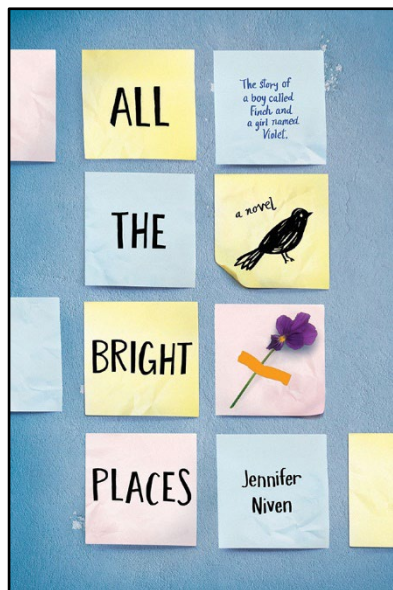


Mental Health Booklist

Young Adult Novels

Depression, Suicide

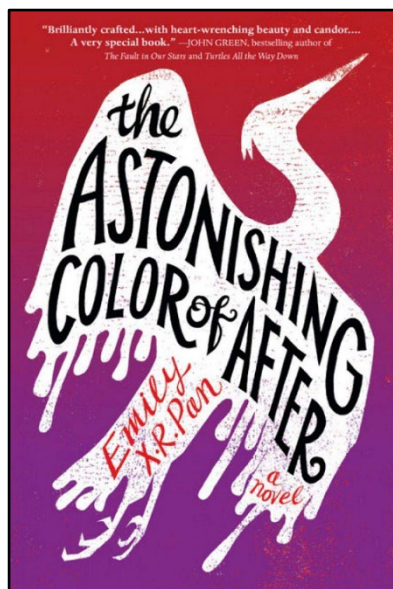


All the Bright Places
written by Jennifer Niven
Knopf, 2015
(suicidality, depression)

Theodore Finch is fascinated by death. Every day he thinks of ways he might kill himself, but every day he also searches for – and manages to find – *something* to keep him here, and alive, and awake.

Violet Markey lives for the future, counting the days until graduation, when she can escape her small Indiana town and her aching grief in the wake of her sister's recent death.

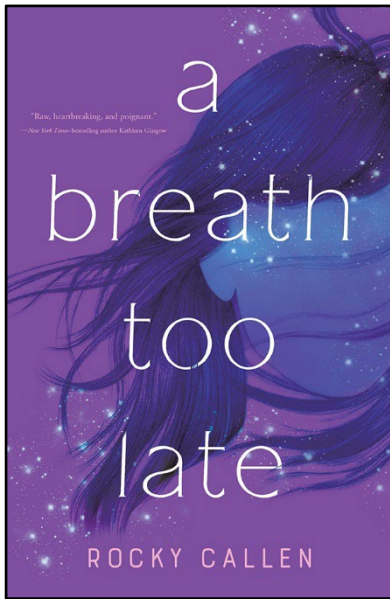
When Finch and Violet meet on the ledge of the bell tower at school – six stories above the ground – it's unclear who saves whom. Soon it's only with Violet that Finch can be himself. And it's only with Finch that Violet can forget to count away the days and start living them. But as Violet's world grows, Finch's begins to shrink.



The Astonishing Color of After
written by Emily X.R. Pan
Little, Brown, 2018
(loss by suicide)

Leigh Chen Sanders is absolutely certain about one thing: When her mother died by suicide, she turned into a bird.

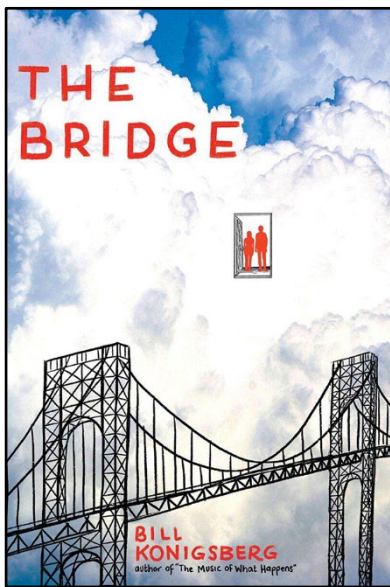
Leigh, who is half Asian and half white, travels to Taiwan to meet her maternal grandparents for the first time. There, she is determined to find her mother, the bird. In her search, she winds up chasing after ghosts, uncovering family secrets, and forging a new relationship with her grandparents. And as she grieves, she must try to reconcile the fact that on the same day she kissed her best friend and longtime secret crush, Axel, her mother was taking her own life.



A Breath Too Late
written by Rocky Callan
Henry Holt, 2020
(suicide, depression)

Seventeen-year-old Ellie had no hope left. Yet the day after she dies by suicide, she finds herself in the midst of an out-of-body experience. She is a spectator, swaying between past and present, retracing the events that unfolded prior to her death.

But there are gaps in her memory, fractured pieces Ellie is desperate to re-assemble. There's her mother, a songbird who wanted to break free from her oppressive cage. The boy made of brushstrokes and goofy smiles who brought color into a gray world. Her brooding father, with his sad puppy eyes and clenched fists. And Ellie's determined to find out why a piece of *her* was left behind.



The Bridge
written by Bill Konigsberg
Scholastic Press, 2020
(suicide, depression)

Aaron and Tillie don't know each other, but they are both feeling suicidal, and arrive at the George Washington Bridge at the same time, intending to jump. Aaron is a gay misfit struggling with depression and loneliness. Tillie isn't sure what her problem is – only that she will never be good enough.

On the bridge, there are four things that could happen:

Aaron jumps and Tillie doesn't.

Tillie jumps and Aaron doesn't.

They both jump.

Neither of them jumps.

Or maybe all four things happen.



By the Time You Read This I'll Be Dead

written by Julie Ann Peters

Little, Brown, 2011

(suicidality)

Daelyn is fifteen years old, and in her mind she is a failure. She tried slitting her wrists, and she was rescued. She tried swallowing chemicals, and after burning through her esophagus enough to lose the ability to speak, she was rescued. But this time will be different.

As readers see Daelyn's touching friendship with a quirky seventeen-year-old boy develop and her newfound willingness to share all of the pain she has held inside of her, they may just see a glimmer of hope. Will Daelyn see it though?

Raw and heartfelt, this is an inside look into the mind of a teen who has lost the will to fight and the parents that will do anything they can to help her survive. Still, there are some things that even loving parents can't protect you from – yourself.



The Coldest Winter I Ever Spent

written by Ann Jacobus

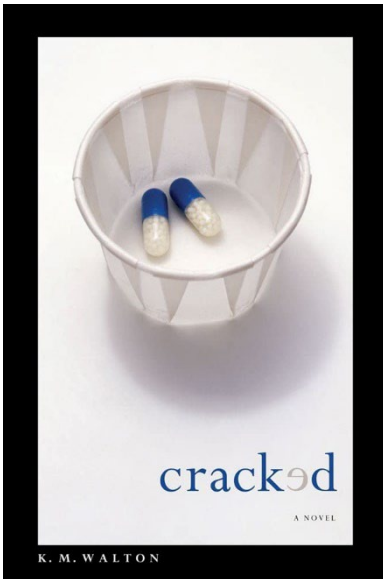
Carolrhoda Lab, 2023

(suicidality, anxiety, substance abuse)

Eighteen-year-old Del is in a healthier place than she was a year and a half ago: She's sober, getting treatment for her depression and anxiety, and volunteering at a suicide-prevention hotline. Her own suicide attempt is in the past, and living in San Francisco with her beloved aunt has helped her see a future for herself.

But when Aunt Fran is diagnosed with terminal cancer, Del's equilibrium is shattered. She's dedicated herself to saving every life she can, but she can't save Fran. All she can do is help care for her aunt and try to prepare herself for the inevitable—while also dealing with a crush, her looming first semester at college, and her shifts at the crisis line.

After Aunt Fran asks for her help with a mind-boggling final request, Del must confront her own demons and rethink everything she thought she knew about life and death.



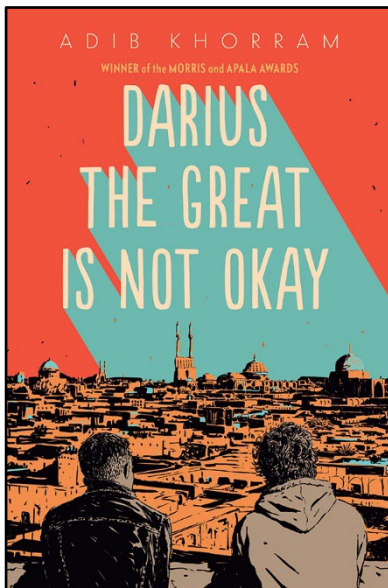
Cracked

written by K.M. Walton
Simon & Schuster, 2012
(suicidality)

Victor hates his life. He's relentlessly bullied at school and his parents constantly ridicule him at home.

Bull is angry. He's sick of his grandfather's drunken beatings. And he likes to take out his rage on Victor.

Determined to end it all, Victor takes a bottle of his mother's sleeping pills – only to be disappointed when he wakes up in the psych ward. And his roommate? None other than Bull, whose loaded-gun effort at self-defense has been labeled as a suicide attempt. Things go from bad to worse – until the boys discover they might just have something in common: a reason to live.

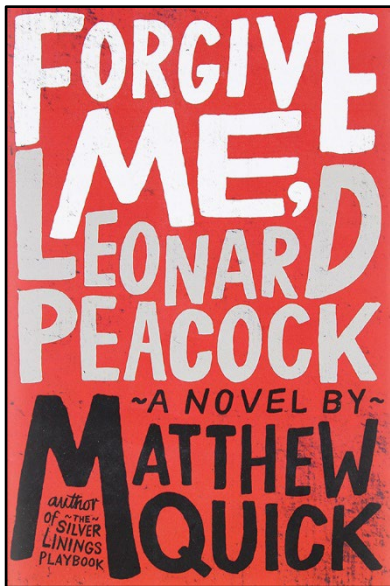


Darius the Great is Not Okay

written by Adib Khorram
Dial Books, 2018
(depression)

Darius Kellner speaks better Klingon than Farsi, and he knows more about Hobbit social cues than Persian ones. He's a Fractional Persian – half, his mom's side – and his first-ever trip to Iran is about to change his life.

Darius has never really fit in at home, and he's sure things are going to be the same in Iran. His clinical depression doesn't exactly help matters, and trying to explain his medication to his grandparents only makes things harder. Then Darius meets Sohrab, the boy next door, and everything changes. Soon, they're spending their days together, playing soccer, eating faludeh, and talking for hours on a secret rooftop overlooking the city's skyline. Sohrab calls him Darioush – the original Persian version of his name – and Darius has never felt more like himself than he does now that he's Darioush to Sohrab.



Forgive Me, Leonard Peacock

written by Adib Khorram

Little, Brown, 2013

(suicide, homicide)

In addition to the P-38, there are four gifts, one for each of my friends. I want to say good-bye to them properly. I want to give them each something to remember me by. To let them know I really cared about them and I'm sorry I couldn't be more than I was – that I couldn't stick around – and that what's going to happen today isn't their fault.

Today is Leonard Peacock's birthday. It is also the day he will kill his former best friend, and then himself, with his grandfather's P-38 pistol.

Maybe one day he'll believe that being different is okay, important even.

But not today.



Hold Still

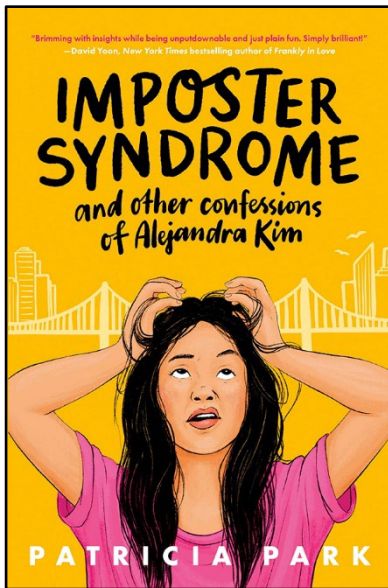
written by Nina LaCour

Dutton, 2009

(loss by suicide)

dear caitlin, there are so many things that i want so badly to tell you but i just can't.

Devastating, hopeful, hopeless, playful ... in words and illustrations, Ingrid left behind a painful farewell in her journal for Caitlin. Now Caitlin is left alone, by loss and by choice, struggling to find renewed hope in the wake of her best friend's suicide. With the help of family and newfound friends, Caitlin will encounter first love, broaden her horizons, and start to realize that true friendship didn't die with Ingrid. And the journal which once seemed only to chronicle Ingrid's descent into depression, becomes the tool by which Caitlin once again reaches out to all those who loved Ingrid – and Caitlin herself.



Imposter Syndrome and Other Confessions of Alejandra Kim

written by Patricia Park

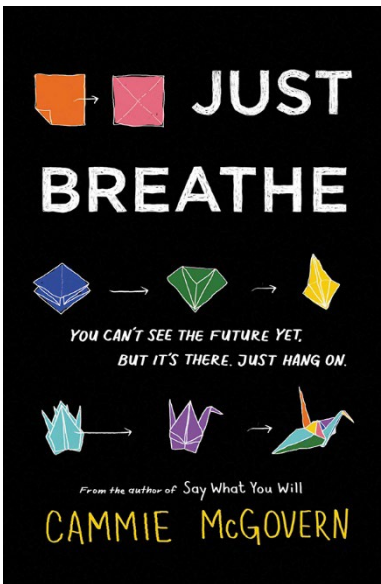
Crown, 2023

(suicidal parent)

Alejandra Kim feels like she doesn't belong anywhere.

Not at home, where Ale faces tense silence from Ma since Papi's passing. Not in Jackson Heights, where she isn't considered Latinx enough and is seen as too PC for her own good. Certainly not at her Manhattan prep school, where her predominantly white classmates pride themselves on being "woke." She only has to survive her senior year before she can escape to the prestigious Whyder College, if she can get in. Maybe there, Ale will finally find a place to call her own.

The only problem with laying low – a microaggression thrusts Ale into the spotlight and into the middle of a discussion she didn't ask for. But her usual keeping her head down tactic isn't going to make this go away. With her signature wit and snark, Ale faces what she's been hiding from. In the process, she might discover what it truly means to carve out a space for yourself to belong.



Just Breathe

written by Cammie McGovern

HarperTeen, 2020

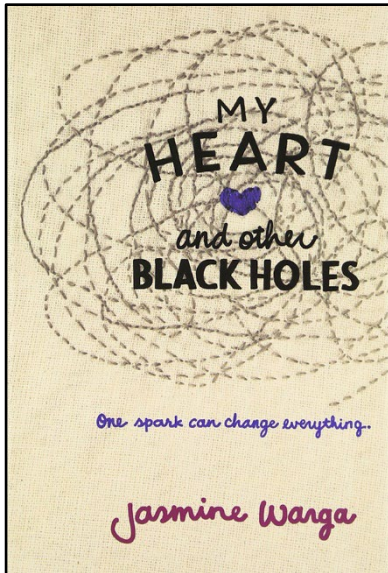
(depression, parental suicide)

David Scheinman is the popular president of his senior class, battling cystic fibrosis.

Jamie Turner is a quiet sophomore, struggling with depression.

The pair soon realizes that they're able to be more themselves with each other than they can be with anyone else, and their unlikely friendship starts to turn into something so much more.

But neither Jamie nor David can bring themselves to reveal the secrets that weigh most heavily on their hearts – and their time for honesty may be running out.



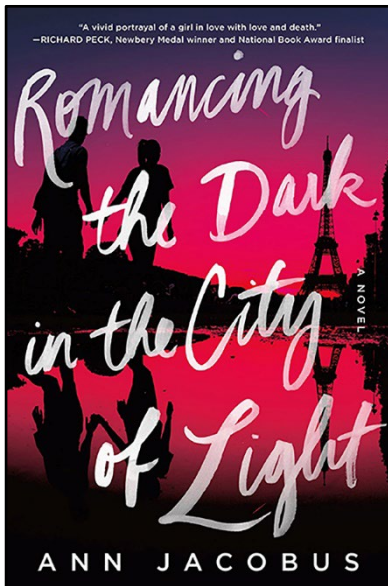
My Heart and Other Black Holes

written by Jasmine Warga
Balzer + Bray, 2015
(suicidality, depression)

Sixteen-year-old physics nerd Aysel is obsessed with plotting her own death. With a mother who can barely look at her without wincing, classmates who whisper behind her back, and a father whose violent crime rocked her small town, Aysel is ready to turn her potential energy into nothingness.

There's only one problem: she's not sure she has the courage to do it alone. But once she discovers a website with a section called Suicide Partners, Aysel's convinced she's found her solution – Roman, a teenage boy who's haunted by a family tragedy, is looking for a partner.

Even though Aysel and Roman have nothing in common, they slowly start to fill in each other's broken lives. But as their suicide pact becomes more concrete, Aysel begins to question whether she really wants to go through with it. Ultimately, she must choose between wanting to die or trying to convince Roman to live so they can discover the potential of their energy together.

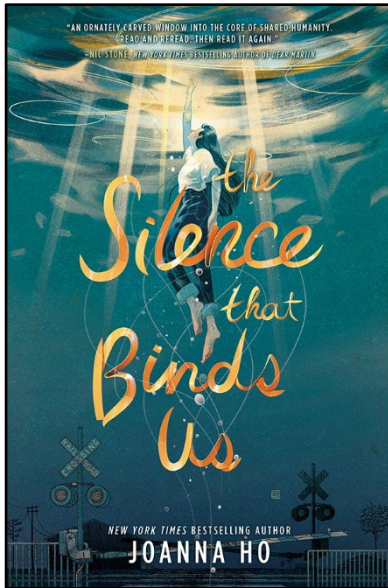


Romancing the Dark in the City of Life

written by Ann Jacobus
St. Martin's Griffin, 2015
(suicidality, depression, addiction)

Summer Barnes just moved to Paris to repeat her senior year of high school. After being kicked out of four boarding schools, she has to get on the right track or she risks losing her hefty inheritance. Summer is convinced that meeting the right guy will solve everything. She meets two. Moony, a classmate, is recovering against all odds from a serious car accident, and he encourages Summer to embrace life despite how hard it can be to make it through even one day. But when Summer meets Kurt, a hot, mysterious older man who she just can't shake, he leads her through the creepy underbelly of the city – and way out of her depth.

When Summer's behavior manages to alienate everyone, even Moony, she's forced to decide if a life so difficult is worth living.

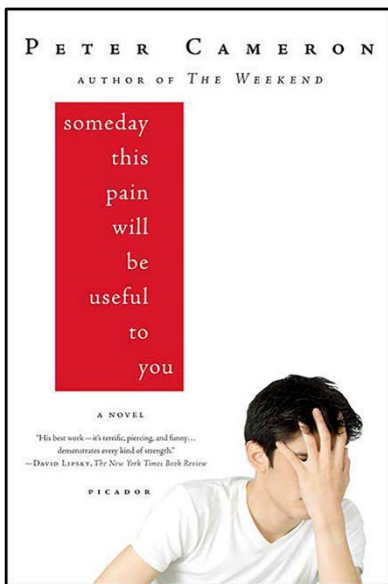


The Silence That Binds Us

written by Joanna Ho
HarperTeen, 2022
(suicide, racism)

Maybelline Chen isn't the Chinese Taiwanese American daughter her mother expects her to be. May prefers hoodies over dresses and wants to become a writer. When asked, her mom can't come up with one specific reason for why she's proud of her only daughter. May's beloved brother, Danny, on the other hand, has just been admitted to Princeton. But Danny secretly struggles with depression, and when he dies by suicide, May's world is shattered.

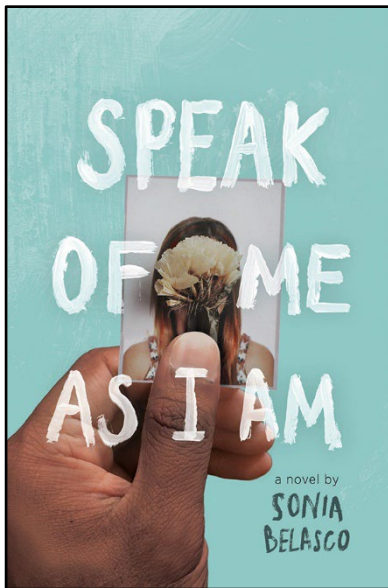
In the aftermath, racist accusations are hurled against May's parents for putting too much "pressure" on him. May's father tells her to keep her head down. Instead, May challenges these ugly stereotypes through her writing. Yet the consequences of speaking out run much deeper than anyone could foresee. Who gets to tell our stories, and who gets silenced? It's up to May to take back the narrative.



Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You

written by Peter Cameron
Picador, 2009
(depression)

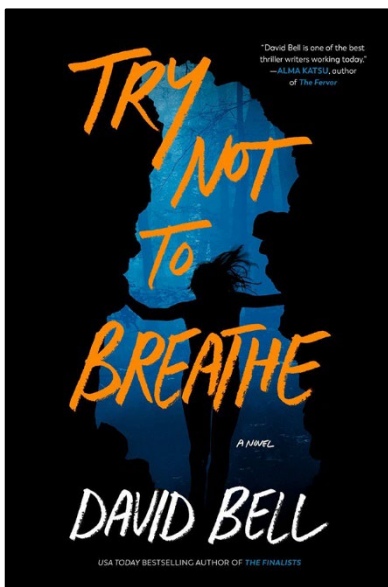
This is the story of James Sveck, a sophisticated, vulnerable young man with a deep appreciation for the world and no idea how to live in it. James is eighteen, the child of divorced parents living in Manhattan. Articulate, sensitive, and cynical, he rejects all of the assumptions that govern the adult world around him—including the expectation that he will go to college in the fall. He would prefer to move to an old house in a small town somewhere in the Midwest. *Someday This Pain Will Be Useful to You* takes place over a few broiling days in the summer of 2003 as James confides in his sympathetic grandmother, stymies his canny therapist, deplores his pretentious sister, and devises a fake online identity in order to pursue his crush on a much older coworker. Nothing turns out how he'd expected.



Speak of Me as I Am
written by Sonia Belasco
Philomel Books, 2017
(loss by suicide)

Melanie and Damon are both living in the shadow of loss. For Melanie, it's the loss of her larger-than-life artist mother, taken by cancer well before her time. For Damon, it's the loss of his best friend, Carlos, who took his own life.

As they struggle to fill the empty spaces their loved ones left behind, fate conspires to bring them together. Damon takes pictures with Carlos's camera to try to understand his choices, and Melanie begins painting as a way of feeling closer to her mother. But when the two join their school's production of *Othello*, the play they both hoped would be a distraction becomes a test of who they truly are, both together and on their own. And more than anything else, they discover that it just might be possible to live their lives without completely letting go of their sadness.



Try Not to Breathe
written by Jennifer R. Hubbard
Berkley, 2023
(suicidality)

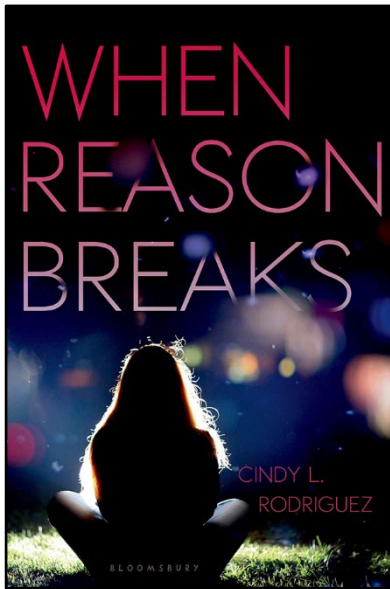
A traumatic experience in the line of duty forces thirty-year-old Avery Rogers to abandon both her relationship and her position as a Kentucky State Police officer. She retreats to a college town where she works an unfulfilling job as a security guard, breaking up fights between drunken frat boys.

But a frantic phone call turns Avery's life upside down. Her father – a retired cop who never fails to convey his disappointment in Avery – says her half sister is missing and in danger. Avery is sure Anna's just crashing with friends, but her father strong-arms her into searching for the sister she barely knows.

Anna Rogers is fed up with her family – a half sister who resents her existence and a domineering father who thinks it's okay for cops to shoot unarmed civilians. She hits the road to attend a protest against police brutality, unaware of the danger that awaits her there.

Just after catching a glimpse of Avery at the protest, Anna receives a shocking text. Now she's no longer road-tripping; she's *running*, pursued by an older sister she doesn't trust and a violent stranger who has been stalking her for weeks.

When Avery discovers Anna's hiding place near a remote cave system, she risks everything to save her. Little do the sisters know that a secret is catching up to them – a secret at the very heart of their family history.

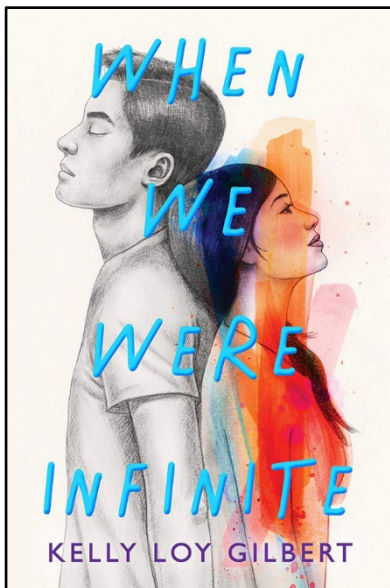


When Reason Breaks

written by Cindy L. Rodriguez
Bloomsbury, 2015
(depression, suicidality)

A Goth girl with an attitude problem, Elizabeth Davis must learn to control her anger before it destroys her. Emily Delgado appears to be a smart, sweet girl, with a normal life, but as depression clutches at her, she struggles to feel normal. Both girls are in Ms. Diaz’s English class, where they connect to the words of Emily Dickinson. Both are hovering on the edge of an emotional precipice. One of them will attempt suicide. And with Dickinson’s poetry as their guide, both girls must conquer their personal demons to ever be happy.

In an emotionally taut novel with a richly diverse cast of characters, readers will relish in the poetry of Emily Dickinson and be completely swept up in the turmoil of two girls grappling with demons beyond their control.

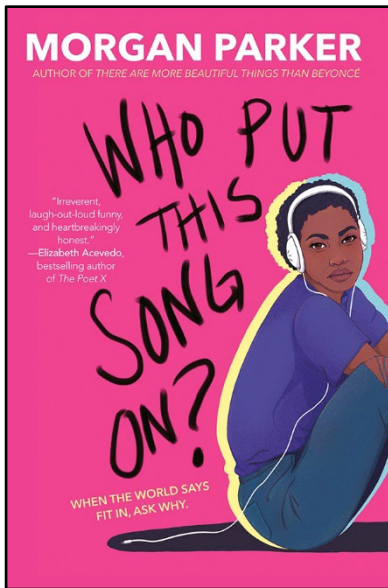


When We Were Infinite

written by Kelly Loy Gilbert
Simon & Schuster, 2021
(depression, anxiety, suicidality)

All Beth wants is for her tight-knit circle of friends – Grace Nakamura, Brandon Lin, Sunny Chen, and Jason Tsou – to stay together. With her family splintered and her future a question mark, these friends are all she has – even if she sometimes wonders if she truly fits in with them. Besides, she’s certain she’ll never be able to tell Jason how she really feels about him, so friendship will have to be enough.

Then Beth witnesses a private act of violence in Jason’s home, and the whole group is shaken. Beth and her friends make a pact to do whatever it takes to protect Jason, no matter the sacrifice. But when even their fierce loyalty isn’t enough to stop Jason from making a life-altering choice, Beth must decide how far she’s willing to go for him – and how much of herself she’s willing to give up.



Who Put This Song On?
written by Morgan Parker
Delacorte Press, 2019
(depression)

Trapped in sunny, stifling, small-town suburbia, seventeen-year-old Morgan knows why she’s in therapy. She can’t count the number of times she’s been the only non-white person at the sleepover, been teased for her “weird” outfits, and been told she’s not “really” black. Also, she’s spent most of her summer crying in bed. So there’s that, too.

Lately, it feels like the whole world is listening to the same terrible track on repeat – and it’s telling them how to feel, who to vote for, what to believe. Morgan wonders, when can she turn this song off and begin living for herself?