book-about-loss

Barthelmess offers solid advice on how librarians can evaluate children's books about death.

Talking to Cyberbullied Kids—and to Bullies

By Tori Coridiano, PhD
School Library Journal. Accessed October 18, 2018.
www.slj.com/?detailStory=talking-to-cyberbullied-kids-and-to-bullies.

Article includes links to eight websites on coping with cyberbullying.

This Is How You Teach Kids About Consent

By the Good Men Project
Huffington Post/Life. Accessed November 28, 2018.
www.huffpost.com/entry/this-is-how-you-teach-kids-about-consent_b_10360296

A list of parenting action items (geared toward kids ages 1-21), created in the hope of raising a generation of children who have less rape and sexual assault in their lives.

After #MeToo: Educators Seek Strategies To Teach Students About Consent

By Drew Himmelstein
School Library Journal. Accessed December 27, 2018.
www.slj.com/?detailStory=after-metoo-educators-look-for-strategies-to-teach-students-about-consent

With systemic harassment and assault in the news, educators are teaching age appropriate lessons about boundaries, safety, and sexual assault.

Tender Topics: Exploring Sensitive Issues with Pre-K through First Grade Children

By Sue Mankiw and Janis Strasser
Young Children 68, no. 5 (Mar. 2013): 84-90
issuu.com/naeyc/docs/tender_topics_mankiw2_0313

A graded, annotated list of books for children about topics such as bullying, death, divorce, tragedy and disaster, with suggestions for how to use books to explore difficult issues with young children.

Parents Explain the Me Too Movement To Their Kids In Emotional Video

by Alanna Vagianos
Huffington Post/ Life. Accessed December 17, 2018
www.huffpost.com/entry/parents-explain-the-me-too-movement-to-their-kids-in-emotional-video_n_5ac51d16e4b09ef3b24309b4

In this video, three parents discuss the Me Too movement with their children, showing how difficult, but ultimately worthwhile, it can be to talk about sexual assault.

Websites

How to Talk to Children about Difficult News and Tragedies

American Psychological Association. Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children.aspx

A brief overview of how to proceed after a tragedy, which includes the following downloads and weblinks:

- "Disaster Distress Hotline"—SAMHSA.gov
- "Listen, Protect, Connect—Psychological First Aid for Teacher & Students"—Ready.gov
- "Tips for Talking with and Helping Children and Youth Cope after a Disaster or Traumatic Event—a Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers"—SAMHSA.gov
- "Helpful Hints for School Emergency Management: Psychological First Aid for Students and Teachers: Listen, Protect, Connect—Model & Teach"—U.S. Department of Education
- "Explaining the News to Our Kids"—CommonSenseMedia.org
- "Children & Grief: Guidance and Support Resources"—Scholastic.com
- "The Road to Resilience"—APA.org

I'm Your Neighbor website

Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.imyourneighborbooks.org

Resources for teachers and parents to promote using children's literature to connect "new arrivals" to "long term communities".

Talking about Difficult Topics with Children

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/talking-about-difficult-topics

Suggestions for parents about how to open and carry on a discussion about a sensitive topic.

Teaching Tolerance website

Accessed December 15, 2018
www.tolerance.org

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance has classroom resources like films and lesson plans on topics such as bullying, immigration, equality, and more.

TOUGH TOPICS

Inspiring Conversations in Difficult Times

Grade 3
through
Grade 5

Addiction/Substance Abuse

The Education of Ivy Blake

By Ellen Airgood
Nancy Paulsen Books, 2015. 240p.

The companion to *Prairie Evers*, Ivy's world is turned upside down when she is reunited with her alcoholic mother and moves back to the city where they must start a new life together.

The Seventh Wish

By Kate Messner
Bloomsbury, 2016. 250p.

Charlie devises a fantasy to help her cope with family upheaval caused by her sister's addiction to heroin.

Sunny Side Up

By Jennifer L Holm, Illus. by Matthew Holm
Graphix, 2015. 224p.

A new friend, some comic books, and a loving, supportive Gramps help Sunny find the strength to be able to work through her feelings surrounding her older brother's substance abuse problems.

Adoption

Forever or a Long, Long Time

By Caela Carter
HarperCollins, 2017. 320p.

Eleven year old Flora, her younger brother Julian, and their adopted mom delve into the siblings' past to find out more about the foster families they lived with, and to accept their new, forever home.

Greenglass House

By Kate Milford, Illus. by Jaime Zollars
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt Books, 2016. 400p.

Milo lives with his adopted parents in Greenglass House, a smugglers inn atop an

isolated cliff. Winter break is usually family time, but Milo is annoyed and then suspicious when a series of unusual guests arrive at the house.

Patina

By Jason Reynolds
Atheneum/Caitlyn Dlouhy Books, 2017. 240p.

Living with aunt and uncle because of her mother's debilitating diabetes, Patina joins the track team and struggles to help with her younger sisters, while keeping her grades up at a new school full of rich kids.

Soar

By Joan Bauer
Viking, 2016. 296p.

Jeremiah's dreams of playing baseball are put on hold not only because he learns he has a heart condition but also because he and his adoptive father must relocate for a temporary job for his father.

Three Pennies

By Melanie Crowder
Atheneum, 2017. 181p.

Marin risks the chance she has at a forever family in order to find the birth mother who abandoned her years ago.

Body Image/Self Esteem

El Deafo

By Cece Bell
Amulet Books, 2014. 233p.

In order to keep from being isolated, Cece must wear an external hearing device in order to hear. Being different in this way makes her lonely until she discovers a true friend.

Short

By Holly Goldberg Sloan
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017. 296p.

Julia is so self-conscious about her height that she won't even say the word "short," but being cast as a Munchkin in a summer production of *The Wizard of Oz* helps her learn to embrace her stature as one of the things that makes her unique.

Body Safety

Sex is a Funny Word

By Cory Silverberg, Illus. by Fiona Smyth
Triangle Square, 2015. 160p.

A graphic novel introduction to sex education that emphasizes body safety, respect and gender inclusion featuring a group of 4 friends--Zai, Cooper, Mimi and Omar-- who respond in different ways to the lessons in the book.

When the Crickets Stopped Singing

By Marilyn Cram-Donahue
Calkins Creek, 2018. 276p.

When the adults in her small town turn a blind eye to a popular citizen's predatory behavior, young Angie finds the courage to stand up for a friend and tell the truth.

Bullying

Hurricane Child

By Kheryn Callender
Scholastic Press, 2018. 224p.

Twelve-year-old Caroline is bullied and hated by everyone in the island community of St. Thomas for having been born during a hurricane. When she befriends Kalinda, her luck begins to turn around.

Rhyme Schemer

By K.A. Holt
Chronicle, 2014. 176p.

This novel in verse explores bullying from the bully's point of view, as the bully is caught and comes to terms with what he's done wrong and how to make amends.

Divorce/Single Parent

Big and Little Questions (According to Wren Jo Byrd)

By Julie Bowe.
Kathy Dawson Books, 2017. 228p.

Wren doesn't want her friends to think she's weird. She just wants everything the way it was before the summer, and that means not telling anyone that her parents are getting divorced. She can't even tell her best friend, who seems to like the mean, new girl better.

Dragons in a Bag

By Zetta Elliott. Illus. by Geneva B.
Random House Books for Young Readers, 2018. 160p.

In this urban fantasy, Mama has to go to court to fight their apartment eviction notice, so she leaves Jax with Ma, an enigmatic old woman who turns out to be a witch. As Jax and Ma travel through space and time to save three dragons, Jax meets his grandfather for the first time and learns more about his mother's childhood.

Raymie Nightingale

By Kate DiCamillo
Candlewick, 2016. 263p.

In order to draw her father who abandoned the family back home, Raymie enters a beauty contest. In order to do this, she has to do many good deeds and along the way befriends two other contestants in the contest who have also lost someone close to them.

Grief

Clayton Byrd Goes Underground

By Rita Williams-Garcia
Amistad, 2017. 181p.

Clayton loves nothing more than playing jazz with his grandpa, Cool Papa Byrd, and his band. After Cool Papa's sudden death, Clayton goes on a journey to Manhattan looking for his grandfather's friends and the peace he once had playing the blues.

Cry, Heart, But Never Break

By Glenn Ringtved
Illus. by Charlotte Pardi. Enchanted Lion, 2016. 32p.

Death personified comes to the home of four children and their ailing grandmother; throughout his visit, Death explains why sorrow and grief are as essential to life as delight and happiness.

The Distance to Home

By Jenn Bishop
Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2016. 240p.

Her beloved older sister's death changed everything about baseball-fanatic Quinnen's life. In a story that goes back and forth between last summer and present day, the reader finds out what happened on that terrible day and why Quinnen quit baseball.

Finding Langston

By Lesa Cline-Ransome
Holiday House, 2018. 104p.

Still grieving over his mother's death, eleven-year-old Langston deals with moving from Alabama to Chicago with his dad, and trying to avoid being bullied in school. But he finds solace in the library, the poetry of another Langston, and a secret that he learns about his mom.

My Father's Words

By Patricia MacLachlan
Katherine Tegen Books, 2018. 144p.

A terrible accident leaves Fiona and Finn O'Brien without a father, but his memory and his words remain to guide them through their grief.

Home Situation Change

Crenshaw

By Katherine Applegate
Feiwel and Friends, 2015. 256p.

When Jackson was a little kid he had an imaginary friend; a cat named Crenshaw. Crenshaw appeared about the time that the family lost their house and had to live in their van for a few months. Now it might be happening again and all of a sudden, Crenshaw is back.

The Journey of Little Charlie

By Christopher Paul Curtis
Scholastic Press, 2018. 256p.

After his father dies, twelve-year-old Charlie is forced to leave his home under the watch

of the nefarious Cap'n Buck. In their travels from South Carolina to Canada, in search of stolen property, Charlie experiences firsthand the ugliness of discrimination in pre-Civil War America.

Just Under the Clouds

By Melissa Sarno
Knopf, 2018. 229p.

Since her dad died, Cora, her younger sister, and her fiercely independent mother have moved from place to place, from friends' couches to a shelter, searching not just for a place to live, but for a place to belong.

Merci Suarez Changes Gears

By Meg Medina
Candlewick Press, 2018. 368p.

Everything is changing for eleven-year-old Merci at school and at home, but hardest of all are the changes in her beloved grandfather who has started forgetting important things, falling from his bike, and getting angry over nothing.

Illness (Catastrophic)

Just My Luck

By Cammie McGovern
HarperCollins, 2016. 240p.

Fourth grader Benn is struggling. His father is ill, his best friend moved away, and school isn't going well at all. He is doing his best to be a good person, student and brother, but no one seems to be noticing.

Love Like Sky

By Leslie C Youngblood
Hyperion, 2018. 296p.

Eleven-year-old Georgie worries about losing her best friend to a bully, about how to get close to a step sister, and how to help make things right when her little sister is diagnosed with bacterial meningitis.

Ms. Bixby's Last Day

By John David Anderson
HarperCollins, 2017. 336p.

Ms. Bixby is the sort of teacher that makes going to school worthwhile. When she is diagnosed with cancer, three boys decide to make sure her last day is perfect.

Immigration

Front Desk

By Kelly Yang
Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018. 304p.

Mia Tang and her parents expected to work hard when they came to the United States from China, but they had no idea how difficult things would be. After a year or two struggling to make ends meet, they find themselves managing a motel for a cruel and exploitive owner and Mia works the front desk.

Harbor Me

By Jacqueline Woodson
Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 192p.

Six kids meet for a weekly chat organized by their school. They discover it's safe to talk about what's bothering them from deportation and incarceration to fears of racial profiling.

Nowhere Boy

By Katherine Marsh
Roaring Brook Press, 2018. 368p.

After losing his father and fleeing a life of suffering in Aleppo, Syria, 14-year-old Ahmed meets Max, a self-centered American Boy, also newly arrived to Brussels, Belgium.

Stepping Stones: A Refugee Family's Journey

By Margriet Ruurs
Orca Books Publishers, 2016. 28p.

This unique book incorporates both Arabic and English to tell the story of a refugee family's journey. The artwork highlights a Syrian artist's work with stones, creating powerful images of the family's struggles.

We Came to America

By Faith Ringgold
Alfred A. Knopf, 2016. 32p.

Bold illustrations punctuate the short text in this celebration of the diversity found here in the United States because of immigration.

Natural Disaster

Ivy Aberdeen's Letter to the World

By Ashley Herring Blake
Little, Brown, 2017. 320p.

When a tornado rips through town, Ivy's family home is destroyed. Ivy deals with the stress of her family's unstable living situation, along

with the devastating loss of her diary and the fear that her crush on a girl will be revealed.

Ninth Ward

By Jewell Parker Rhodes
Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2012. 224p.

Twelve-year-old Lanessa must summon all her strength and resilience to survive Hurricane Katrina and the following floods that take her Ninth Ward home, as well as the life of her beloved Mama Ya-Ya.

The Rhino Who Swallowed a Storm

By LeVar Burton and Susan Schaefer Bernardo. Illus. by Courtenay Fletcher
Reading Rainbow, 2014. 32p.

A young mouse who once lost her home to a storm is frightened by severe weather; her father calms her fears with the tale of a rhino who was also displaced but learns "you're never really alone when bad things happen."

Resilience

Amal Unbound

By Aisha Saeed
Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 240p.

Amal's life is quiet and ordinary in a Pakistani village, but she had no complaints, and besides, she's busy pursuing her dream of becoming a teacher one day. Her dreams are temporarily dashed when--as the eldest daughter--she must stay home from school to take care of her siblings.

Everlasting Nora

By Marie Miranda Cruz
Starscape, 2018. 288p.

Life is not easy for Nora whose father has died in a fire that also destroyed the family home, leaving Nora and her mother to live in a shantytown in a Manila cemetery. When Nora's mother disappears, Nora struggles to fend for herself as she embarks upon a dangerous search.

Out of Left Field

By Ellen Klages
Viking Books for Young Readers, 2018. 320p.

It's 1957, so even though Katy is the best pitcher in her Berkeley, CA neighborhood, she can't play on the Little League team because she's a girl. She is determined to prove that women can and have played baseball, refusing to back down in the face of gender discrimination.

Suicide

All Three Stooges

By Erica S. Perl
Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2018. 240p.

Seventh graders Noah and Dash enjoy their friendship and shared love of comedy, but everything changes when Dash loses his father to suicide.

Friends For Life

By Andrew Norriss
David Fickling Books, 2015. 240p.

Four young teens, linked by thoughts of suicide and feeling like outsiders, form strong bonds of friendship. The author handles the topic with sensitivity and positive suggestions.

Trauma/Violence/War

Flowers for Sarajevo

By John McCutcheon, Illus. by Kristy Caldwell
Peachtree Publishers, 2017. 32p.

In the midst of war, Drasko takes over his father's job of selling flowers in the market; after a horrible tragedy occurs at the marketplace, Drasko is a witness to the kindness of a stranger.

The Night Diary

By Veera Hiranandani
Kokila, 2018. 272p.

Through diary entries, twelve-year-old Nisha tells her deceased mother about the family's search for religious freedom, safety and a new home as India gains its independence from the British in 1947.

Painting for Peace in Ferguson

By Carol Swartout Klein
Treehouse Publishing Group, 2015. 47p.

A community painting project reclaims neighborhoods damaged by rioting in Ferguson, MO in this moving photographic tribute to resilience and hope.

Resources for Adults

Books

Building Resilience in Students Impacted by Adverse Childhood Experiences: A Whole-Staff Approach

By Victoria E. Romero, Ricky Robertson, and Amber Warner
Corwin, 2018. 248p.

Covering topics including poverty, divorce, neglect, homelessness, substance abuse, domestic violence and parent incarceration, this workbook style resource for K-12 educators shows how the school community

can work together to assist children impacted by these issues.

Tender Topics: Picture Books About Childhood Challenges

By Dorothy Stoltz, Elaine Czarnecki, and Buff Kahn
Huron Street Press/ALA, 2013. 176 p.

Grouped by topics such as life lessons, divorce, and trauma, this listing of more than 300 picture books with annotations are recommended to get adults and children talking about the subjects.

Articles

What Makes a Good Picture Book about Loss?

By Thom Barthelmess
Horn Book Magazine 89, no. 5 (Sept./Oct. 2013): 56-62
www.hbook.com/2013/09/choosing-books/horn-book-magazine/what-makes-a-good-picture-book-about-loss

Barthelmess offers solid advice on how librarians can evaluate children's books about death.

Talking to Cyberbullied Kids—and to Bullies

By Tori Coridiano, PhD
School Library Journal. Accessed October 18, 2018.
www.slj.com/?detailStory=talking-to-cyberbullied-kids-and-to-bullies.

Article includes links to eight websites on coping with cyberbullying.

This Is How You Teach Kids About Consent

By the Good Men Project
Huffington Post/Life. Accessed November 28, 2018.
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A list of parenting action items (geared toward kids ages 1-21), created in the hope of raising a generation of children who have less rape and sexual assault in their lives.

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www.slj.com/?detailStory=after-metoo-educators-seek-strategies-to-teach-students-about-consent

With systemic harassment and assault in the news, educators are teaching age appropriate lessons about boundaries, safety, and sexual assault.

Tender Topics: Exploring Sensitive Issues with Pre-K through First Grade Children

By Sue Mankiw and Janis Strasser
Young Children 68, no. 5 (Mar. 2013): 84-90
issuu.com/naeyc/docs/tender_topics_mankiw2_0313

A graded, annotated list of books for children about topics such as bullying, death, divorce, tragedy and disaster, with suggestions for how to use books to explore difficult issues with young children.

Parents Explain the Me Too Movement To Their Kids In Emotional Video

by Alanna Vagianos
Huffington Post/ Life. Accessed December 17, 2018
www.huffpost.com/entry/parents-explain-the-me-too-movement-to-their-kids-in-emotional-video_n_5ac51d16e4b09ef3b24309b4

In this video, three parents discuss the Me Too movement with their children, showing how difficult, but ultimately worthwhile, it can be to talk about sexual assault.

Websites

How to Talk to Children about Difficult News and Tragedies

American Psychological Association. Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.apa.org/helpcenter/talking-to-children.aspx

A brief overview of how to proceed after a tragedy, which includes the following downloads and weblinks:

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- "Listen, Protect, Connect—Psychological First Aid for Teacher & Students"—Ready.gov
- "Tips for Talking with and Helping Children and Youth Cope after a Disaster or Traumatic Event—a Guide for Parents, Caregivers, and Teachers"—SAMHSA.gov
- "Helpful Hints for School Emergency Management: Psychological First Aid for Students and Teachers: Listen, Protect, Connect—Model & Teach"—U.S. Department of Education
- "Explaining the News to Our Kids"—CommonSenseMedia.org
- "Children & Grief: Guidance and Support Resources"—Scholastic.com
- "The Road to Resilience"—APA.org

I'm Your Neighbor website

Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.imyourneighborbooks.org

Resources for teachers and parents to promote using children's literature to connect "new arrivals" to "long term communities".

Talking about Difficult Topics with Children

National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children. Accessed December 15, 2018.
www.nspcc.org.uk/preventing-abuse/keeping-children-safe/talking-about-difficult-topics

Suggestions for parents about how to open and carry on a discussion about a sensitive topic.

Teaching Tolerance website

Accessed December 15, 2018
www.tolerance.org

A project of the Southern Poverty Law Center, Teaching Tolerance has classroom resources like films and lesson plans on topics such as bullying, immigration, equality, and more.

TOUGH TOPICS

Inspiring Conversations in Difficult Times

Grade 6
through
Grade 8

Addiction/Substance Abuse

Hey, Kiddo: How I Lost My Mother, Found My Father, and Dealt with Family Addiction

By Jarrett Krosoczka
Graphix, 2018. 320p.

In this candid graphic novel memoir, the author shares the realities of his mother's heroin addiction, and the family love and support that guided him as he embarked on the path to becoming an artist.

Solo

By Kwame Alexander, with Mary Hess
Blink, 2017. 460p.

Blade's story as the son of a washed-up rock star battling addiction brings to light the complex issues of families dealing with addiction.

Adoption

Beyond the Bright Sea

By Lauren Wolk
Dutton Books for Young Readers, 2017. 304p.

Found as a baby on the shores of the tiny island of Cuttyhunk, Crow dreams of finding her biological family. Her quest involves a secret island community, pirates, and lost treasure, as well as finding out the real meaning of family in this ocean-drenched historical fiction title.

Half a World Away

By Cynthia Kadohata
Atheneum, 2014. 240p.

Jaden, who was adopted at age 8, sees himself as an "epic fail" because of his troubled behavior and inability to love his adopted parents. As his parents prepare to adopt a second child, the experience stirs up complicated feelings and worries that he is being replaced.

Just Like Me

By Nancy Cavanaugh
Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2016. 256p.

Three very different girls who were adopted from the same orphanage in China meet at a summer camp, where they are to journal their bonding experience for the camp counselor.

Anxiety and Depression

Cicada

By Shaun Tan
Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018. 32p.

Bullied, ignored, overworked, and underappreciated, Cicada works in a dreary, grey office building. Inspired by the 17-year life cycle of a cicada, as well as a haiku, this picture book for older readers uses brief lines of text and stark oil paintings to depict Cicada's humiliation, isolation, and persistence.

Don't Call Me Crazy

By Kelly Jensen
Algonquin Young Readers, 2018. 240p.

Thirty-three authors share their personal stories of mental illness in a variety of comics, short stories, and lists. This reminder that our brains are wired differently, including a section on depression, provide the reader with new opportunities to talk about mental health.

Sheets

By Brenna Thummler
Lion Forge, 2018. 238p.

Marjorie must run the family laundromat for her father, who is dealing with a severe depression after her mother's death. Daily pressures mount, but Marjorie finds support from an unexpected friend.

Body Image/Self Esteem

Goodbye Stranger

By Rebecca Stead
Random House Books for Young Readers, 2015. 304p.

Bridge's friend Emily doesn't seem to be concerned when her intimate photograph is exposed via social media...

Insignificant Events in the Life of a Cactus

By Dusti Bowling
Sterling, 2017. 262p.

Born without arms, 13-year-old Aven has never let that stop her from doing everything she sets her mind to. But a move to a new state challenges her innate sense of humor and indomitable spirit.

Like Vanessa

By Tami Charles
Charlesbridge, 2018. 288p.

Inspired by Vanessa Williams' 1983 win as the first African-American Miss America, 8th grader Vanessa Martin auditions for her middle school's pageant, and learns how to develop her confidence, face her fears, and challenge mainstream beauty norms.

The Poet X

By Elizabeth Acevedo
HarperTeen; 1st Edition edition, 2018. 368p.

This novel in verse tells the story of Xiomara Batista, a young teen living in Harlem who finds her voice through poetry, using it to come to terms with her changing body and her difficult relationship with her religiously conservative mother.

Tight

By Torrey Maldonado
Nancy Paulsen Books, 2018. 192p.

Bryan's new friend, Mike, pressures him into doing things that are pretty risky. Bryan needs to learn to stand up for and be true to himself, even when it means confronting his good friend.

Bullying

Blackbird Fly

By Erin Entrada Kelly
Greenwillow Books, 2015. 304p.

Apple, who moved to Louisiana from the Philippines with her mom, has always been aware of her differences from her classmates. But when Apple enters middle school, her name is added to a secret list of the ugliest girls in

school, and her friends abandon her. She copes through her music and searches for a new place to be herself.

Brave

By Svetlana Chmakova
Yen Press, 2017. 248p.

This graphic novel puts Jensen, aspiring astronaut and kid struggling to stay afloat in middle, front and center. When he's recruited to work on the school newspaper, Jensen realizes the kids he thought were his friends might really be bullies.

The Parker Inheritance

By Varian Johnson
Arthur A. Levine Books, 2018. 352p.

When Candice finds an old letter, she has no idea it will lead her on a puzzling chase through the history of a small town in South Carolina to find a treasure and clear her grandmother's name. Candice and her new friend Brandon, dig into a past full of racial tensions, hidden identities, and ugly secrets in this page-turning mystery that toggles between past and present.

The Truth as Told By Mason Buttle

By Leslie Connor
Katherine Tegen Books, 2018. 226p.

Mason Buttle, large for his age and dyslexic, is plagued by bullies. He finds new joy in his friendship with the equally-bullied Calvin, but when Calvin goes missing, Mason searches for the truth about his disappearance as well as the death of his friend Benny fifteen months ago.

Twerp

By Mark Goldblatt
Yearling, 2016. 288p.

This is a funny, poignant story of one middle school boy's experience as the bully, and the lessons he learns from his mistakes. Told through journal entries written by Julian, the main character, this story will resonate with middle school students struggling with any aspect of bullying.

Divorce/Single Parent

Blended

By Sharon M. Draper
Atheneum, 2018. 320p.

Isabella's identity is split- one week she lives with her white mother and the next with her black father. She wishes her divided life could come together like a magical, musical symphony through the black and white keys on her piano.

See You in the Cosmos

By Jack Cheng
Dial Books, 2017. 320p.

A space-obsessed boy and his dog travel from Colorado to New Mexico, Las Vegas to LA meeting remarkable people along the way. His father

is dead, his mom is troubled, his brother isn't around, and there are secrets to uncover.

Speed of Life

By Carol Weston
Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2017. 352p.

Eighth grader Sofia's mother died only nine months ago, so she's shocked when her dad starts dating again. She's even more appalled when she learns her father's new girlfriend is none other than Dear Kate, a woman who writes an advice column for teens.

Grief

The Girl with More Than One Heart

By Laura Geringer Bass
Abrams, 2018. 288p.

When the death of her father forces her to seek new perspectives, Briana uses her imagination as a coping mechanism.

Rebound.

By Kwame Alexander
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2018. 414p.

After the sudden death of his father, twelve-year-old Charlie struggles to find an outlet for his grief, until his mother sends him to spend the summer with his grandparents and he throws himself into basketball.

Summerlost

By Ally Condie
Dutton Books for Young Readers, 2016. 272p.

Still reeling from the death of her father and younger brother in a car accident, Cedar and her family move into a quiet summer house to grieve and heal. An unexpected friendship and an intriguing mystery help Cedar move forward through her sadness one day at a time.

Home Situation Change

Dollar Kids

By Jennifer Richard Jacobson, Illus. by Ryan Andrews
Candlewick, 2018. 416p.

Twelve year old Lowen Grover's family seeks a new beginning in a new town through a "dollar program", allowing them to purchase a new home for a dollar. This story explores one family's struggle to process complex emotions such as guilt, grief, and finding themselves in a new community.

Train I Ride

By Paul Mosier
HarperCollins, 2017. 192p.

After the death of her mother followed by her grandmother, Ryder is on a train to live with an unknown great uncle in Chicago, her last chance before entering foster care. Anxious, hungry and lonely, Ryder finds strength from new friends on

the train and ultimately within herself too.

Two Roads

By Joseph Bruchac
Dial Books, 2018. 320p.

After months of riding the rails during the Depression, Pop reveals to twelve-year-old Cal that they are part Creek and sends Cal to live at a government school. Although the school's conditions are harsh, Cal finds a community of boys who help him connect to his heritage and understand his father.

Illness (Catastrophic)

Auma's Long Run

By Euabeth Odiambo
Carolrhoda Books, 2017. 304p.

Set during the 1980's, Auma's dreams of earning a running scholarship and becoming a doctor, are crushed as the HIV/AIDS epidemic ravages Kenya. Auma struggles to decide what to sacrifice, the survival of her siblings or the fulfillment of her dreams.

Echo's Sister

By Paul Mosier
HarperCollins, 2018. 240p.

El's excitement at starting seventh grade at a new school is derailed when her little sister Echo is diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. El struggles with the fear, stress, and difficult emotions that arise as the family fights to stay strong together for Echo.

Family Game Night and Other Catastrophes

By Mary E. Lambert
Scholastic, 2017. 256p.

Annabelle's mother suffers from hoarding, a compulsion which affects the whole family's psychological well-being in different ways, until they realize they need to come together to help mom and each other.

Halfway Normal

By Barbara Dee
Aladdin, 2017. 256p.

After completing two years of treatment for leukemia, Norah is ready to tackle seventh grade, challenging classes, new friends and being honest about her experience.

Immigration

All the Stars Denied

By Guadalupe Garcia McCall
Lee & Low Books, 2018. 322p.

Estrella and her family struggle to contend with the consequences of U.S. government's unjust and discriminatory repatriation policy during the Great Depression.

It Ain't So Awful, Falafel

By Firoozeh Dumas
Clarion Books, 2016. 384p.

Set in the tumultuous times around America's Bicentennial and growing anti-Iranian sentiment, Zomorod (Cindy) Yousefzadah finds comfort in family and making new friends.

My Family Divided: One Girl's Journey of Home, Loss, and Hope

By Diane Guerrero
Henry Holt and Company, 2018. 251p.

Diane's parents thought their luck was finally turning for the better, but instead, 14-year-old Diane comes home from high school to find that both her parents have been picked up by ICE to be deported. Adapted from Diane Guerrero's memoir, *In the Country We Love*.

Undocumented: A Worker's Fight

By Duncan Tonatiuh
Abrams ComicArts, 2018. 15p.

Despite the danger of deportation, Juan demands that undocumented workers be treated with dignity and respect.

Natural Disaster

Another Kind of Hurricane

By Tamara Ellis Smith
Schwartz & Wade, 2015. 336p.

Two boys, both grieving terrible losses, somehow connect with one another in the chaos after Hurricane Katrina.

Drowned City

By Don Brown
Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2015. 96p.

A graphic novel telling the story of Hurricane Katrina and its effects on the city of New Orleans. The graphic novel format will engage readers in understanding the complexities of natural disasters.

Resilience

Be Prepared

By Vera Brogso
Macmillan/ First Second, 2018. 256p.

Vera is excited for a summer of new friendships and fun activities at Russian summer camp, but nearly goes home early when confronted with mean girls, too much nature, and loneliness. Vera rallies to save the summer and find a place for herself in this graphic novel memoir.

Hunger

By Donna Jo Napoli
Paula Wiseman Books, 2018. 272p.

Lorraine and her family are tenant farmers in 1846 Ireland, entering the second year of the potato famine that is devastating their community. Lorraine and the other children of the community struggle to keep starvation, illness and death at bay as the wealthy British landowners continue to ignore the problem.

You May Already Be a Winner

By Ann Dee Ellis
Dial Books for Young Readers, 2017. 347p.

Olivia's father has left her, her mother and her little sister to fend for themselves in their trailer park home. When money gets tight, Olivia has to stay home to take care of her sister since daycare is too expensive, but she finds solace in her daydreams.

Sexual Abuse

Speak: The Graphic Novel

By Laurie Halse Anderson, Illus. by Emily Carroll
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2018. 384p.

Through her work on an art project, Melinda begins to face the terrifying fact that she was raped by an upperclassman at a party days before the start of her freshman year in high school.

The Summer of Owen Todd

By Tony Abbott
Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2017. 224p.

Owen and his best friend, Sean, are blissfully ready for summer vacation with nothing planned except trips to Cape Cod's beaches. Then Sean is sexually molested by their babysitter which drastically changes the course of the boys' lives.

Suicide

My Brother's Shadow

By Tom Avery
Schwartz & Wade, 2014. 176p.

Eleven-year-old Kaia isolates herself after her older brother's suicide. The mute wild boy who mysteriously appears outside her boarding school helps draw Kaia out of her mental funk as she begins to work through her grief.

Nest

By Esther Erlich
Wendy Lamb Books, 2014. 336p.

Set in the summer of 1972, Naomi "Chirp" Orenstein's mother is diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis; rather than face the disease and in the

throes of depression, Chirp's mom chooses to end her own life. Chirp and her family must stick together to find a way through this tough time.

Someone Else's Shoes

By Ellen Wittlinger
Charlesbridge, 2018. 304p.

This emotion-heavy title paints a picture of how divorce, suicide, and depression can affect a family. There may be a way twelve-year-old Izzy's can use her comedic skills to lighten and mend the situation, but it will be hard when she's stuck with her mom's boyfriend's on top of taking care of her cousin.

Trauma/Violence/War

A Game for Swallows

By Zeina Abirached
Graphic Universe, 2012. 188p.

A graphic memoir of the author's childhood in war-torn Beirut shows how amidst the horrors of conflict and fear one can always find solace in the strength of family and the comfort of neighbors.

Illegal

By Eoin Colfer, Illus. by Giovanni Rigano
Sourcebooks Jabberwocky, 2018. 122p.

Ebo leaves his home in Ghana hoping to reunite with his brother and sister and start a new life in Europe.

Long Way Down

By Jason Reynolds
Atheneum/Caitlin Dlouhy Books, 2017. 320p.

Will's brother has been shot, and Will is in an elevator on the way down to find his brother's killer, gun in hand. As the elevator descends, Will is visited by loved ones lost to gun violence from his past.

Refugee

By Alan Gratz
Scholastic, 2017. 352p.

Josef, Isabel, and Mahmoud are all fleeing war and/or violence in their homes as refugees in this novel that takes place in three different time periods.

The Stars Beneath Our Feet

By David Barclay Moore
Yearling, 2017. 304p.

Twelve year-old Lolly and his best friend Vega cope with the loss of Lolly's older brother to gang violence as they resist being dragged into the same cycle of violence themselves through community and creativity.

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Resources for teachers and parents to promote using children’s literature to connect “new arrivals” to “long term communities”.

National Alliance on Mental Illness, Learning to Help Your Child and Your Family, Teens and Young Adults

Accessed April 15, 2019.
www.nami.org/Find-Support/Teens-and-Young-Adults

Warning signs, conversation starters, and resources for how to help teens with mental illness, including but not limited to depression, eating disorders and addiction.

Talking about Difficult Topics with Children

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