

BZRK. Michael Grant. 2013. 416 p.

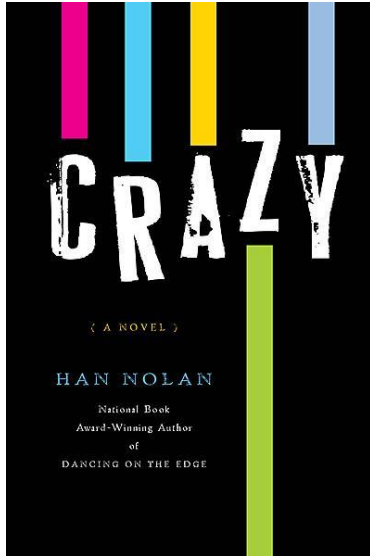
*Recommended for Grades 9-12
Science Fiction*

BZRK is set in the future and focuses on a war over mind control. On one side are Benjamin and Charles Armstrong, conjoined twins who own the affluent company Armstrong Fancy Gifts Corporation. The twins share their mind and are looked at as an atrocity. Their goal is to create a utopia of no conflict, no hunger, but also no free will; they wish to unite all human minds. They plan to do this by rewiring

the heads of states of the most powerful nations. In opposition is BZRK a group of young adults, who fight the Armstrong twins and their team, Nexus Humanus, on the microscopic level using nanotechnology to fight “in the meat” or inside other people’s brains. The members of BZRK take codenames of insane members of history to symbolize their possible fate. If they lose the war the only thing left is madness.

This novel takes a look at the development of nanotechnology and the terrifying possibilities that come with it. The novel focuses on the scientific aspect which is very interesting, but can get gritty and gory when describing battle scenes “in the meat” which includes descriptions of cells and other bacteria that could be unappealing to some readers. While the characters were well developed and interesting, it was sometimes hard to keep track of all of them since many had two names, their code-name and their birth name. While the concept of the novel was interesting, the execution could have been better. I would recommend this book to lovers of sci-fi and adventure who are in high school.

Elizabeth, teen book reviewer



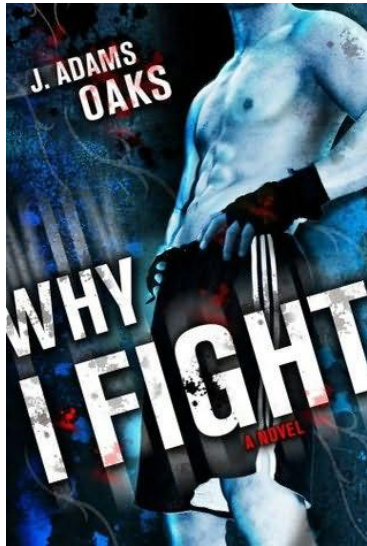
Nolan, Han. Crazy. 352 pgs.

Recommended for Grades 7-12

Realistic Fiction

Jason Papadopoulos's conscious isolation and secretiveness is due to the fact that his family has fallen apart in the past year. His mother died because of a stroke, and his father is the victim of mental illness. He lives in a fantasy world based off of ancient Greek mythology, and Jason tries to keep him under control. In addition, Jason has a series of imaginary voices in his head, that narrate his life, advise him, and help him keep his thoughts straight. Jason acts as his father's caretaker, but at fifteen, he's unequipped. He also worries that he, too, will one day lose his sanity. When he is placed in a group of other teens, Shelby, Haze, and Pete, to vent with the school psychologist, he learns to open up, but only after hearing about the others' troubles. His new friends try to help Jason as his life falls apart, but only after many obstacles do they become key factors in Jason's renaissance.

This novel, while at first seeming unrelatable, teaches the reader an important lesson. While everybody sometimes feels alone, they never really are; there are always people around who care. The interjections made by Jason's imaginary voices help give him insight into who he is. It's an easy read, and just as you think all the conflicts have ended, something else comes up. Themes such as death, mental illness, and loneliness are everyday ideas and this novel emphasizes their importance. I would recommend this novel to almost anybody out there. – Casey



Oaks, J. Adams. *Why I Fight*. 228 pg.

Recommended for Grades 9-12

Realistic Fiction

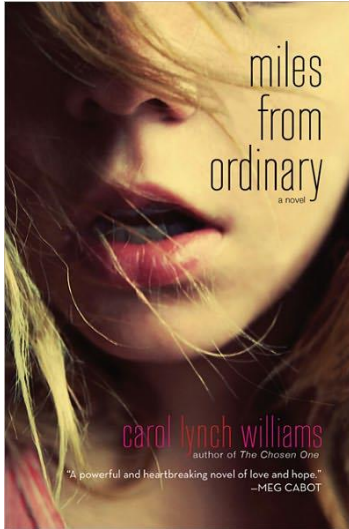
Wyatt Reaves is a young boy who starts out his life weak and scared. Wyatt grows up in a poor family. His parents are constantly getting drunk and they don't really care for him or about him. One day, his house is gone and he and his family are on the streets. That night, while his parents are asleep, his uncle Spade comes to take Wyatt with him because he is worried for him. First his uncle just takes him around for a while. Then they end up at Wyatt's grandmother's house. His grandma is a little bit crazy. She does very random things and stares at glass for no reason. Wyatt's uncle is constantly disappearing for "business" reasons.

One day uncle Spade takes Wyatt to the county fair. Little does Wyatt know this little trip will change his life forever. On his county fair trip, Wyatt joins in on a pig catching contest. During the contest a girl keeps getting to the pig before Wyatt. Finally Wyatt gets fed up and punches the pig in the face and knocks it out. Wyatt ends up winning the contest. His uncle sees that Wyatt is special; he has a knock-out punch. Uncle Spade starts Wyatt's fighting career. Wyatt would train with a friend of his uncle's as much as possible and would train by himself when he could. As Wyatt became bigger and stronger he was able to fight more and more guys and beat them.

As Wyatt got older he grew out of fighting, he missed his parents, and just wanted to go home to be with them. When Wyatt told Uncle Spade about this, Spade would always yell and fight with Wyatt because he was leaving him. At the end of the book Wyatt returns home. Wyatt and his father use the money that he received from fighting to build a parking lot next to a popular football stadium so they could charge people money to park when there was no more space at the stadium. They would collect a lot of money from that and were no longer a poor family.

I liked this book very much. It showed me to be grateful for what I have because as shown in the book, Wyatt came from a poor family that lived in a shelter and didn't have things that we have. I would recommend this book to any teen that is interested in a more action theme book and is interested in non-fiction reading.

-Alex, Teen Reviewer



Williams, Carol Lynch. Miles From Ordinary. 197p.

Recommended for Grades 7-9

Realistic Fiction

Lacey and her mom live a very exquisite lifestyle. Lacey likes to wander off into other people's yards and has eccentric habits. They have been living off of an inheritance from Lacey's Granddad as long as she could remember, but their small family is running out of money, fast. Lacey wonders if it is time to get jobs, but; will jobs be enough for them to survive? Ever since Lacey's Grandfather died, the same day Lacey was born, Lacey's mom has been acting bizarre. Lacey's mom talks to her long dead father. When he tells her to do something, she does it. So, when he tells her to hang herself and her daughter..... well, you will have to read the book to find out. Lacey will always have her aunt there to help her care for her mentally ill mother, right? Well, apparently not. And to make matters worse, Lacey has no friends. There is a very simple explanation for that, her mom. She may be ill, but Lacey still loves her. Will this be a fatal disaster?

This cliff-hanger will be most loved by more mature middle school students even though it could be loved by older readers. This book describes Lacey's struggle for a normal life. All she needs is a friend who understands her and will be there for her. Carol Lynch Williams has a way of writing the book so that by the end, you are begging for more. I personally thought that the book was a bit slow in the beginning. It seemed that the more I read, the more interesting the book became. Overall I enjoyed the book. Like the title says, this book really is Miles From Ordinary.

–Sophia, Teen Book Reviewer–



Lisa McMann. Wake. 210 pages.

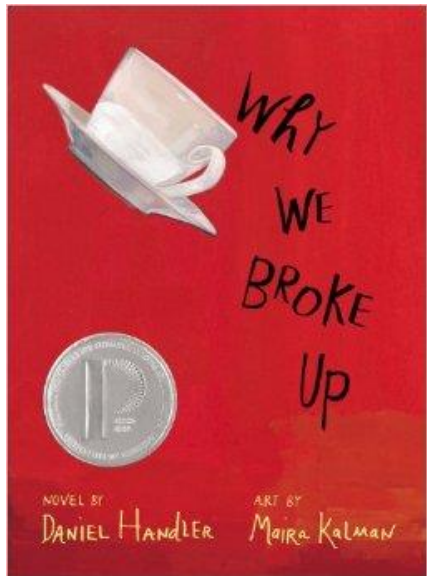
Recommended for Grades 7-12

Fantasy

Janie Hannagan is a seventeen-year-old who lives on the wrong side of town with her alcoholic mother who basically ignores her. Her best friend, Carrie, lives next door, and neither Carrie nor Janie's mother knows Janie's biggest secret. Since she was a small child, she could enter people's dreams. She is sucked into them if she's too close, or if the dream is powerful enough. She learns about the people around her, whether she wants to or not. Her constant passing out in school cues in a boy from school, Cabel, who befriends her. He's mysterious and rumors circle all around him. She gets to know the real him, but their relationship follows a bumpy path as Janie tries to figure out her life and how to control this "curse".

This novel is broken into sections that are labeled with the date and time they occurred. I like this layout because you can keep track of how the events unfold. Things aren't drawn out, but you don't feel like there isn't enough detail. I enjoyed this book because you really feel like you get to know Janie and her situation. In a way, her ability doesn't seem outlandish. You can relate to her worries and feelings. I would recommend this book to grades 7 or 8 and above. Wake is the first novel in a trilogy and I'm excited to read the rest of the series!

-Casey



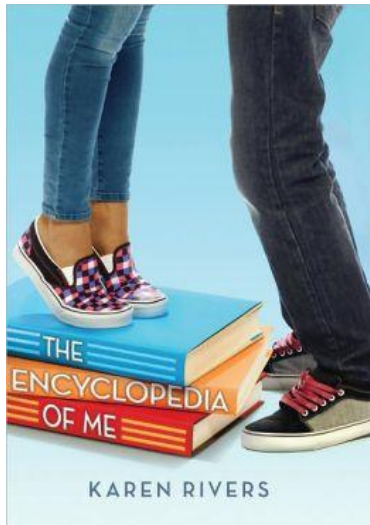
*Handler, Daniel. Why We Broke Up. 2011
Recommended for grade 7-12
Realistic Fiction*

Min Green writes a letter to her ex-boyfriend explaining why they broke up. Over the course of Min and Ed Slaterton's relationship, Min starts a box that holds memories that the two teens had together. Bottle caps, egg cubers, a movie ticket, a photo of a famous actress, an empty box of matches, a pinhole camera, a paper ninja star with a note on the inside and many more items that appear through Ed and Min's relationship. Min is ready to let go of Ed and decides to return every good feeling of Ed and Min dating by giving the box back to Ed. While Min and Ed were dating, they had a crazy idea to throw a party for the famous actress that they thought they saw one night while on a date. Ed and Min didn't even

get a chance to invite everyone before their relationship was over.

The pictures in the book help to visualize exactly what was in the box that Min kept. The book was lengthy but the semi short chapters help to keep the reader's attention. This book would be best for middle school and high school students. Even though the story ends in heartbreak, how the two teens got to that point is heartwarming and may even remind you of your own tale of heartbreak.

-Jordyn, Teen Reviewer



Rivers, Karen. The Encyclopedia of Me. 247p.

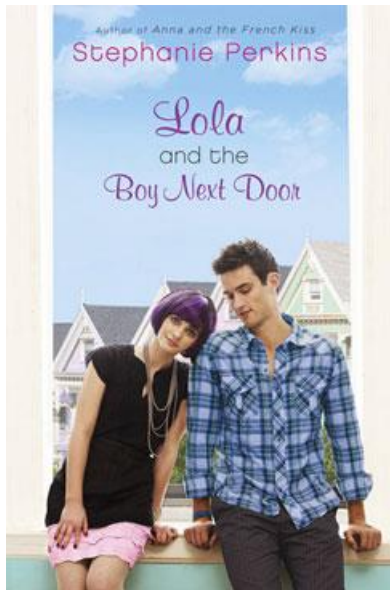
Recommended for Grades 5-8

Realistic Fiction

*Writing a book in general is challenging, but writing in the format of an encyclopedia? That may be a little more difficult to do, but this book couldn't have done it better. In *The Encyclopedia of Me* by Karen Rivers, Rivers tells a loving story of a 13-year-old girl's exciting summer. Isadora, better known as Tink, is grounded again. She decides to make time go by as she writes the story of her summer in an encyclopedia format. Starting at "aa" and ending at "zoo" you would be surprised at how these words can fit so perfectly into Isadora's life. She promises that "This is not a regular encyclopedia. It's better." And how right she was! Personally, this was one of the best books that I have read so far. It was very heart warming, original, and creative. Isadora and her bestie Freddie Blue meet the new kid on the street, Kai, and they hit it off instantly. They form new hobbies, go on adventures, and might even have a little summer romance but... you'll have to read it to find out for yourself! The only thing in Isadora's way is drama. She also faces difficulty at home due to her brother's autism and her parents constant fighting. These characters make the book much more believable and much more relatable for the readers.*

I think this book was interesting and very well written. In my opinion, this book is probably at a 5th -8th grade enjoyment level. I never wanted to put it down! I do feel someone with a more mature liking for books wouldn't like this as much, as it is exactly like a 13-year-old's life. All-in-all, I definitely recommend this book to middle school level readers!

-Georgie , Teen Book Reviewer



*Perkins, Stephanie. Lola and the Boy Next Door. 2011. 338pg.
Recommended for grades 9-12
Realistic Fiction*

In this realistic fiction story Lola lives a pretty ordinary and peaceful life until her twin neighbor's return. Lola has a rocker boyfriend, a great best friend and loving parents. These relationships are strained and some are ruined after the return of the neighbors. The twins Calliope and Cricket moved away so Calliope could pursue her ice skating career. When they return Lola has to face her emotions and can either forgive and forget their problems or ban them from her life. Calliope was the popular girl in school and wasn't very nice to Lola. Lola and Cricket had a thing going on in middle school and lied to her and grew distant.

Stephanie Perkins shows what it is like to lose a friend and what it is like to try and repair that friendship. The way she created Lola's personality and style added to the story and showed that her dad's and friend's love her for who she is. Also, she brings you in on Lola's decision making on who is the right guy for her; the boy next door or the 22 year old rocker.

Lola learns a lot about herself and that she shouldn't change because of what anyone else says. I recommend this book for anyone who is a fan of Stephanie Perkins and likes reading about self-identity.

-Gabriela, Teen Reviewer



McCormick, Patricia. Purple Heart. 199p.

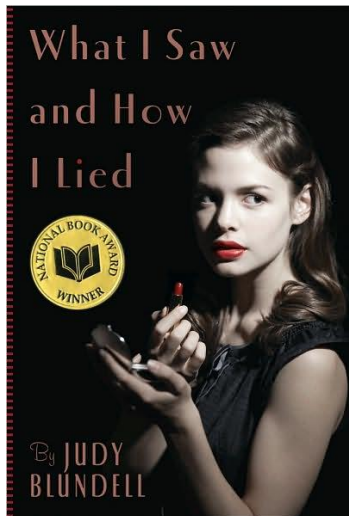
Realistic Fiction

Recommended for grade 8-12

One day Private Matt Duffy wakes up in a hospital bed in Iraq and is awarded a Purple Heart, but can't quite remember what he has done to deserve this award. He is confused and lost in his own thoughts. He has a plethora of different images scattered across his mind of what may have happened to him the day he was so injured that he woke up in this hospital. One image haunts him. It is the image of a young Iraqi boy being lifted from the ground with a bullet in his chest. He can't shake the feeling that he had something to do with his death. Eventually, Matt is sent back to combat with all of his buddies, where he aspires to be the soldier he once was again. He is terrified that in the moment he will not be able to pull the trigger if necessary. He views potential threats everywhere he looks. Once he finally finds out who is truly guilty he realizes that the entire situation is a complicated one.

Purple Heart is a very compelling read. It is suspenseful and will have you at the edge of your seat. Patricia McCormick did a beautiful job at making the reader feel for the characters within her book. She had a way of pulling you in and making you feel as though you were sitting with Matt Duffy in a hospital in Iraq. The story makes you feel as though you are the injured soldier going back into combat. The organization of the story will also help attract readers because of its lack of chapters and font size. This story is one that many would encourage young readers to try. There are many life lessons lurking around in such a short read.

Cassidy, Teen Reviewer.



*Blundell, Judy. What I Saw and How I Lied. 2008. 281p.
Recommended for grades 7 and up
Realistic Fiction*

Fifteen year-old Evelyn "Evie" Spooner lived in an ordinary house with her ordinary best friend, Margie Crotty, in 1947, after World War II had ended. Evie's stepfather, Joe Spooner, had finally returned home. Best of all, they are going on a vacation to Palm Beach, Florida! When the Spooner family finally arrives there, they stop at an elaborate hotel. It is there where Evie meets her first true love, Peter Coleridge, a young ex-GI who served in Joe's company in postwar Austria. However, Evie's mother offers to "chaperone" whenever Evie and Peter arrange for a date. Evie observes how Peter takes off his hat, the way he lit her (Evie's mother's) cigarette. Evie doesn't understand why her mother is always in the way. Or is it Evie that's in the way? Evie finds herself caught in a complex string of lies that she had once believed to be true. Then Joe, Peter, and Evie's mom leave on a boat to "sort things out", saying they'll come back soon. That's when a hurricane hits Florida and Evie is left to worry about the three of them. Joe comes back safely, so does Evie's mom. But they come back without Peter. When the family find themselves in court because of the tragedy, Evie forces herself to put on her mother's lipstick and betray her feelings for Peter.

The choice of words that are used and the continuation of excitable and horrendous events in the story build help to build suspense. Middle school and high school students especially will find this book convincing because of the romance and suspense of the story. Junior high, or middle school students, might not be able to relate to the story as well, but still may find this book very appealing. This book explains love, life, hope, and truth all in one. Teen readers will feel like they are watching a movie, because of the details that make every sentence easy to imagine. Reluctant readers should be encouraged to try this book as they will be drawn deeply into it.

-Shirley, Teen Reviewer