

Mental Health Booklist

Young Adult Novels

Trauma, Abuse



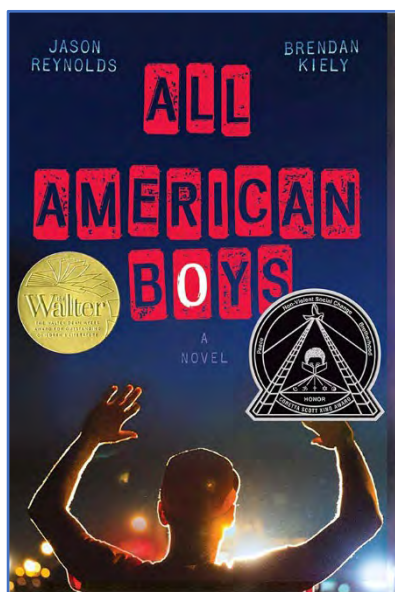
A Girl is a Half-Formed Thing

written by Eimear McBride

Coffee House Press, 2014

(trauma, abuse)

The story of a young woman's relationship with her brother, and the long shadow cast by his childhood brain tumor, touching on everything from family violence to sexuality and the personal struggle to remain intact in times of intense trauma.



All American Boys

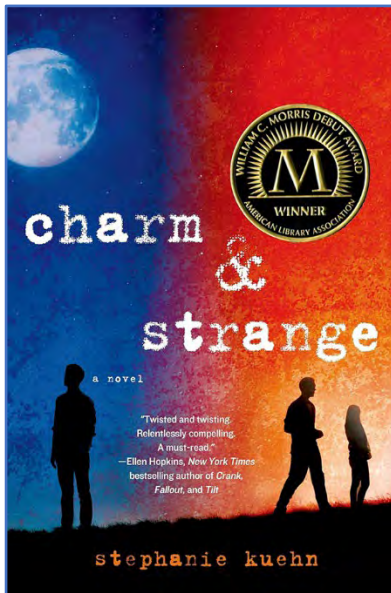
written by Jason Reynolds, Brendan Kiely

Atheneum, 2015

(trauma)

A bag of chips. That's all sixteen-year-old Rashad is looking for at the corner bodega. What he finds instead is a fist-happy cop, Paul Galluzzo, who mistakes Rashad for a shoplifter, mistakes Rashad's pleadings that he's stolen nothing for belligerence, mistakes Rashad's resistance to leave the bodega as resisting arrest, mistakes Rashad's every flinch at every punch the cop throws as further resistance and refusal to STAY STILL as ordered. But how can you stay still when someone is pounding your face into the concrete pavement?

There were witnesses: Quinn Collins – a varsity basketball player and Rashad's classmate who has been raised by Paul since his own father died in Afghanistan – and a video camera. Soon the beating is all over the news and Paul is getting threatened with accusations of prejudice and racial brutality. Quinn refuses to believe that the man who has basically been his savior could possibly be guilty. But then Rashad is absent. And absent again. And again. And the basketball team – half of whom are Rashad's best friends – start to take sides. As does the school. And the town. Simmering tensions threaten to explode as Rashad and Quinn are forced to face decisions and consequences they had never considered before.



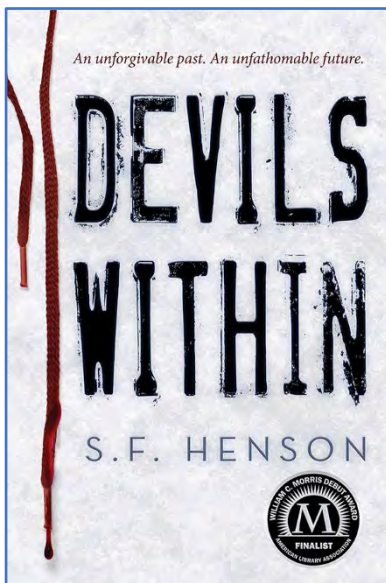
Charm and Strange
 written by Stephanie Kuehn
 St. Martin's Griffin, 2014
 (abuse survivor, PTSD)

Andrew Winston Winters is at war with himself.

He's part Win, the lonely teenager exiled to a remote Vermont boarding school in the wake of a family tragedy. The guy who shuts all his classmates out, no matter the cost.

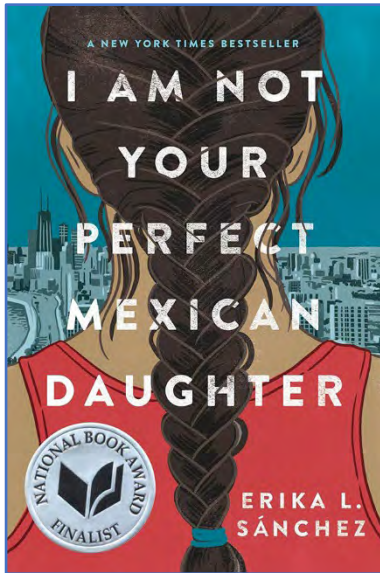
He's part Drew, the angry young boy with violent impulses that control him. The boy who spent a fateful, long-ago summer with his brother and teenage cousins, only to endure a secret so monstrous it led three children to do the unthinkable.

Over the course of one night, while stuck at a party deep in the New England woods, Andrew battles both the pain of his past and the isolation of his present. Before the sun rises, he'll either surrender his sanity to the wild darkness inside his mind or make peace with the most elemental of truths—that choosing to live can mean so much more than not dying.



Devils Within
 written by S.F. Henson
 Sky Pony Press, 2017
 (PTSD)

Nate was eight the first time he stabbed someone; he was eleven when he earned his red laces—a prize for spilling blood for "the cause." And he was fourteen when he murdered his father (and the leader of The Fort, a notorious white supremacist compound) in self-defense, landing in a treatment center while the state searched for his next of kin. Now, enrolled in a new school under a false name, so no one from The Fort can find him, he struggles to forge a new life, trying to learn how to navigate a world where people of different races interact without enmity. But he can't stop awful thoughts from popping into his head, or help the way he shivers with a desire to commit violence. He wants to be different—he just doesn't know where to start.



I Am Not Your Perfect Mexican Daughter

written by Erika L. Sanchez

Knopf, 2017

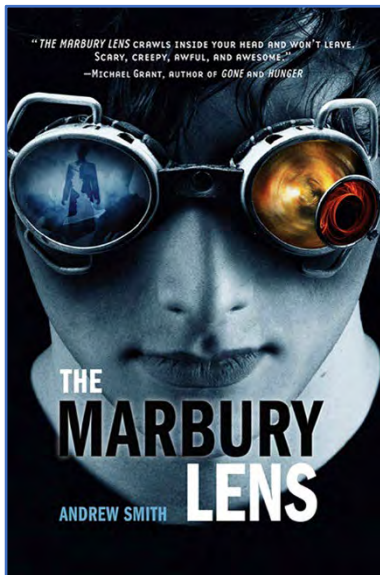
(trauma, grief)

Perfect Mexican daughters do not go away to college. And they do not move out of their parents' house after high school graduation. Perfect Mexican daughters never *abandon* their family.

But Julia is not your perfect Mexican daughter. That was Olga's role.

Then a tragic accident on the busiest street in Chicago leaves Olga dead and Julia left behind to reassemble the shattered pieces of her family. And no one seems to acknowledge that Julia is broken, too. Instead, her mother seems to channel her grief into pointing out *every possible way* Julia has failed.

But it's not long before Julia discovers that Olga might not have been as perfect as everyone thought. With the help of her best friend Lorena, and her first love, first everything boyfriend Connor, Julia is determined to find out. Was Olga really what she seemed? Or was there more to her sister's story? And either way, how can Julia even attempt to live up to a seemingly impossible ideal?



The Marbury Lens

written by Andrew Smith

Feiwel & Friends, 2010

(trauma, mental illness)

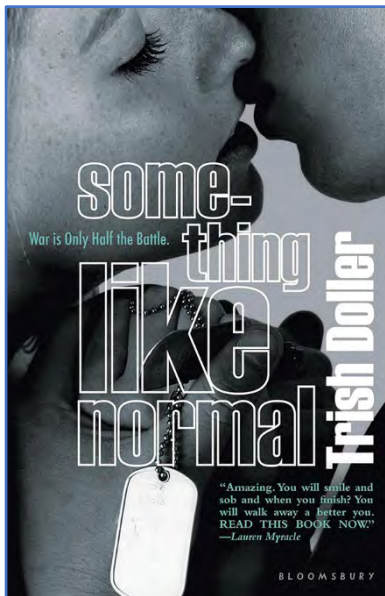
Sixteen-year-old Jack gets drunk and is in the wrong place at the wrong time. He is kidnapped. He escapes, narrowly. The only person he tells is his best friend, Conner. When they arrive in London as planned for summer break, a stranger hands Jack a pair of glasses. Through the lenses, he sees another world called Marbury.

There is war in Marbury. It is a desolate and murderous place where Jack is responsible for the survival of two younger boys. Conner is there, too. But he's trying to kill them.

Meanwhile, Jack is falling in love with an English girl, and afraid he's losing his mind.

Conner tells Jack it's going to be okay.

But it's not.



Something Like Normal

written by Trish Doller

Bloomsbury, 2013

(PTSD)

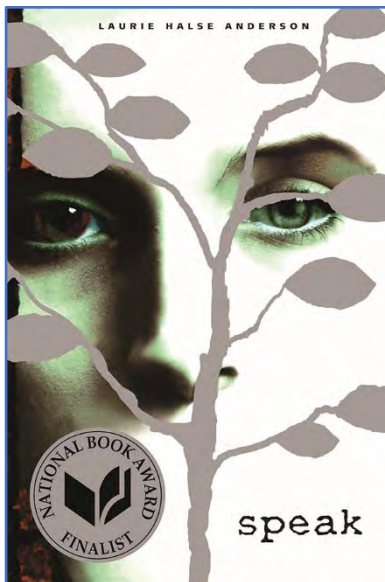
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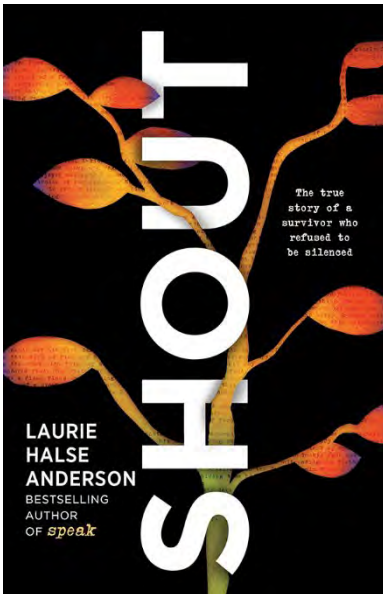
Speak

written by Laurie Halse Anderson

Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 1999

(sexual assault, trauma)

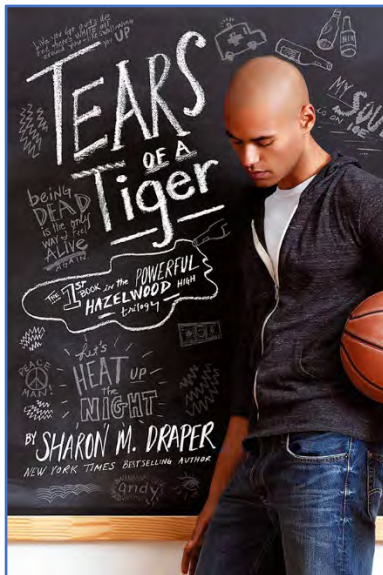
Freshman year at Merryweather High is *not* going well for Melinda Sordino. She busted an end-of-summer party by calling the cops, and now her friends – and even strangers – all hate her. So she stops trying, stops talking. She retreats into her head, and all the lies and hypocrisies of high school become magnified, leaving her with no desire to talk to anyone anyway. But it's not so comfortable in her head, either – there's something banging around in there that she doesn't want to think about. She can't just go on like this forever. Eventually, she's going to have to confront the thing she's avoiding, the thing that happened at the party, the thing that nobody but her knows. She's going to have to speak the truth.



Shout

written by Laurie Halse Anderson
Viking, 2019
(sexual assault, trauma)

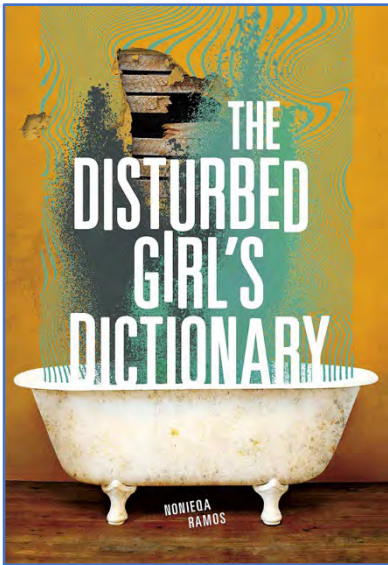
Enraged by how little in our culture has changed since her groundbreaking novel *Speak* was first published twenty years ago, Laurie Halse Anderson has written a poetry memoir that is as vulnerable as it is rallying, as timely as it is timeless. In free verse, she shares reflections, rants, and calls to action woven between deeply personal stories from her life that she's never written about before. Described as "powerful," "captivating," and "essential" in the nine starred reviews it's received, this must-read memoir is being hailed as one of 2019's best books for teens and adults. A denouncement of our society's failures and a love letter to all the people with the courage to say #MeToo and #TimesUp, whether aloud, online, or only in their own hearts, *SHOUT* speaks truth to power in a loud, clear voice-- and once you hear it, it is impossible to ignore.



Tears of a Tiger

written by Sharon Draper
Atheneum, 1994
(PTSD, suicidality)

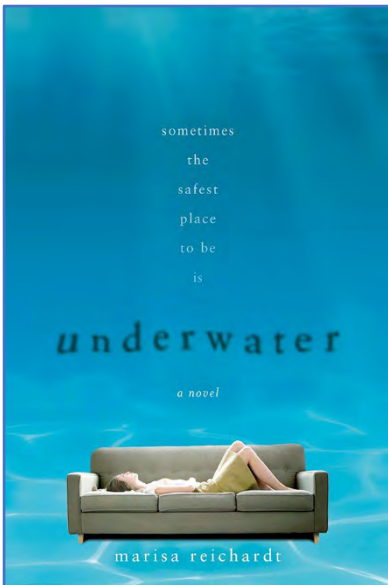
Tigers don't cry – or do they? After the death of his longtime friend and fellow Hazelwood Tiger in a car accident, Andy, the driver, blames himself and cannot get past his guilt and pain. While his other friends have managed to work through their grief and move on, Andy allows death to become the focus of his life. In the months that follow the accident, the lives of Andy and his friends are traced through a series of letters, articles, homework assignments, and dialogues, and it becomes clear that Tigers do indeed need to cry.



The Disturbed Girls Dictionary

written by Nonieqa Ramos
Carolrhoda Lab, 2018
(trauma, sexual abuse)

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.



Underwater

written by Marisa Reichardt
Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2016
(PTSD, gun violence)

Morgan didn't mean to do anything wrong that day. Actually, she meant to do something *right*. But her kind act inadvertently played a role in a deadly tragedy. In order to move on, Morgan must learn to forgive—first someone who did something that might be unforgivable, and then, herself. But Morgan can't move on. She can't even move beyond the front door of the apartment she shares with her mother and little brother. Morgan feels like she's underwater, unable to surface. Unable to see her friends. Unable to go to school. When it seems Morgan can't hold her breath any longer, a new boy moves in next door. Evan reminds her of the salty ocean air and the rush she used to get from swimming. He might be just what she needs to help her reconnect with the world outside. *Underwater* is a powerful, hopeful debut novel about redemption, recovery, and finding the strength it takes to face your past and move on.



The Secrets We Keep

written by Cassie Gustafson

Simon & Schuster, 2022

(incest/sexual abuse, obsessive compulsive disorder)

High school freshman Emma Clark harbors a secret—a secret so vile it could implode her whole world, a secret she’s managed to keep buried...until the day her best friend, Hannah, accuses Emma’s father of a heinous crime.

Following her father’s arrest and torn between loyalty to Hannah and to her family, Emma is devastated to learn she must testify against Hannah’s word in order to keep her family together. As Emma wrestles with this impossible decision, her fractured past begins to resurface piece by painful piece—causing the line to blur between her present-day reality and the dark fairy tales she writes to survive, all of which threaten to expose Emma’s long-buried truths.

The Secrets We Keep explores the complex, powerful bonds of friendship and family, asking the difficult question: At what point does Emma’s loyalty to another become a betrayal of herself? And perhaps the toughest question of all: Can Emma find the strength to finally unbury her secret?