

All about Realistic Fiction for Teens

By Jennifer Brannen

Here's what Realistic Fiction is:

Realistic fiction is real life set to fiction. It's about anything that can happen in real life -- good, bad, and in-between. It's real emotions and behaviors in real settings and encompasses the experiences of characters from all different backgrounds. It can also include extremes, both positive and negative, from high living with a focus on wealth, designer clothes, and private schools to the darker extremes of drug use, family breakdowns, and sexual assault. The only limit is reality, which, depending on one's point of view, is either a jump-off point into the fantastical or just where it starts to get interesting all on its own.

Here's what happens in a Realistic Fiction novel:

Well, almost anything except the fantastical is fair game. Stories are frequently about life changing events and their repercussions or opportunities for growth. It can be as sweet as first love and finding out who you really are (*Into the Wild Nerd Yonder*) or as bleak as coming to terms with a sexual assault (*Speak*). Friendships, love, sex, relationships, cliques, school, growing up, family issues, and leaving for college are all common themes in realistic novels for teens. Often, realistic fiction focuses on solving problems, voyages (sometimes literal ones) of self-discovery, and coming of age. These stories can be played for humor or for drama, but angst and silliness are not necessarily mutually exclusive in the same story.

A few things to keep in mind:

- Coming of age is a very common theme; the trials and tribulations of growing up take many forms but they comprise a classic and rich theme in YA realistic fiction.
- Issues that teens face every day frequently come up: bullying, cliques, drugs, divorce, crushes, fitting in vs. being true to yourself, etc.
- Realistic fiction can cross over into historical fiction, adventures, mysteries, and thrillers, but stays in the real world.
- Realistic fiction can be a good place to explore multicultural issues from race and religion to class and gender.
- Subject matter and tone can range from gritty and bleak to charming and fluffy.
- Realistic fiction isn't all problem novels and coming-of-age stories. Escapism is also a welcome part of the genre as is demonstrated by the popularity of authors such as Kate Brian, Sara Shepard, and Cecily von Ziegesar.

Why teens might like reading Realistic Fiction:

- To work through problems, issues, and ideas that they face in their own lives through literature.
- Because they want to explore how people who are different from them live, think, and feel.
- Because the humor and drama of real life appeals to them more than the world-bending turns of fantasy, science fiction, or horror.

Key Realistic Fiction titles:

- *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* by Sherman Alexie: In this funny and unsparing novel, Arnold tells his story of life on and off the Rez using words and his comics with self-awareness.
- *Speak* by Laurie Halse Anderson: A grim and eloquent story of an alienated and mute ninth-grader coming to terms with her rape and finding her voice again.
- *The Perks of Being a Wallflower* by Stephen Chbosky: Charlie comes to terms with his best friend's suicide, his own sexuality, and experiments with drugs while telling the story of his freshman year and new friendships in a series of letters to an anonymous friend.
- *The Chocolate War* by Robert Cormier: A small rebellion against being forced to sell chocolate for his school fundraiser has life-changing implications for one teen in this bleak YA classic where doing the right thing doesn't guarantee justice or a happy ending.
- *The First Part Last* by Angela Johnson: A pregnancy complication leaves teen father Bobby parenting his new daughter, Feather, by himself, contemplating "then" and "now."
- *The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau Banks* by E. Lockhart: Smart and sharply funny, Frankie turns her boarding school on its institutional head when she decides to take on the school's all-male secret society.

Key authors who write realistic fiction:

- **Chris Crutcher:** Uses sports of all sorts to help his characters find their ways in the world -- sometimes they're running from something, sometimes to it, and sometimes they run for the joy of it. Intense, outspoken, and funnier than the dark themes would indicate, get started with *Whale Talk* or *Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes*.
- **Sarah Dessen:** Her novels often cross over into romance, but they are first and foremost about girls coming to terms with their pasts, their futures, and their friendships. Issues include: abusive relationships (*Dreamland*), teen pregnancy (*Someone Like You*), and divorce (*Along for the Ride*). Get started with *Just Listen* or *The Truth About Forever*.
- **John Green:** He crafts an inspired mix of pathos and humor which doesn't shy away from the realities and sometimes the eccentricities of his teen characters. Love, cancer, math, and mystery have all played roles in his books so far. Get started with his first, Printz award-winning novel *Looking for Alaska* or his most recent novel *The Fault in Our Stars*.
- **Ellen Hopkins:** All of the darkest topics in YA fiction can be found in her novels in verse: drug addiction, abuse, prostitution, cutting, mental illness. Dark and even brutal, but very popular with teen readers. Get started with *Crank* or *Identical*.

- **Walter Dean Myers:** Gangs, war, romance, sports, crime, friendships -- Myers has explored all of it in his impressive body of work which explores, in particular, the urban African-American experience. Get started with Printz winner *Monster* or *Autobiography of My Dead Brother*.
- **Paul Volponi:** Sports, drugs, bullying, crime, and race all come into play in his high appeal urban-based novels, which are consistently good choices for reluctant readers. Get started with *Black and White* and *Crossing Lines*.

Crossover with other genres:

Realistic fiction can cross over with even fantastical genres if characters' emotions are depicted honestly and care is given to creating and hewing to an internal logic. Some genres such as romance and mystery are easier crossovers though.

Romance

Love takes many different forms and these romances reflect just a few.

- *Perfect Chemistry* by Simone Elkeles
- *Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli
- *Hard Love* by Ellen Wittlinger

Mystery

Mysteries are made in the details. They draw readers in through setting, careful plotting, and denouements made viable by emotionally realistic character development.

- *Thirteen Reasons Why* by Jay Asher
- *Tangerine* by Edward Bloor
- *Please Ignore Vera Dietz* by A. S. King

Urban fiction

Rooted in the urban teen experience, these stories are realistic and even gritty, though not always without humor.

- *Tyrell* by Coe Booth
- *Money Hungry* by Sharon G. Flake
- *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes

Crossover with Nonfiction:

Realistic fiction, not surprisingly, can cross over with a variety of nonfiction categories depending on what topics it's addressing. Here are some nonfiction categories to keep in mind for the avid Realistic Fiction reader including:

Memoir/Autobiography

Real-life stories compellingly told can echo both the humor and angst of realistic fiction.

- *Hole in My Life* by Jack Gantos
- *Fist, Stick, Knife, Gun: A Personal History of Violence in America* by Geoffrey Canada

History

Realism is not all in the eye of the contemporary beholder. Just as some realistic fiction readers find enjoyment in historical fiction, they may also find pleasure in reading about some of the actual history that inspired those novels.

- *Hitler Youth: Growing Up in Hitler's Shadow* by Susan Campbell Bartoletti
- *Flesh & Blood So Cheap: The Triangle Fire and Its Legacy* by Albert Marrin

True Adventure

Real-life adventures can be just as breathtaking as fictional ones, as these books prove.

- *High Exposure: An Enduring Passion for Everest and Unforgiving Places* by David Breashears (Alex winner)
- *The Lady and the Panda: The True Adventures of the First American Explorer to Bring Back China's Most Exotic Animal* by Vicki Croke
- *Between a Rock and a Hard Place* by Aron Ralston

Crossover with adult titles/authors:

When suggesting crossover reads with adult titles, it's useful to keep in mind that sex, language, and violence (quite often in combination) are often dialed up in adult realistic fiction.

- **Sherman Alexie:** Teens who enjoyed the humor and unflinching emotions of *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* may also find much to enjoy in Alexie's adult fiction, especially his short story collections. Get started with *The Lone Ranger and Tonto Fistfight in Heaven*.
- **Roddy Doyle:** Rife with humor and generally set in Ireland (often working-class Dublin), Doyle's earlier novels may hold particular appeal for teens because they feature younger protagonists looking for ways to define themselves in relation to their world. Get started with *The Commitments*.
- **Katie Fforde:** Light and gentle, Fforde's books are humorous stories of women finding themselves and their place in the world and (often) finding love. Get started with *Restoring Grace*.
- **Jodi Picoult:** Her novels are complex explorations of her characters' lives and the ethical and emotional choices they face. She would be a good crossover for teens who enjoy Sarah Dessen's stories. Get started with *My Sister's Keeper*.

Here's how to talk with Realistic Fiction fans:

- Realistic fiction fans aren't likely to think of themselves as such. They may express a lack of interest in the fantastic or paranormal or they may be drawn to stories that reflect their own lives. Listen carefully to how they describe the stories they enjoy.
- Tone may be important to your realistic fiction readers. Some are seeking the release of humor, others are drawn to grittiness and problems, while others want a mix of emotional intensity and lightness.
- Teens don't just read realistic fiction to sort through their problems vicariously; they also read it to make themselves feel good. That may be through humor or simply feel-good stories where underdogs triumph, high school is conquered, and angst is at a minimum. Some examples include: *Dairy Queen* by Catherine Gilbert Murdock, almost anything by Meg Cabot, The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants series by Ann Brashares, and Carl Hiaasen's mysteries for tweens.
- Don't forget that novels in verse can be a very good choice for these readers. From *Make Lemonade* to *Crank*, there is a surprising variety in tone. (And don't forget to include them in a poetry display.)
- Find out if your reader is looking for a new series, not just a new book to read. Teen readers often enjoy immersing themselves in series. Series are a common occurrence in realistic fiction and, just like standalone novels, reflect its breadth in tone and content: from the materialistic jostling of the Clique novels and cheerful nastiness of the Pretty Little Liars series to the urban feel of the Bluford series and warm-hearted silliness of the Confessions of Georgia Nicolson series.
- Realistic fiction readers are likely to cross over into other realistic genres such as romance, adventure, mystery, or even historical fiction if the tone and the details resonate.

A few more tips:

- To market your realistic fiction, try creating displays and booklists around popular themes such as friendship, sports, or different cultures.
- Realistic fiction titles often work well for teen book clubs, especially at the beginning. Common experiences, pathos, and humor can all be access points for readers with different interests.

Jennifer Brannen is a Teen and Adult Services Librarian for Durham (NC) County Library. She also presents and writes about readers' advisory for adults, teens, and tweens.

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These books for teens, by literary legends like Harper Lee and J.D. Salinger and modern novelists including J.K Rowling and John Green, will show your teenager the best that being a bookworm has to offer. 30 Best Books for Teens for Young Adults to Read Right now. Some of these novels may be on required reading lists, but they definitely won't feel like homework. By Lindsey Murray. Apr 21, 2020. Lindsey Murray. John Green's debut into contemporary fiction offers up a new perspective from the kid who isn't the nerd or the most popular, but somewhere in between. The protagonist leaves his safe, predictable life looking for The Great Perhaps, a concept that will entice any teen who feels a bit restless. Simon & Schuster. 18 of 30. But what books do teenagers read and what genre is absorbing for them? We have asked some of our Skyeng students and found out that most teenagers are fond of detective and science fiction, but other genres are also worth mentioning. Here we provide must-read books that your teens will probably like. Detective stories. Crime novels keep younger readers engrossed as everybody wants to find out the required evidence and the murderer. And in the top list of detective stories popular among teenagers is certainly "Sherlock Holmes" by Arthur Conan Doyle. However, we really hope that the article turned out to be helpful and your teens will enjoy reading these books. Are your teens fond of reading? Do you have anything to recommend? All Fiction Action-Adventure Fan Fiction Historical Fiction Realistic Fiction Romance Sci-fi/Fantasy Scripts & Plays Thriller/Mystery. All Novels Action-Adventure Fan Fiction Historical Fiction Realistic Fiction Romance Sci-fi/Fantasy Thriller/Mystery Other. Please note that while we value your input, we cannot respond to every message. Also, if you have a comment about a particular piece of work on this website, please go to the page where that work is displayed and post a comment on it. Thank you! Name. See more ideas about books young adult, books, ya books. Teen Realistic Fic. Collection by Abington Public Library. 93. Pins. 399. Followers. Country Day School. Young Adult Fiction. Books For Teens. Fiction Books. Search Results for 31627010896408. Ya Books. Good Books. Books To Read. Music Books. Realistic Fiction. Night Book. African American Girl. Young Adult Fiction. New Teen. Ya Novels. Books For Teens. Teen Books. Bright Lights, Dark Nights. Short Stories featuring Realistic Fiction. Here are the top short stories, fanfiction, poetry, and posts about Realistic Fiction on Commaful, including topics like "new school", "story", and more. Click here to sign up for more stories about Realistic Fiction. Follow. Short Stories.

All about Realistic Fiction for Teens. Now www.ebscohost.com. issues, and leaving for college are all common themes in realistic novels for teens. Often, realistic fiction focuses on solving problems, voyages (sometimes literal ones) of self-discovery, and coming of age. These stories can be played for humor or for drama, but angst and silliness are not necessarily mutually exclusive in the same story.Â On our side, in addition to self-searching data or resources, we also refer to reviews from other sites about Realistic Fiction Novels For Teens in order to give out the own result. However, all sites we learn from are reliable, reputable and prestigious. Are the suggestions given to Realistic Fiction Novels For Teens sorted by priority order? Not completely. See more ideas about books, ya books, realistic fiction.Â Dear Justyce by Nic Stone. Incarcerated teen Quan Banks writes letters to Justyce McCallister, with whom he bonded years before over family issues, about his experiences in the American juvenile justice system. Book Club List. Book Club Books Book Clubs Book Lists. Brave. Cd Audio. Audio Books. Mendoza. Excellent Realistic Beginning Chapter Books for Kids. Meet Yasmin! by Saadia Faruqi, illustrated by Hatem Aly ages 6 - 9 What an adorable main character! Yasmin is an exuberant girl who is interested in everything from exploring to building to fashion. This book tells four short stories from Yasmin's life, all in chapters with lively, full-color illustrations. Each story shows Yasmin as a creative problem solver even when things get hard. Her Pakistani American culture is embedded throughout the story such as the foods Yasmin's family eats like naan or how she calls her father Baba. I LOVE th

See more ideas about books, ya books, realistic fiction.Â Dear Justyce by Nic Stone. Incarcerated teen Quan Banks writes letters to Justyce McCallister, with whom he bonded years before over family issues, about his experiences in the American juvenile justice system. Book Club List. Book Club Books Book Clubs Book Lists. Brave. Cd Audio. Audio Books. Mendoza. But realistic fiction, which offers a "slice of life," is perfect for those who are firmly grounded in reality. The below novels touch on widely varying snapshots of the human experience in ways so real that you won't believe they're fiction. Here are our picks for the best realistic fiction books to add to your shelf. 01 of 16. The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas.Â John Green's novel about love and terminal illness was turned into a fan-favorite movie with Shailene Woodley and Ansel Elgort. Don't forget the tissues when reading The Fault in Our Stars. 13 of 16. "Realistic" may be a bit of a stretch here as far as genre goes, but the emotions this novel evokes, as well as the discussion of gender identity it raises, are all too real and all too necessary. I'll Give You the Sun.Â It's a beautifully written story of the power of art and envy, pain and family, love and loss. It's hands-down one of the best teen novels of 2014, realistic or otherwise. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian. Common Sense Media editors help you choose Realistic Fiction for Tweens and Teens. Captivating stories set in the world as we know it.Â Stories about navigating friendships, family dynamics, and real-life romances all resonate. From funny classroom adventures to challenging down-to-earth dilemmas, the books on our list are sure to grab readers. For more great tween and teen reads, check out 50 Books All Kids Should Read Before They're 12 and Best Book Series for Teens. Browse Realistic Fiction for Tweens and Teens. All ages. Preschoolers (2-4). Forget unicorns and wizards and introduce your kids to these realistic fiction books. You're excited that your kids like to read. But they seem to read only fantasies and not much else! If so, introduce them to some more realistic fiction books for kids and give them a more well-rounded reading ...Â "Harriet the Spy" by Louise Fitzhugh In "Harriet the Spy," Brinkley explains, "Harriet M. Welsch tracks everything she knows about everybody. But when her notebook ends up in the wrong hands, everybody discovers what she's written. Harriet must find a way to put her life and her friendships back together."

The best realistic fiction books for teens. :) Score. A book's total score is based on multiple factors, including the number of people who have voted for it and how highly those voters ranked the book. All Votes Add Books To This List. The Truth About Forever by Sarah Dessen (Goodreads Author). 4.12 avg rating 213,795 ratings. Tags: best, fictions, for, realistic, teens. 5 likes Like. Lists are re-scored approximately every 5 minutes. But realistic fiction, which offers a slice of life, is perfect for those who are firmly grounded in reality. The below novels touch on widely varying snapshots of the human experience in ways so real that you won't believe they're fiction. Here are our picks for the best realistic fiction books to add to your shelf. 01 of 16. The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. Angie Thomas The Hate U Give \$12. Shop. Angie Thomas's The Hate U Give is acclaimed for the way it presents current issues like police brutality and socioeconomic disparity and has even been made into a movie. John Green's novel about love and terminal illness was turned into a fan-favorite movie with Shailene Woodley and Ansel Elgort. Don't forget the tissues when reading The Fault in Our Stars. 13 of 16. A book about realistic fiction might have a character learning to cope with mental illness or grieving the loss of a loved one. As I mentioned, it might be coming of age. This obviously isn't an exhaustive list of the themes realistic fiction deals with, but they all have in common that readers can take those messages and apply it to their own lives. This doesn't mean the messages have to be morally good, or that you have to be teaching your reader a valuable, applicable lesson! So where do we start with examples of realistic fiction? If you're interested in YA or books dealing with teen issues, here's a quick list of some famous books to get you started: The Hate U Give by Angie Thomas. The Fault in Our Stars by John Green.