

**Annotated Bibliography of Contemporary Canadian Children's Novels Portraying
Characters with Disabilities (1995- 2009)**

Brenna (2010)

(JF) Junior Fiction: ages 8 and up

(IF) Intermediate Fiction: ages 11 and up

(YA) Young Adult Fiction: ages 14 and up

The 50 Canadian Novels in the Annotated Bibliography (scroll down to view annotations)

- Aker, D. (2007). *The space between*. Toronto: HarperCollins. YA
- Bell, W. (2006). *The blue helmet*. Random House of Canada. YA
- Brenna, B. (2005). *Wild orchid*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press. YA
- Brenna, B. (2007). *The moon children*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press. IF
- Carter, A. L. (2001). *In the clear*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. IF
- Choyce, L. (2004). *Smoke and mirrors*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. YA
- Dyer, K. C. (2002). *Seeds of time*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. IF
- Dyer, K. C. (2003). *Secret of light*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. IF
- Dyer, K. C. (2005). *Shades of red*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. IF
- Dyer, K. C. (2007). *Ms. Zephyr's notebook*. Toronto: Dundurn Press. IF
- Ellis, D. (1999). *Looking for X*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. IF
- Fairfield, L. (2009). *Tyranny*. Toronto: Tundra Books. YA
- Fournier, K. M. (2007). *Sandbag shuffle*. Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown Press. YA
- Frizzell, C. (2006). *Chill*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. YA
- Gilmore, R. (1995). *A friend like Zilla*. Toronto: Second Story Press. JF
- Gingras, C. (2009). *Pieces of me* (S. Ouriou, Trans.). Kids Can Press. YA
- Goobie, B. (2002). *Kicked out*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. YA
- Haworth-Attard, B. (2002). *Irish chain*. Toronto: HarperCollins. IF
- Holeman, L. (2002). *Search of the moon king's daughter*. Toronto: Tundra Books. YA
- Horrocks, A. (2006). *Almost Eden*. Toronto: Tundra Books. IF
- Huser, G. (2003). *Stitches*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. IF

Janz, H. L. (2004). *Sparrows on wheels*. Edmonton, AB: Doc Crip Press. YA

Johnston, J. (2006). *A very fine line*. Toronto: Tundra Books. YA

Lawrence, I. (2006). *Gemini summer*. New York: Delacorte Press. IF

Leavitt, M. (2004). *Heck, Superhero*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press. IF

Lekich, J. (2002). *The losers' club*. Toronto: Annick Press. IF

Little, J. (2005). *Forward, Shakespeare!* Victoria, BC: Orca Books. JF

Little, J. (2000). *Willow and Twig*. Toronto: Penguin Canada. IF

MacDonald, A. L. (2009). *Seeing red*. Toronto: Kids Can Press. IF

McBay, B., & Heneghan, J. (2003). *Waiting for Sarah*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. IF

McKay, S. (2000). *Charlie Wilcox*. Toronto: Penguin Books. YA

McLintock, N. (2008). *Dead Silence*. Toronto: Scholastic. YA

McNicoll, S. (2003). *A different kind of beauty*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. YA

McNicoll, S. (2006). *Beauty returns*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. YA

Minaki, C. (2007). *Zoe's extraordinary holiday adventures*. Toronto: Second Story Press. JF

Nugent, C. (2004). *Francesca and the Magic Bike*. Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books. IF

Oppel, K. (2007). *Darkwing*. Toronto: HarperCollins. IF

Porter, P. (2005). *The crazy man*. Toronto: Groundwood Books. IF

Roorda, J. (2007). *Wings of a bee*. Toronto: Sumach Press. YA

Shaw, L. (2009). *Thinandbeautiful.com*. Toronto: Second Story Press. YA

Skrypuch, M. (1999). *The hunger*. Toronto: Boardwalk Books. YA

Stevenson, R. (2008). *Big guy*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. YA

Tokio, M. (2003). *More than you can chew*. Toronto: Tundra Books. YA

Trembath, D. (1996). *The Tuesday café*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. YA

Tullson, D. (2006). *Zero*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside. YA

Waldorf, H. (2008). *Tripping*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press. YA

Walters, E. (2005). *Elixir*. Toronto: Penguin Books. IF

Walters, E. (2000). *Rebound*. Toronto: Stoddart Kids. IF

Walters, E. (2003). *Run*. Toronto: Penguin Books. IF

Walters, E. (2009). *Special Edward*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books. IF

Aker, D. (2007) *The space between*. Toronto: HarperCollins.

In Mexico celebrating his 18th birthday, events unfold for Jace—a grade 12 kid from Halifax— that are completely unexpected. Instead of losing his virginity, as was his plan, he develops a perplexing friendship with a guy whom he later discovers is gay, and then watches the girl of his dreams head back home to her boyfriend. With new insight regarding what it means to be ‘different,’ Jace is better equipped to understand his elder brother’s suicide and allow himself to grieve over Stefan’s death. At the same time, Jace values even more deeply his relationship with his little brother, Luke, a 9 year old boy with autism.

Excerpt:

Sometimes it’s like a light shutting off, and that’s what happens this time. One minute Lucas is totally fixated on the screen and the next he’s on the balcony looking at me with this What-are-you-waiting-for? expression on his face. Like I’m the one who’s been holding him up all this time. He points toward the water.

“Beach,” he says.

“You bet, buddy,” I say, ruffling his hair. After the last few minutes I’d like to put my arms around him and pull him close, but I don’t. Lucas doesn’t much like being hugged, sometimes not even by our mother. No one in the Antonakos family has ever been big on physical displays of affection, anyway.

I stand up and my notebook falls to my feet. I take a step forward to pick it up but my toe kicks it, sending it flying through the narrow space between the Plexiglas and the balcony floor. I

watch in disbelief as it sails through the air and arcs downward, its flight ending abruptly in the branches of a silver thatch palm.

“Unbelievable!” I mutter. “Shit!”

“Shit!” Lucas parrots back to me, and I whirl to face him. Of all the times for him to actually be listening.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include loss, self-acceptance and self-discovery.

Read-ons: Craig Thompson’s (2003) autobiographical graphic novel *Blankets* contains a similar journey of awakening and discovery for two characters: Craig, the narrator, and Raina, a girlfriend who has two siblings with intellectual disabilities. Francis Chalifour’s (2005) *After* and Brenda Bellingham’s (1998) *Drowning in Secrets* are other titles involving the aftermath of suicide in a teen’s family. Julie Burtinshaw’s (2008) *The Perfect Cut* is an even more mature read about surviving the death of a sibling. Julie Roorda’s (2007) *Wings of a Bee* and Marthe Jocelyn’s (2008) *Would You* also deal with sibling rivalry and loss of a sibling. Katherine Paterson’s (1980) *Jacob Have I Loved* is another title that explores sibling rivalry.

Bell, W. (2006). *The blue helmet*. Random House of Canada.

Lee is a high school drop-out living with his aunt in New Toronto; a part-time job as a courier introduces him to some interesting people, and one of these—Bruce Cutter, a man with a mental illness—changes his life forever. Their unlikely friendship offers Lee a different perspective on violence, and Lee faces his own aggressive habits with transformative results. Cutter’s characterization includes the richness of a man who exists in light and dark phases,

whose uniqueness accompanies but doesn't overshadow his humanness, and whose backstory as a soldier evolves as a framework for the mental health issues that have developed. Cutter's eventual suicide leads Lee further into an attempt to understand the man who has brought Lee peace and establishes that Cutter has at last been the peacekeeper he envisioned himself to be.

Excerpt:

There was something about the house, besides the stale air and musty odour, that made me feel kind of trapped. Then I realized what it was. There was no natural light.

"Here, I'll take that," Cutter said, and I handed him the bag. He carried it through to the kitchen, tore it open, rummaged around for a moment, and came back with it.

"Tell Andrea I put the empties inside," he said.

There were four pill containers in the bag, along with lids. "I don't get it," I said.

"She's always after me to remember my meds," he said, his eye half-winking rapidly. "If I don't, I slide into Never Never Land again. I start colouring outside the lines. Mixed metaphor. So I return the empties to prove I've been a good boy."

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include anger-management, developing friendships, and father/son relationships.

Read-ons: S. E. Hinton's (1967) *The Outsiders* makes a good connection in terms of teen choices regarding anger and violence. **Michèle** Marineau's (1995) *The Road to Chlifa* (translated by Susan Ouriou) offers a portrayal of another teen whose past threatens his future. Paul Zindel's (1980) *The*

Pigman's Legacy offers an additional look at how one human being can affect others. Beth Goobie's (2005) *Something Girl* presents another side of anger through the perspective of an abuse victim.

Brenna, B. (2005). *Wild Orchid*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press.

Taylor Jane Simon is an eighteen-year-old with Asperger's Syndrome who is reluctantly spending the summer with her mother in Prince Albert National Park. Due to Taylor's ingenuity and perseverance, the summer has its ups as well as its downs. Taylor gets her first job. She sees her first live theatre—*The Birthday Party*--a unique look at social interaction by Nobel prize winning playwright Harold Pinter. And she makes headway in reaching a personal goal—acquiring a boyfriend. Readers explore universal themes related to coming-of-age in this first-person account recorded in Taylor's journal.

Excerpt:

The most interesting thing I discovered about orchids is that to thrive, they require a balance of heredity and environment. The seed must fall on a special kind of fungus that allows it to germinate. Orchids have a reputation for being difficult to grow—they are unusually discerning plants that need a home devoted to their unique needs.

Funny, though, that what I remember most about today is not the orchids. It's the man who was replanting the bog specimens. He was wearing khaki pants and a shirt with a crest over one pocket, and a brown Tilley hat. He had longish brown hair that crept out from under the hat, and a short brown beard. He had a soft voice that was not high or low, just somewhere in the middle, and brown boots. His hands were tanned, but you could see where the shirt pulled back that his

arms were lighter. He reminds me of Indiana Jones, although I really didn't get a good look at his face.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include coming-of-age, teen independence, friendship, and mother/daughter relationships.

Read-ons: **The Catcher in the Rye** by J.D. Salinger (1945) is a book Taylor mentions in the story; mature readers are encouraged to explore parallel coming-of-age themes with this title as well as Mark Haddon's (2002) adult crossover novel: *the curious incident of the dog in the night time*, and Terry Spencer Hesser's (1998) *Kissing Doorknobs*. Madeleine L'Engle's (2008) *The Joys of Love* involves an idealistic girl's apprenticeship in summer theatre. Steve Kluger's (2008) *My Most Excellent Year: A Novel of Love, Mary Poppins, & Fenway Park* is a story with mature themes that contains diary entries, emails, and text messages following the lives of three high-school students, with a focus on elements of exceptionality including disability and a same-sex crush. Alyxandra Harvey-Fitzhenry's (2008) *Broken* and Beth Goobie's (2002) *Kicked Out* contain perspectives on first boyfriends that compare to Taylor's relationship with Kody.

Brenna, B. (2007). *The Moon Children*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press.

The Moon Children is a realistic fiction novel for ages 9 – 12 about a friendship between Billy, a boy with a fetal alcohol spectrum disorder, and Natasha, an adopted girl from Romania. The story takes place in North Battleford, Saskatchewan, where Billy is planning to enter a community talent show with his amazing yoyo routine. He and his dad have practiced the tricks, but his father, an alcoholic, disappears and may not return for contest—and Billy's not convinced he can perform without his dad.

Excerpt:

“Hey, do you know about the talent contest?” Billy asked. “It’s next Thursday. I’m going to win, and my dad is going to come.”

Billy hoped this last statement was true and, to make sure it was, he said it again.

“My dad is going to come, you know.”

The girl tilted her small face towards the sky. Billy remembered how she had stared at the moon that morning. He looked up, following her gaze, but all he saw was blue sky.

“There’s no moon there,” he said. “Why are you always looking for the moon?”

The girl turned and went inside before he could think of anything else to say. The big front windows, with their closed curtains, loomed over him and, above them, two other windows stared down at him like dark eyes.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include self-actualization and friendship.

Read-ons: Ann Cameron’s (1985) picture book retelling of the north coast

explanatory myth *How Raven Freed the Moon* is worth reading alongside *The Moon Children* as it contains the story that helps Billy understand Natasha’s need to share the weight of the heavy secret she has been carrying. *Joey Pigza Swallowed the Key* by Jack Gantos (1998) involves a boy who is also dealing with self-control issues. Powerlessness is a theme common to the *Joey Pigza* books as well as to others, including *The Pinballs* by Betsy Byars (1977), Trilby Kent’s (2009) *Medina Hill*, and *The 18th Emergency* by Betsy Byars (1973). Kate di Camillo’s (2002) *The Tiger Rising* and Pamela Porter’s (2005) *The Crazy Man* portray friendships between people who also carry burdens and secrets.

Carter, A. L. (2001). *In the clear*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Pauline is a 12 year old Ontario girl recovering from polio. The story is set in the late 1950s and begins when Pauline is at home from the hospital, using a leg brace, and refusing to consider old friends or a return to her past life. She even gives up on reading, and then, through secret encounters with *Heidi* and *The Secret Garden*, despairs that she will never realize that kind of happy ending. Slowly she overcomes the idea that happy endings must always involve the overcoming of a disability, and begins to fashion for herself a different kind of happy ending.

Excerpt:

Once upon a time, I could walk and run. For me, there's a huge mountain in my childhood. Everything that happened - all that was before the mountain - is once upon a time. Does everyone have a mountain in their lives, a before and after? The mountain fills my sky and I will never cross its peak, never go back to that other time, before I got polio. But I remember everything.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction that evokes time and place but also hinges on the universal; themes include friendship, self-actualization, and dealing with changes.

Read-ons: Spyri's (1880) *Heidi* and Burnett's (1988) *The Secret Garden* are recommended companion titles. Julie Johnston's (1992) Governor General's Award winning *Hero of Lesser Causes* also deals with juvenile polio, as does the New Zealand published *Run* by Linda Aksomitis (2007). Other contemporary fiction with related themes includes Kit Pearson's (2007) *Awake and Dreaming*, whose protagonist uses reading as a source of support. *Home Free* by Sharon Jennings (2009)—another story about friendship and courage—also has references to classic literature. *The Mealworm Diaries* by Anna

Kerz (2009) involves a young protagonist coming to terms with a different kind of loss. Maxine Trottier's (2009) historical fiction *Blood Upon Our Land: The North West Resistance Diary of Josephine Bouvier* presents a young Métis girl's search for personal identity.

Choyce, L. (2004). *Smoke and mirrors*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Sixteen-year-old Simon has always been considered odd; born with prenatal effects from his mother's use of prescription medication, he has always had attention difficulties, and since a skateboarding accident that caused a serious brain injury, he has had short-term memory loss. When a mysterious girl that no one else can see becomes his life skills coach, readers at first assume that she is simply an effect of his brain differences; the discovery that she is actually a real girl in a coma, somehow having out-of-body experiences, lends fantasy to otherwise realistic elements of the story. Simon's eventual realization of his power as a healer attests to a balance of gifts and challenges overlooked by his parents who have concentrated on his difficulties to the exclusion of his dreams and interests.

Excerpt:

Both my dad and my mom, in my estimation, had told me some ridiculous things over the years, given me bad advice, shown me how little they truly understood important things like skateboarding and astral projection and science fiction. They wasted the days of their lives chasing money.

I always hoped to show them that there was another way to live. I wanted to show them they were wrong about so many things. I always knew that I was not normal, that I had problems, but I also knew that I was capable of seeing a kind of wonder in the world.

Description: Young adult fantasy; themes include self-acceptance and self-discovery as well as developing friendships and parent-teen relationships. Possible metafictional elements appear in the occasional shift from first-person into third-person narrative.

Read-ons: In the course of this novel, Simon makes references to Shakespeare's (1623) *Macbeth* as well as to writers James Joyce and William James. Beth Goobie's (2002) *Kicked Out* is an Orca Sounding's teen read dealing with another difficult parent-teen relationship, as does Don Trembath's (1996) *The Tuesday Café*. Meg Rosoff's (2007) *What I Was* also explores how a mysterious companion named Finn changes the protagonist, who wants to have an effect on Finn in return. The subject of imaginary friends is also included in Deborah Ellis's (1999) *Looking for X*. The paranormal is explored further in titles by Margaret Buffie, including her 1992 novel *Someone Else's Ghost*, as well as Bruce McBay and James Heneghan's (2003) *Waiting for Sarah*, and Sean Stewart and Jordan Weisman's "Cathy Series" beginning with their 2006 title *Cathy's Book*. Another character caught in the spirit world is Adrien in Beth Goobie's (2000) mature read *Before Wings*.

Dyer, K. C. (2002). *Seeds of time*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Thirteen-year-old Darrell Connor is spending the summer at an ocean-side British Columbia boarding school where she discovers a passage through time, through which she hopes to change her own circumstances—a motorcycle accident that, three years ago, took her father's life and severely damaged her leg, requiring the use of a prosthesis. Darrell's adventures in 14th century Scotland are unique in that she arrives with the same physical disability, just a different type of artificial leg as dictated by the times.

Excerpt:

She looked down and saw that she was no longer wearing jeans. Instead, she was wearing a long skirt of thick brown wool. At the hem of the skirt, her left foot protruded, encased in a worn brown leather boot, soled in wood and caked with a combination of mud and sand. Where her right foot should be was a splintered stub of wood, like the end of a crutch.

Darrell let out a choking sob. Her head began to swim. She put her face in her hands and closed her eyes tightly, then as quickly opened them again. Everything looked the same. She reached down and pulled the hem of the dress up slowly to see the stump of her right leg tightly bound to a wooden splint, ending in a peg leg like a pirate would wear. No plastic foot. No prosthesis at all, really. Just a wooden peg, bound tightly to the base of her leg.

Description: Intermediate fantasy; themes include self-acceptance and bullying as well as emphasizing the lessons to be learned from history.

Read-ons: This title and its two sequels connect well to other time slip novels including Lynne Kositsky's (2000) *A Question of Will*, Judith Silverthorne's (2005) *The Secret of the Stone House*, Lois Donovan's (2007) *Winds of L'Acadie*, Marsha Skrypuch's (1999) *The Hunger*, and Lynne Fairbridge's (1999) *Tangled in Time*, as well as Nicholas Maes' (2009) combination of futuristic science fiction and time travel in *Laughing Wolf*. Darren Krill's (2006) *The Uncle Duncle Chronicles: Escape from Treasure Island* involves characters that move into a fictional past. One other connecting fantasy is Barbara Nickel's (2006) *Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach*.

Dyer, K. C. (2003). *Secret of light*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

In this sequel to *Seeds of Time*, Darrell Connor's story continues as, along with new friends Brodie and Kate, she begins her first full year at the alternative art school Eagle Glen. The friends travel, along with stray dog Delaney, through the abandoned lighthouse, to 15th century Italy, where they encounter a young Leonardo Da Vinci. When school bully Conrad Kennedy accidentally accompanies them, things don't go according to plan and he is left behind in the past. In these travels, Darrell's prosthetic limb is rendered as an elaborately carved, roll-toed paw, similar to a piano leg, but she bears the discomfort so that she can search further for a way to change her own past—to somehow alter the motorcycle accident that caused her injury and killed her father.

Excerpt:

The long weekend had flown by. Her mother had taken a day off to celebrate Thanksgiving by cooking an enormous turkey. But Darrell had spent the whole weekend formulating her plans, which gnawed at her like a tickertape running along the base of her brain.

What would her mother think if she found a way to change the past? Darrell stared out the window, imagining the look on her mother's face when she walked in the front door on two sound legs. Or even better, if she got carried in on the back of her wonderful, beautiful, perfect father, as if the accident had never happened. Okay—so her mom hadn't believed her father was wonderful or perfect. They were divorced, after all. But maybe Darrell could find a way to fix that, too.

Description: Intermediate fantasy; themes include self-acceptance and bullying as well as emphasizing the importance of history.

Read-ons: As above, for *Seeds of Time*.

Dyer, K. C. (2005). *Shades of red*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

In this conclusion of the Eagle Glen trilogy, Darrell and her friends travel through a portal in the library, entering the period of the Protestant Reformation in England. In this context, Darrell's prosthesis transforms into a peg leg that has a hinged wooden foot. Modern issues of racism and discrimination are depicted as ages old through Darrell's experiences in the Court of King Henry VIII where priests secretly offer safe passage to Jews targeted by the Church's brutal cleansing. In this title, Darrell learns what she has always known—that you cannot change the past—and comes to terms with her physical self in the present time.

Excerpt:

Darrell reached out her hand and followed Brodie into the passage. Within two or three feet a worn wooden stairway opened below them. Darrell and Brodie cautiously followed Paris's bobbing flashlight down the steps. The thin glow of light from above disappeared as the stairs reached a landing and changed direction.

Paris was waiting on the landing. "This is as far as I got before," he said in a low voice. Below the landing the surface of the steps changed abruptly from wood to rock and began a tight spiral down into the darkness.

Description: Intermediate fantasy; themes include self-acceptance and coming to terms with loss.

Read-ons: As above, for *Seeds of Time*.

Dyer, K. C. (2007). *Ms. Zephyr's notebook*. Toronto: Dundurn Press.

Much of the emotional build in this novel takes place in the children's ward of a fictional Evergreen County Hospital and revolves around three main characters: 15 year old Logan, whose point of view is dominant in the story, has Crohn's Disease; 14 year old Cleo, whose 'real' name is Jacqueline, has an eating disorder; 11 year old Kip is awaiting a kidney transplant. This complex story about identity and relationships unfolds through documents discovered by Logan in their hospital teacher's journal. Ms. Zephyr's school notebook contains letters from families, updates from school, and assignments from the students themselves. Each of the three children deals differently with illness, and yet what they have in common becomes a tie that binds, even through what Logan fears is Cleo's next suicide attempt.

Excerpt:

If he could somehow manage to find Cleo before everyone else, he wanted to tell her something that he'd finally figured out. Maybe it was just a question of listening to the right voices. Not the kind of voices that told a person to kick a hole in the wall or stuff your fingers down your throat. Other voices—other ideas. Maybe all heroes were not found on rugby pitches or prancing in front of the Hollywood paparazzi.

Then there was the question of the meds. She took these pills every day, right? He racked his memory. The hospital must have put them in the bottle for when Cleo was given the weekend pass. But he couldn't remember how often she took them or even what she needed them for. That she left them behind was the worst sign yet.

Logan rubbed his tired eyes. Who knew what he was going to say or do? He wasn't even sure himself. He just knew this journey might be worth something, if he could just find Cleo. He just needed to know she would be okay.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes prompt readers to explore what life is like with debilitating illness, and to recognize how barriers between people are erected and removed.

Read-ons: Paul Zindel's (1968) *The Pigman* offers a good companion read due to its presentation through the alternate voices of John and Lorraine and in terms of its close look at teen relationships. A desperate search for a friend provides a connection between K. C. Dyer's (2007) *Ms Zephyr's Notebook* and Deborah Ellis's (1999) *Looking for X*. Natalie Babbitt's (2000) *Tuck Everlasting* offers a look at life choices through the theme of everlasting life. Other life choices are explored in Susin Nielsen's (2008) *Word Nerd* about a boy with a serious peanut allergy who seeks identity and acceptance, and Iain Lawrence's (2000) *Ghost Boy*.

Ellis, D. (1999). *Looking for X*. Toronto: Groundwood Books.

Eleven-year-old Khyber, living in downtown Toronto, embarks on a desperate search for a friend through first-person narration that illuminates her intelligence and resiliency in a life that looks bleak from the outside but from the inside has a fine balance of edginess, warmth, and adventure. Because of Khyber's strong, matter-of-fact voice, the scenes depicting her relationship with autistic twin brothers and the episodes with X, a homeless person, operate without sentimentality. One of the main plot lines in the novel is that Khyber's mother has decided to place David and Daniel in a group home, a plan to which Khyber is resistant.

Excerpt:

Daniel was asleep in Tammy's arms, which made him a lot easier to carry than David. David wanted to walk, so he squirmed and fought me all the way home. I wanted to ask Tammy if we could trade boys, but she looked angry at me still, so I didn't ask.

David's boots were still in the hallway, and I kicked them into the apartment ahead of me. I was glad to put him down, and I think he was glad to get away from me, too. I crawled up to my bunk, remembering too late that Tammy had my blanket, and it was covered with blood.

Mom put the twins in their room, then helped me off with my jacket. I was too tired to do it myself. She got me into a dry nightgown, then covered me up with her own bedspread.

"I didn't do it on purpose," I said.

"I know you didn't. But do you see what I mean, about the boys being too much for us?"

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; winner of a Governor General's Award for Children's Fiction (text); themes include family dynamics and dealing with change.

Read-ons: Jean Little's (2007) *Dancing Through the Snow* and Katherine Paterson's (1978) *The Great Gilly Hopkins* have girl protagonists with similar spunk. Cynthia Lord's (2006) *Rules* is another intermediate novel that explores the relationship of a 12 year old girl with a younger brother who has autism. *No Place for Kids* by Alison Lohans (1999) is the story of two siblings on the run from social services through the sometimes terrifying, sometimes comforting, world of the urban homeless, while Martin Leavitt's (2003) *Tom Funder* deals with another type of escape. Sarah Ellis's (1991) *Pick-Up Sticks*, winner of a Governor General's Award for Children's Fiction (text), focuses on a mother/daughter relationship similar to the one between Khyber and Tammy. The subject of imaginary friends is also dealt with in Lesley Choyce's (2004) *Smoke and Mirrors*.

Fairfield, L. (2009). *Tyranny*. Toronto: Tundra Books.

This graphic novel follows Anna's chronological journey as she succumbs to an eating disorder named as her personal demon, Tyranny, and then accounts her eventual triumph. The author cites a long term personal struggle with eating disorders as her inspiration for writing this book.

Excerpt:

I could no longer concentrate, and fell far behind in classes. I dropped out of high school on Valentine's Day. I felt as if I had been walking a tightrope and had fallen off...and was at the beginning of a long descent.

Description: Young adult graphic novel; themes include self-acceptance and identity, and the information about eating disorders is presented in a straightforward manner.

Read-ons: Another mature, graphic novel from an adolescent girl's perspective is Mariko Tamaki and Jillian Tamaki's (2008) *Skim*. *Monster* by Walter Dean Myers (1999) involves the perspectives of a 16 year old boy who is being tried for felony murder; readers might wish to compare Steve's self-image and external pressures with the societal pressures that have influenced Anna, as well as the strength of character Steve and Anna share. Francis Chalifour's (2005) *Call Me Mimi* and Robin Stevenson's (2008) *Big Guy* are additional titles for teens that explore body image. Other novels that deal with eating disorders include *The Hunger* by Marsha Skrypuch (1999), *thinandbeautiful.com* by Liane Shaw (2009), *Ms Zephyr's Notebook* by K.C. Dyer (2007), and Marnelle Tokio's (2003) *More Than You Can Chew* as well as Diane Tullson's (2006) *Zero*.

Fournier, K. M. (2007). *Sandbag shuffle*. Saskatoon, SK: Thistledown Press.

Owen and Andrew are two teens escaping a group home during the Manitoba Red River flood of 1997. What makes this book so original as compared to other books of its genre is that Owen, a boy of rapid-fire wit, has no legs and isn't leery of exploiting their absence. The action takes place as the boys travel via the river from Grand Forks to Emerson, Manitoba, then make their way on land to Winnipeg.

Excerpt:

"You're just lucky I pity you, little man," said Andrew.

"What are you saying, there, Leg-boy? You wanna piece of me?"

"Don't test me, Stumpy Joe. I'll smear your ass all up and down this town."

"Ha! You ain't even man enough to try it."

Tossing the chip bag aside, Andrew got up from the ground in a great flying leap and tackled Owen in his chair. The chair went over, Owen spilled out, and the two boys punched and grappled at one another up and down the expanse of damp and brownish grass. Andrew, having the advantage of legs, had the better of it for the most part, but Owen got in more than one good hit. The fight ended when Andrew, having pinned his friend to the ground with both knees, pulled up a fistful of grass and began rubbing it in Owen's face. Then Owen grabbed a fistful of grass for himself and began rubbing it in Andrew's face. And then both of them laughed so hard they couldn't keep it up any more, and they lay on the ground in the thin light of early morning, laughing.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction: contextually realistic profanity in addition to transgressive politics raises the reading age; themes include life altering journeys and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Progressive attitudes toward disability are also presented in William Bell's (1991) title *Absolutely Invincible!* Sherman Alexie's (2007) mature read *The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-time Indian* involves a different kind of journey as 14 year old Arnold Spirit Jr. tries to escape the reservation, and Barbara Smucker's (1977) *Underground to Canada* deals with escape from slavery. Three other quests for escape are found in Wendy A. Lewis' (2008) *Freefall*, a realistic title dealing with child abuse and set against the backdrop of skydiving, Meg Rosoff's (2007) *What I Was*—the story of a young man during a transformative summer, and Mark Twain's (1884) classic text: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*. Michael Noel's (2004) *Good for Nothing* is another teen novel that deals with the effects of history and culture on coming-of-age.

Frizzell, C. (2006). *Chill*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Chill is a high school boy with a 'bum leg' whose story is told through the eyes of Sean, a friend and classmate. Chill stereotypically 'overcomes' his disability by using art to confront an abusive teacher who bullies Chill because of his physical differences.

Excerpt:

Chill's foot dragged behind him like a murder victim being taken to a shallow grave by a killer too weak to do the job, but he still stood straighter than any other kid in school.

His presence far exceeded his wiry five-foot-nine, fifteen-year-old body. Chill's size didn't matter because he was fast, and the speed was made twice as powerful because no one expected it from a guy with a bum leg.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction contrived to suit the grade 3.5 reading level of the Orca Soundings imprint; themes include the triumph of good vs evil, and man's inhumanity to man.

Read-ons: David Poulsen's (2008) *Numbers* is another story of a high school student who challenges a teacher, in this case for dispersing hate-literature. William Bell's (2001) *Stones* could also be used to further explore hate-crimes. Other links involve the power of art, such as is represented by the magic realism of Alyxandra Harvey-Fitzhenry's (2008) *Broken*. A look at artists and their self-concepts appears in Peter H. Reynold's (2004) picture book, *Ish*.

Gilmore, R. (1995). *A friend like Zilla*. Toronto: Second Story Press.

The setting is a summer cottage on Prince Edward Island where Nobby, short for Zenobia—a young girl from Ottawa—is holidaying with relatives. The cottage owner has a 17 year old daughter, Zilla whose developmental disabilities elicit stereotypical reactions from Uncle Chad. As Zilla becomes Nobby's friend, "It was sort of neat how we fit together," Nobby relates. "Like puzzle bits. Zilla could do things I couldn't, like cook and find clams and berries and stuff. But I could read and draw and think up ideas." Through her friendship with Zilla, Nobby learns to understand the complexities of people, including her Uncle Chad, whom, until this point in her life, she has vilified.

Excerpt:

By the end of the day I felt like I'd known Zilla forever. Her having a grown-up body didn't really matter. She dressed like me in shorts, T-shirts and stuff, and she liked to play. She never once talked silly teenage talk. She was just a regular kid. Better, actually, 'cause she knew so many neat things.

But sometimes she didn't get what I said. Like a joke or a big word or something. Yet she knew really fun stuff. Like the best place and time for clam digging. Where the bank swallows lived. Even the safest path down the cliff to the beach. The funny thing was she didn't know how cool it was that she knew all that. I mean, she didn't often come up with ideas about what to do. But I had lots, and Mrs. Rowan suggested things I didn't know about.

Description: Junior realistic fiction; themes include friendships and considerations of diversity.

Read-ons: *Lily's Crossing* by Patricia Reilly Giff (1997) and Myrna Neuringer Levy's (1991) *The Summer Kid* make good connections through their exploration of developing summer friendships. Betsy Byars' (1970) *Summer of the Swans*, along with *The Summer Kid*, also offer opportunities to compare and contrast notions of ability/disability.

Gingras, C. *Pieces of me* (S. Ouriou, Trans.). Toronto: Kids Can Press.

This title is Susan Ouriou's Governor General's Award winning English translation of the novella *La Liberté? Connais pas* and follows the story of Mira, a Quebec teenager living with a domineering and mentally unstable mother. Catherine, the new girl, is at first drawn to Mira because of the artistic talents they share, but in the end proves not to be the friend Mira thinks she is. With the death of her father, Mira sinks into a depression, recovering with the help of Paule, the school counsellor, who is blind.

Excerpt:

"She sews coats, skirts, dresses, blouses. She knits scarves and sweaters. She puts them all in boxes in closets, in the hallway, in the shed. Then she starts all over again."

"She doesn't sell them?"

"No."

"What do you live on then?"

"My father gives her money."

"Why?"

"My mother can't work. She...she...It's like she's afraid of people. Worse...she's afraid of having her designs stolen."

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; mature themes include sexuality, powerlessness, living with mental illness, and the search for personal identity.

Read-ons: Susan Juby's (2000) *Alice, I Think*, is told within a similar context; *Egghead* by Carlyne Pignat (2008) is another young adult novel that tackles identity-issues, as well as bullying, through the voices of three first-person narrators, one of whom uses free-verse poetry. An Na's (2001) *A Step from Heaven* and Rukhsana Khan's (1999) *Dahling If You Luv Me, Would You Please, Please Smile* also involve high-school settings, following protagonists who navigate displacement, immigration, and cultural identity towards self-acceptance. Shem Salvadurai's (2005) *Swimming in the Monsoon Sea* engages readers with similar themes of self-acceptance as a young boy identifies his homosexuality. A more esoteric link is to Shaun Tan's (2006) *The Arrival*, through which the experiences of immigrants could be compared to any confused encounters with one's own world.

Goobie, B. (2002). *Kicked out*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Dime, a rebellious Winnipeg teen, goes to live with her brother Darren who has been quadriplegic since an accident three years earlier. In a different context, away from her domineering parents, Dime begins to sort out aspects of her life that need exploration including the dreamy new boyfriend, Gabe, whose looks and motorbike initially trump his abusive nature.

Excerpt:

At 9 p.m., Darren and I headed out to his favourite bar. Some of his friends were there and we joined them at a table. Another guy at the table was also in a wheelchair.

“He got arrested for drunk driving. He was going down the middle of the road in his chair,” Darren whispered.

“Are any of you quads normal people?” I joked.

Darren shrugged. “What’s normal?”

As usual, some of the crowd couldn’t seem to stop watching the wheelchairs. People are always surprised to see someone in a wheelchair having a good time. It’s as if they think life in a wheelchair is only good for watching TV. One woman came by and patted Darren’s arm.

“I wanted to tell you I think you’re so brave. I’m sure you’ll get well some day,” she said, her voice wobbling.

“But I am well,” Darren said.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction with a grade 3.5 reading level representative of the Orca Soundings label; themes include self-discovery, family dynamics, and coming-of-age as well as abusive relationships.

Read-ons: Other titles by Beth Goobie that include similar themes are her 1994 novel *Mission Impossible* and as well as her 2005 title *Something Girl. One More Step* by Sheree Fitch (2002) depicts a teenage boy with a voice just as angry as Dime's. Beverley Brenna's (2005) *Wild Orchid* and Alyxandra Harvey-Fitzhenry's (2008) *Broken* offer perspectives on first boyfriends that compare with Dime's. Eric Walters' (2000) *Rebound* offers another look at societal response to disability.

Haworth-Attard, B. (2002). *Irish chain*. Toronto: HarperCollins.

This historical fiction novel relates events occurring alongside the Halifax explosion of 1917 as 12 year old Rose Dunlea is enveloped in the tragedy of the surrounding community. Told by her teachers that she is "slow," "retarded," and "lazy," Rose has severe learning disabilities that have prevented her from reading or writing with ease. Yet by using pieces of the Irish chain quilt, she demonstrates masterful storytelling, and offers exceptional leadership in the face of danger.

Excerpt:

I studied the other patches, silently repeating to myself whom they belonged to and the stories tied to each. Winnie's question came back to me. Why did I always want to tell the stories of the quilt? I'd not really thought about that before, but now that I did, I realized it was because of a belief I had. I believed there was a key somewhere inside the Irish Chain quilt—a key to how to be brave and strong like Great-grandmother Rose. And if I kept telling the stories, maybe someday I might find it.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction; themes include self-acceptance and the value of storytelling.

Read-ons: Another title from Haworth-Attard (2001)—*Flying Geese*—makes a nice companion read as it also involves quilting as a life affirming act, as does Deborah Hopkinson’s (1993) picture book *Sweet Clara and the Freedom Quilt*. The value of storytelling is explored in Marcus Sedgwick’s (2001) *Floodland*, a futuristic fantasy where a young girl realizes that stories are how people survive, how they remember whom they are and where they are from. Jean Little’s (1997) *The Belonging Place* identifies similar themes of growing up in transition, as does Alice Walsh’s (2006) *A Sky Black with Crows*. Penny Draper’s (2006) *Terror at Turtle Mountain* also focuses on Canadian disasters and is told from the perspective of a young girl whose self-doubts mirror Rose’s. *Ramona’s World* by Beverly Cleary (1999), *Freak the Mighty* and *Max the Mighty* by Rodman Philbrick (1993; 1998), Jamie Gilson’s (1980) *Do Banana’s Chew Gum?* and Carol Fenner’s (1995) *Yolanda’s Genius*, are other titles for a similar age group that involve characters who have learning disabilities. Julie Johnston’s (2006) *A Very Fine Line* also explores the weight of gifts and challenges.

Holeman, L. (2002). *Search of the moon king’s daughter*. Toronto: Tundra Books.

This historical fiction saga involves a young girl’s quest to find her brother, sold as a chimney sweep in Victorian England. Emmaline’s little brother, Tommy, is born to an alcoholic mother; although not explicitly defined, it is possible his hearing impairment was caused by prenatal alcohol abuse in addition to a fever he had as a baby and brain injuries sustained in a fall. After the death of their father from cholera, their mother suffers a factory-related injury and becomes addicted to laudanum, at which point she sells Tommy to a master sweep. In her

desperate search to find him, Emmaline experiences the appalling conditions that workers in the 19th century endured as well as the strong class distinctions made during that time and place.

Excerpt:

When Tommy was about three, Emmaline realized he was afraid of the dark. He'd shake his head no no no when Emmaline blew out the rushlight at night, and she'd hold him close, humming against his temple. The vibration of her lips against his scalp seemed to calm him, although she knew he couldn't hear the melody.

Some nights the moon would be almost visible through the ceaseless thick smoke belched out of the high factory chimneys, although its light couldn't reach down into the knotted maze of narrow courts. But on those nights, if it wasn't too cold, Emmaline would take the little boy outside.

"Look, Tommy," she'd say, pointing at the round orb that would appear and then disappear in the perpetually murky sky over the city. "Our father was the Moon King." She'd touch her chin, then make a circle around the moon with her hands and move the circle onto her head. Touching her chin meant Father to Tommy. "Moon King," she'd repeat, and Tommy would make the same motions with his small hands.

"You're my smart boy," she's say, and then whisper about their father and what it had been like to live in a village; how one day she'd take him back and they'd live together in a lovely cottage and look up at the moon every night.

Description: Young adult historical fiction; themes include hope and the enduring power of love.

Read-ons: Charles Dickens (1838) offers a compelling companion read in *The Adventures of Oliver Twist*. Sharon McKay's (2004) *Esther* presents a similarly emotionally charged and dramatic rendering of early 18th century France, although with somewhat more mature content. *To Dance at the Palais Royale* by Janet McNaughton (1996) is another gripping historical read.

Horrocks, A. (2006). *Almost Eden*. Toronto: Tundra Books.

Twelve-year-old Elsie deals with her mother's mental illness, isolated by feelings of guilt and confusion in the fictional Mennonite community of Hopefield, Canada. Serious subject matter is presented in a style younger readers can absorb regarding the course of the summer of 1970 where Elsie's mom is in the local mental institution taking shock treatments. The story follows Elsie's feelings of responsibility regarding her mother's breakdown, her relationship with Beth, her bossy older sister, and her forgetfulness of family responsibilities with regard to Lena, her younger sister, as well as her loss of faith in God.

Excerpt:

My heart was thudding in my chest still. Mom didn't act like she was mad at me. I quickly kissed her forehead and tried not to let it show on my face that she smelled funny. Or that she looked so awfully tired. Her eyes didn't shine like they usually did. Mom was maybe starting to turn into one of the zombies.

"Let's go for a walk," I blurted, because I had to get out of there and I had to get Mom out of there, too. "Are you thirsty? I'm thirsty. Let's go get a soft drink."

Mom moved slowly. I almost had to drag her, back out through the lounge and past the reception desk. She told the nurse she'd be outside with her daughters.

Outside Mom's eyes didn't look so dead anymore. We walked across the street to the service station. Mom didn't have any money on her, but I had brought some change. I dropped fifteen cents into the slot and slid a bottle of Grape Crush out of the rack for Lena. Mom wanted an Orange Crush, and I got myself a Mountain Dew.

Then we walked back to Eden with our soft drinks and sat on a bench on the back lawn.

"So, how goes it?" I didn't know what else to say, and I wanted for Mom to say, "On two legs, like a gander," because then we could smile and maybe even pretend everything was like always.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction; themes include self-discovery and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Lucy Maud Montgomery's (1908) *Anne of Green Gables* offers a comparatively spunky character who despairs at her own mistakes. Miriam Toews' (2004) *A Complicated Kindness* is an adult crossover novel that portrays another Mennonite girl coming-of-age, although it is geared to older readers. Elizabeth Berg's (1997) *Joy School* is an additional crossover novel that serves the young adult market, and Katie, its protagonist, is a 12 year old with striking similarities to Elsie. Martine Leavitt's *Heck, Superhero* also follows a character dealing with a parent's mental illness.

Huser, G. (2003). *Stitches*. Toronto: Groundwood.

This book is set in the fictional Western Canadian town of Acton and explores the friendship between Travis, a boy in junior high-school whose artistic talents direct him towards a future in sewing and design, and Chantelle, a classmate with a rare bone disease. Bullied since grade school, Travis perseveres in designing puppets and dreams of a place "where there are no Shon Dockers" and "where you could do what you wanted and no one would make fun of you. Where your best friend could be a girl. Where people wouldn't look away when they saw

someone like Chantelle." Travis stands up for Chantelle when even his family call her a "poor little thing," but, without anyone to prevent the bullying that eventually puts him in hospital, he decides to move to the city to attend art school where "no one seems to mind how different you are." The ending implies that some day Chantelle will also move away to the city, leaving a lasting impression that some problems can't be solved, just escaped.

Excerpt:

When we got to the edge of town with the hospital parking lot on one side of the street and Gumley's field on the other, Chantelle stumbled and fell. She just lay there for a moment in the ditch, not moving, like a small wounded animal.

"Let me help--" I knelt beside her.

Her face was twisted, as if she were crying, but there were no tears, no sound.

"I hate this," she whispered, finally.

"What?"

"Everything. Being a freak."

"You're not--"

"A freak," Chantelle repeated. "It's not fair."

"Let me help you--"

"No," she said, struggling to her feet. For a couple of seconds I thought she was going to topple over again.

"I don't think you're a freak," I said.

"You don't count," she grumbled.

"What do you mean, I don't count?" I said, breaking the silence.

"You don't count because you're my friend."

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction, winner of a Governor General's Award for Children's Fiction (text); themes include self-discovery and self-acceptance as well as bullying and the power to endure.

Read-ons: Katherine Paterson's (1977) *Bridge to Terabithia* offers connecting characters and themes, as does Christopher Paul Curtis' (2007) *Elijah of Buxton* about a pre-teen determined to become a 'man's man' but struggling with emotional fragility. A more mature read that also deals with the power to endure is Robert Cormier's (1974) *The Chocolate War*.

Janz, H. (2004). *Sparrows on wheels*. Edmonton, AB: DocCrip Press.

Originally written as a Master's thesis, this semi-autobiographical novel presents the story of Tallia, a young person with cerebral palsy, who, through the course of the story, grows from an anxious grade seven student in a special school to the co-editor of the school newspaper and a high-school senior considering university courses. It is not Tallia's choice to leave Inglewood School Hospital and attend a regular high school,

although one of her peers made that transition, with conflicting results.

Much of the omniscient narration includes factual details about the day-to-day life of characters with physical disabilities in the pre-integration era, and while these facts slow the plot, they also add a layer of richness to the story's content.

Excerpt:

"You certainly had a restless night last night—I must have turned you at least seven times," Anna remarked as she began sponging down Tallia's upper body.

"Yeah, I know," Tallia sighed. "I just couldn't sleep."

"First day jitters?"

"Guess so.

"But you're an old hand at this," Anna reasoned. "You've been going to Inglewood since nursery school."

"Yeah, but I'm going to be in junior high now. I'll be involved in lots more stuff—there's the Students' Union, noon-hour sports, the yearbook,

planning for the year end camp...Maybe I'll even get onto the school

paper."

"Well, you certainly seem to be serious about this writing business." Anna deftly wrung out and resoaped the towel. "You've been cooped up in the house writing all summer. It was all I could do to get you to go outside once in a while. Just look at how pale you still are!"

"I wheeled over to Connie's a few times," countered Tallia. "Besides, the only way to get good at writing is to write—that's what Mr. Harris says."

Description: Historical young adult novel adapted from academic writing; themes include self-actualization and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Don Trembath's (1996) *The Tuesday Cafe* portrays a protagonist with similar dreams of being a writer. *Mabel Riley* by Marthe Jocelyn (2004) also explores a young teen's quest to find her voice.

Johnston, J. (2006). *A Very Fine Line*. Toronto: Tundra Books.

Rosalind is a 13 year old in a family of girls who decides that coming-of-age isn't for her, and works hard to become the boy she believes her mother has always wanted. Peers in small-town Ontario in 1941 make her cross-gendered presentation difficult, but she perseveres as "Ross" until a crush on Adrian, a young man who has been hired to tutor her at home, causes her to think differently about womanhood. One of the complications for Rosalind is that she struggles with second-sight, and stories told her by elderly aunts confirm the potential of this gift in a seventh daughter of a seventh daughter, which she actually is, until she 'becomes' a son

through clothes and gesture. The actuality of her birth order has been hidden until now through the banishment of a sister with intellectual disabilities, sent to live with aunts. Aspects of this sister, Lucy, ring with gothic description and she operates as a metaphor in this novel about difference and belonging. This is a title where many characters are presented as “different,” from Rosalind’s own giftedness and gender confusion, to Adrian’s lameness, to cousin Corny’s birthmarked face, in addition to Lucy. Even Rosalind’s elder sister, a female medical doctor at a time when women are expected to prioritize marriage and children over careers, is a character worth consideration for her actions as a ‘rule-breaker.’

Excerpt:

The door opened a crack, just wide enough for me to glimpse an eye peering out, and then it slammed in my face. Behind the door I could hear mad Lucy shouting gibberish. I looked back at Corny, beckoning him over, but he was swinging the ax above a thick piece of wood and bringing it down with all his might. His glancing blow produced merely a wood chip. Swearing under his breath, he tried again.

Abruptly, the door swung open and Lucy’s slack-featured face bent to mine. “Little pig, little pig, let me come in,” she shrieked, and lowered her voice. “No-no, by the hair of my chinny-chin-chin.”

“Lucy?” I could hear Great-Aunt Eileen’s voice.

“You’ll never come in.”

“Lucy!” A commanding tone now.

Lucy swooped at me before I could run, and crushing me tightly against her—her long thick hair in my face, suffocating me—she swung me into the kitchen.

The next moment Eileen was there, grappling with her to free me, wheedling, bribing. Lucy relinquished me in favour of the new pencil Eileen offered. She lumbered to the table, sat down, and was soon busy, her face bent closely over a sheet of paper.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction with shades of magic realism; themes include respect for diversity and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Other titles exploring the burdens of second-sight include Anne Louise MacDonald's (2009) *Seeing Red*, Cora Taylor's (1985) *Julie*, and Robin Stevenson's (2008) *Impossible Things* as well as Carol Matas's psychic adventure series beginning with her 1997 title *The Freak*. Exceptionality and birth order is further explored in Patricia C. Wrede's (2009) *Thirteenth Child*, and Barbara Haworth-Attard's (2002) *Irish Chain* also considers the weight of gifts and challenges. Other titles that employ fairy tale imagery include include Iain Lawrence's (2006) *Gemini Summer* and *Broken* by Alyxandra Harvey-Fitzhenry (2008). Glen Huser's (2003) *Stitches* also explores issues related to gender roles. References to Lucy could be compared to Charlotte Brontë's (1924) Bertha Mason in *Jane Eyre*. Other references within the text include George Bernard Shaw's (1924) play *Saint Joan*, about Joan of Arc, and William Shakespeare's (1623) *Macbeth*.

Lawrence, I. (2006). *Gemini summer*. New York: Delacorte Press.

Magic realism transforms this poignant story about a boy's loss of his brother. Set in 1965 Hog's Hollow (a fictionalized Toronto suburb), tragedy strikes just when each member of the River family is bent on following a personal dream. After the death of Danny's brother, Beau,

and Beau's eventual reincarnation as a dog, Danny vows to take Beau to Cape Canaveral to satisfy what had been his brother's dream as well as assuage his own guilt. The novel's antagonist, a boy who is initially blamed for Beau's death, is Dopey Colvig, a child depicted completely through atypical physical characteristics (a large head and absence of speech) suggesting autism or another developmental disorder. It is Dopey's unexplained violent antagonism to the brothers that offers good fuel for classroom discussion.

Excerpt:

Older than Danny, younger than Beau, Dopey was huge for his age. He was meaner than mean. For no reason at all, he hated Danny River, and he guarded his end of the Hollow like a troll, lurking on the paths through the cottonwoods, waiting for Danny to pass. At any moment he might leap from the bushes or jump up from the wooden bridge. Once he chased Danny through the woods with a realtor's sign, swinging it like a broadaxe, smashing through the bushes on Danny's heels.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction and a winner of a Governor

General's Award for Children's Fiction (text); themes include death of a sibling and following your dreams. Because this story is framed in fairy tale imagery, Dopey Colvig, lurking like a troll under the bridge in the woods, appears as a believable figure of evil. An exploration of how this type of framing contributes to negative stereotypes about people with physical differences is a theme well worth exploring.

Read-ons: Susan Patron's (2006) *The Higher Power of Lucky* also involves a

young protagonist recovering from a death—the death of her mother— through a run-away adventure with a dog, HMS Beagle. Another book that explores loss in the hopeful style of *Gemini Summer* is Katherine Paterson’s (1977) *Bridge to Terabithia*. Other titles with stereotypical villains include Frieda Wishinsky’s (2005) *Queen of the Toilet Bowl* and Colin Frizzell’s (2006) *Chill* as well as *The Proof that Ghosts Exist* by Carol Matas and Perry Nodelman (2008). Fairy tale imagery also frames the plot in *Broken* by Alyxandra Harvey-Fitzhenry (2008), and Cynthia Nugent’s (2004) *Francesca and the Magic Bike* includes the Dickensian technique of naming as representation of character.

Leavitt, M. *Heck superhero*. Red Deer Press.

In this title, a 13 year old boy deals with his mother’s mental illness by trying to pretend things are okay, imagining himself a superhero. After they are evicted from their apartment, Hector spends four days on the street, not knowing where his mother is but certain that she is in a phase of illness Heck calls “hypertime.” It is in this urban setting where Heck’s new friendship with a boy called Marion teaches him the difference between imagination and another type of being gone that is permanent; Marion’s own mental illness and eventual suicide force Heck to admit that he and his mother need help.

Excerpt:

“We have to stop pretending that Everything’s Okay. Because we need some help.

Don’t we, Mom?”

She shrugged.

“I know you lost your job at the Pepper Bar.”

She nodded at her feet.

“We have to trust some people. We have to ask for help. Everything isn’t okay, Mom, but it will be if we get some help, right?”

She looked at him, and her eyes were twelve and her mouth was sixty. Even her body couldn’t stay in one time and dimension. He was breaking the trust. Tears came to her eyes, and Heck suddenly couldn’t think straight.

Then he remembered the art assignment for Mr. Bandras, and he remembered he was going topworld. He wasn’t going to play himself and his mom out of the microuniverse anymore. He was going to deal with the one they were in.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include self-discovery and coming-of-age as well as living with mental illness.

Read-ons: Dianne Linden’s (2008) *Shimmerdogs* is a story for a similar age group about a young boy trying to cope in difficult circumstances. Sarah Ellis’ (2006) *Odd Man Out* further explores stereotypes about mental illness as a young boy discovers facts about his deceased father. Tim Wynne–Jones’ (1998) *Stephen Fair* follows a 15 year old boy who is also struggling with terrifying events in his life before returning home to his mother. *Looking for X* by Deborah Ellis (2006) portrays another young protagonist spending a series of days on the street. *Slake’s Limbo* by Felice Holman (1974) is another young adult novel about living on the streets, in this case, the interior of the New York subway; it connects, as well, to an intermediate graphic novel: Brian Selznik’s (2007) *Invention of Hugo Cabret*.

Lekich, J. (2002). *The losers’ club*. Toronto: Annick Press.

Alex Sherwood, a high school kid with cerebral palsy, becomes the leader of a group of so-called losers. When his father goes into hiding, Alex moves in with another friend whose family is also away, and the two boys become acquainted with a neighbour nicknamed "The Beast," Harry Beardsley, who is persuaded to act as their surrogate parent. Harry eventually decides to go and visit his own son, a boy who also has cerebral palsy. A bet regarding a Christmas display contest earns Alex the opportunity to save his friends once and for all from bully Jerry Whitman. Other than using his disability for put-downs by other students, the author includes it as a minor aspect of Alex's characterization. Metafictive elements appear in the narrator's habit of speaking directly to the reader.

Excerpt:

I should explain that I'm currently the only kid at Marshall McLuhan High with a hall pass that gets me out of class a full five minutes early. That's because the administration thinks I might get trampled by a stampede of "thoughtless individuals" if they let me out at the same time as everybody else. For years, I've been using metal crutches to get around. I'm what you'd call "permanently disabled" if you were being polite. People are not always polite.

I don't like being disabled, of course. The crutches make a creepy hollow sound when I'm moving down the empty halls, and certain thoughtless individuals are always offering to help me down the stairs so they can get out early and be first in line at the cafeteria. I never let anybody help me that way. It's one of my rules.

Besides the hall pass, the only good thing about walking on crutches is that nobody tries to stuff me in a locker. Even Jerry Whitman, who runs a very profitable extortion ring and intimidates a decent cross section of the losers in the student body, refuses to

shake me down for my share of "loser bucks." While Jerry relishes loser bucks more than any other kind of money, he says it's bad public relations to injure a poster boy for the handicapped.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include bullying and making the best of difficult situations.

Read-ons: Titles connecting on the basis of their high school humour include Don Trembath's (1997) *A Fly Named Alfred* and Gordon Korman's (1987) *A Semester in the Life of a Garbage Bag*. Ted L. Nancy's (1997) *Letters from a Nut* provide a good connection to a letter to Alex's dad in Chapter Two. Another title depicting physical disability as merely one aspect of characterization is Mary Downing Hahn's (1996) *Following My Own Footsteps*.

Little, J. (2005). *Forward, Shakespeare!* Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

This simple junior novel is narrated from the third-person perspective of a dog protagonist. Shakespeare is a seeing-eye pup, trained to be a Rescue Dog, and assigned to Tim, an angry, blind teen, who is staying at The Seeing Eye residence in Morristown, New Jersey. As Shakespeare accompanies Tim on his journey back to Guelph, Ontario, and a healthy, hopeful future, there are a few amusing turns in the plot, including the scenario of two guide dogs accidentally switched with each other.

Excerpt:

It wasn't quite as simple as Shakespeare had imagined. That very night, the dog heard his new master crying again in the darkness. Shakespeare knew what was wrong now; he could

smell the boy's fear. But it worried the boy far more than the dog. The Lab was certain that once Tim got outside with him and the instructor, he would forget his overwhelming anxiety.

Shakespeare lay and listened to the muffled sobs. Maybe he should jump up on the bed and nuzzle Tim's neck or ear. But Tessa had said that Seeing Eye dogs were not allowed up on beds. He would wait a day and see if things improved.

Description: Junior realistic fiction, but because of the story's content, it could work for older, reluctant readers; themes include self-acceptance, self-confidence, and overcoming obstacles.

Read-ons: Jean Little's (2004) prequel, *Rescue Pup*, explores Shakespeare's training as a Seeing Eye dog. Another helpful canine is depicted in Christina Minaki's (2007) *Zoe's Extraordinary Holiday Adventures*. Other texts told from an animal's point of view include particular selections from Tiffany Stone's (2004) poetry book: *Floyd the Flamingo and his Flock of Friends*, Avi's (2001) *The Good Dog*, Glenda Goertzen's (2005) *The Prairie Dogs*, and Beverly Cleary's (1964) *Ribsy*. Another connection is the non-fiction title *Working Like a Dog: The Story of Working Dogs Through History* by Gena K. Gorrell (2003). Barbara Smucker's (1987) *Jacob's Little Giant* is an additional junior title that explores self-confidence.

Little, J. (2000). *Willow and Twig*. Toronto: Penguin Canada.

Willow is a 10 year old girl caring for her 4 year old brother in Vancouver through the disappearance of their mother, drug-addicted Angel, and the death of the family friend where they have been living. Child and Family Services arrange for the children to fly to Toronto, to a grandmother Willow has not seen in a long time and who has never met Twig—a little boy who was born an addict, has attention problems, and is hearing impaired as a result of a beating.

Uncle Humphrey, their grandmother's brother, who is blind, offers love and support, but Aunt Con, when she comes to stay, is at first unfriendly and judgemental. The heart of the story is the bond between Willow and Twig, and how these children make the transition to their new home.

Excerpt:

Aunt Con was actually smiling at Twig, who was offering her a drink from one of the juice glasses. He had spilled a lot of water over himself and some onto Aunt Con but he was now holding it to her lips and, to Willow's astonishment, she tried to drink. They were all surprised when her teeth chattered against the rim. Willow bit back a hysterical burst of laughter and then relaxed as she saw Aunt Con laugh herself. The girl knelt and steadied the tumbler while her great-aunt drained it.

"Good. The bleeding has stopped," Willow muttered, as she lifted the towel enough to peer at the wound underneath.

Then Twig was back with a seedless green grape.

"Ope, ope," he ordered, pressing it against Aunt Con's lips.

When she opened her lips to speak, he popped the grape into her mouth, jumped up and ran away back to the kitchen.

"Good," Aunt Con said, and chewed. Before Willow could think what to do next, her little brother was back with a single potato chip.

"Ope," he commanded.

Aunt Con hastily swallowed what was left of the grape and opened her mouth obediently. In went the potato chip.

Twig beamed. Willow pulled herself together, recalled you were supposed to keep the patient warm and ran for a wool blanket.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include adapting to change and sibling relationships.

Read-ons: Julie Johnston's (1994) *Adam and Eve and Pinch-Me* (a Governor General's Award winner for children's text) also offers happy outcomes for a 15 year old foster child as does another intermediate novel by Jean Little (2007): *Dancing Through the Snow*. Other parallels can be seen in Linda Holeman's (2002) historical fiction novel *Search of the Moon King's Daughter* as well as the fantasy novel *The Third Eye* by Mahtab Narsimhan (2007).

McBay, B., & Heneghan, J. (2003). *Waiting for Sarah*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Following a serious accident, Mike is assisted in his transition back to high school in False Creek, Vancouver, by Sarah, a younger girl he believes has been sent to help him with a yearbook project. Mike's loss of mobility has created a bitterness that takes time to dissolve, but eventually Sarah wins his heart. It is then that Mike realizes she is actually the ghost of a young girl murdered by a teacher—and that it is up to him to prove Mr. Dorfman's guilt.

Excerpt:

Meanwhile, to work. Make a start. He pulled out a file box and blew off the dust before letting it fall into his lap. It was heavy. He wheeled over

and lifted the box up onto the table and suddenly felt closed in, trapped in his wheelchair and a prisoner in the dimly lighted room. He felt the shortage of breath that signalled a panic attack. His heart started thumping and his lungs tightened like fists. Don't panic, he told himself, swallowing and sucking in deep breaths and letting his shoulders and arms hang limply the way the therapist at the Rehab Centre had taught him whenever his heart and lungs acted up on him like this. Don't panic, he always told himself, relax and drink the air, like sucking a thick milkshake through a straw, easy does it, close your eyes, one breath at a time, stay calm.

Description: Intermediate fantasy; themes include adapting to change and the power of friendships.

Read-ons: Another boy's relationship with a ghost is outlined in Lesley Choyce's (2004) *Smoke and Mirrors*. Kit Pearson's (2007) *Awake and Dreaming* takes a protagonist's responsibilities to a ghost one step further. Pat Hancock's (2003) *Haunted Canada: True Ghost Stories* offers another look at mysterious phenomena.

MacDonald, A. L.(2009). *Seeing red*. Toronto: Kids Can Press.

Fourteen-year-old Frankie discovers he can dream the future, his only claim to fame, and yet even with this talent he cannot prevent disaster. Caught in confusing circumstances, Frankie presents feelings common to young people striving to control unpredictable situations. Descriptions of Joey, a kid with autism whom Frankie babysits and eventually chaperones during riding therapy at a local stable, are rendered with care, as are other characters with special needs who shift in and out of the therapeutic riding context. Through the course of the novel, Frankie explores his fears, including his fear of horses, as well as a developing friendship with Maura-Lee, a girl who also has extrasensory abilities.

Excerpt:

“Your turn,” Susan said to Joey. “You saw how the others got on. Do you think you can do that?”

Joey nodded. He held his arms up and his father carefully buckled the wide belt around him. Maura-Lee led Prince closer. His thick legs took scuffling steps in the sand. Sunlight streaming in the big doors bounced brown highlights off his dark fur. With his fat pink tongue leaking out the right corner of his mouth, he suddenly looked much more goofy than scary.

“Up you get, then,” said Susan. She motioned to Joey.

Joey started rocking. His father frowned and looked expectantly at me. So did Susan. For that matter, so did Joey. Looking and waiting.

For what? It was up to him to get on the horse. I couldn't do it for him!

I said, “Remember, a horse is just a car-sized Pookey.”

Joey nodded and said, “You first.”

“What?”

“You first.”

Me? My throat clamped shut. Me on a horse? No way! Joey just rocked...and waited.

Susan passed me a riding helmet. I had no choice.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include self-acceptance, conquering fears, and friendships.

Read-ons: René Schmidt's (2008) *Leaving Fletchville* explores similar themes of friendship as well as racial prejudice, as does Ted Stenhouse's (2001) *Across the Steel River*. Jean Little's (1986) *Different Dragons* also involves conquering fears. Cora Taylor's (1985) *Julie*, Julie Johnston's (2006) *A Very Fine Line*, Robin Stevenson's (2008) *Impossible Things*, and Carol Matas's psychic adventure series beginning with *The Freak* (1997), explore situations where children identify themselves as having extrasensory perception and struggle with their gifts.

McKay, S. (2000). *Charlie Wilcox*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

Charlie, born into a Newfoundland sealing family, tries to prove his competence in light of the stigma associated with his club foot. After the foot is repaired through surgery, he stows away at age 14 on what he thinks is a fishing vessel, emerging days later bound for France and World War I.

Excerpt:

"Hey there, peg-leg, step on it," Clint doubled over with laughter.

"Shake a leg," cracked Phil.

Clint and Phil had a repertoire of ten or so insults. Sometimes Charlie could wait them out, ignore them, but not today. He dropped the hoop. He turned, slowly, scanning the street for anyone, anyone at all. Charlie weighed his options. Stay and fight, or run?

“Well, look, do ya think the sissy is going to fight? All on his own?” One side of Clint’s mouth turned up in a sneer. His eyes were black and marble hard. “Where is your little pal?”

Charlie stepped out of the hoop and away from the water just as Phil landed a rock right on the pail. Jeeze, not only did it tip over but one of the buckets looked split.

“You’re a case, Phil,” snarled Charlie.

“Where’s your mammy? She goin’ ta come save her little cripple?” Clint stepped closer, closer, closer still.

“Yea, and you’d look right good getting whipped by a woman,” said Charlie. Was calling his mother a woman bad? He wasn’t sure but it didn’t sound right.

“Ya stupid little begger,” Clint closed in on Charlie and gave him a shove. Charlie stumbled backward and landed on his butt and elbows. It didn’t take much to land Charlie in the dirt. He was half the size of both boys and with a club foot—well, he was never too steady anyway.

Description: Young adult historical fiction introducing ideas about how disability is socially, rather than physically, constructed; themes include the brutality of war and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Other war-based accounts for a similar age group are found in Carol Matas’s *After the War* (1996) and *The Garden* (1997), John Wilson’s (2003) *And in the Morning*, and David Richards’ (1999) *The Lady at Batoche*. Janet McNaughton’s (1994) *Catch Me Once, Catch Me Twice* offers a contrasting picture of Newfoundland. Marguerite de Angeli’s (1949) Newbery Medal winner *The Door in the Wall* offers another depiction of an adventuresome protagonist with a physical disability. A title intended for

younger readers, but whose bravado and clever language make it a possible match for *Charlie Wilcox*, is Sarah Ellis's (2003) *The Several Lives of Orphan Jack*. John Lekitch's (2002) *The Losers' Club* offers a similar look at physical disability and the taunts of bullies.

McLintock, N. (2008). *Dead silence*. Toronto, ON: Scholastic.

After Mike skips out on his friend Sal, he discovers that Sal has been stabbed to death near their high school in an inner city Toronto neighborhood. Bystanders give mixed messages, so Mike starts asking some deeper questions of his own. Various suspects are considered and cleared, including Alex, a young man with an intellectual disability whose own family expect he's guilty. Eventually the mystery is solved in a way that lets readers retrospectively consider the clues.

Excerpt:

"Teddy was wrong about Sal and Staci," I said. "They were just friends. You shouldn't believe anything Teddy or any of his friends say. You shouldn't protect them, either."

"I'm not protecting them." But he still wouldn't look at me. I was pretty sure he was hiding something.

"They're a bunch of jerks, Alex. Their idea of a good time is to hassle people. They were hassling Staci just before Sal was killed."

Finally he met my eyes. "What do you mean?"

“They were making fun of her because she tutors. They were making fun of the kids she tutors. That’s why Sal went over to help her. Because they were making fun of the kids she tutors and Staci got mad at them and things started to get rough.”

“Staci tutors me sometimes,” Alex said in a soft voice.

Description: Young adult mystery; themes involve bullying and societal stereotypes.

Read-ons: Kristin Butcher’s (2009) mystery *Return to Bone Tree Hill* would make a good companion read as Jessica searches for the killer of a school companion much as Mike is desperate to solve the murder of his friend. Graham McNamee’s (2003) *Acceleration*, and *Whalesinger* by Welwyn Katz (1990) are other novels for similar age groups, told with adventure and energy, each touching in a peripheral way on disability themes. Margaret Thompson’s (2000) *Eyewitness* is another title involving a murder as well as cultural stereotypes.

McNicoll, S. (2003). *A different kind of beauty*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

With alternating chapters told in the separate voices of two teenagers, this sequel to *Bringing Up Beauty* cleverly juxtaposes scenes about the training of a guide dog with the story of the young man who is eventually to receive the dog. Elizabeth’s difficulty is learning to let go of an animal she has grown to love, as well as a previous boyfriend. Kyle’s story is heavier and relates to diabetes-induced blindness and a failed relationship with his old girlfriend.

Excerpt:

“I watched Discovery Channel the other day,” Shawna interrupted. “And they had this show on dogs that help handicapped people. Why don’t we get one?”

"I'm not handicapped, I'm blind," I said, trying for some more mashed potatoes.

"But you're chicken, too. That's a handicap."

"Am not. Quit kicking my chair." But she was right. I was a chicken—afraid of the dark, afraid of being alone and worst of all, afraid of dogs. You couldn't trust them. One moment they were friendly, the next they would rip into your face.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include dealing with loss, teen relationships, and self-acceptance.

Read-ons: Teen relationships are further explored in *Bone Dance* by Martha Brooks (1997) and Stephanie Meyer's vampire series beginning with the 2006 title *Twilight*. Self-acceptance and first-love are two of the themes in Madeleine L'Engle's (1962) *A Wrinkle in Time*, as well as *Lean Mean Machines* by Michele Marineau (2000) and translated from the French by Susan Ouriou—a title also written from alternating points of view.

McNicoll, S. (2006). *Beauty returns*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

This realistic fiction novel continues the story introduced in two earlier works: *Bringing Up Beauty* and *A Different Kind of Beauty* and, as in the latter, the chapters are told in the alternating teen voices of Elizabeth and Kyle. Liz is adjusting to life at home with her sister and Teal, her sister's little boy; Kyle is a senior at high school dealing with the prejudices of others regarding his blindness as well as his own resistance to health restrictions. Liz and Kyle's relationship is not an easy one, complicated by concerned parents. Kyle's death corresponds

with traditional literary stereotypes about people with disabilities while at the same time contrasting with readers' understandings of the strong and independent character Kyle has become.

Excerpt:

Why hasn't Elizabeth returned my calls? I made enough of them. Perhaps that's the problem. I sounded too desperate. Why would she want to go out with a blind guy anyway?

*To take my mind off Elizabeth, I decide to work on my school project for Mr. Veen. I've gone on the Internet to search for audio books that might satisfy him. The special program on my computer reads my screen to me. I've put the voice on high speed, but it's still too slow. I stop when I hear the word *Blindness*. It's a Nobel Prize-winning novel by José Saramago. How can Mr. Veen argue with that?*

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include dealing with loss and self-acceptance, with an interesting social commentary on attitudes towards people who are visually impaired.

Read-ons: As above for *A Different Kind of Beauty*.

Minaki, C. (2007). *Zoe's extraordinary holiday adventures*. Toronto: Second Story Press.

As this junior novel begins, Zoe and her Labrador retriever Ella are not having the kind of adventures Zoe craves. To make matters worse, when her friend Anna is absent from school, Zoe is embarrassed by the way other kids treat her in response to her use of a wheelchair.

Cultural themes are prominent in the story as the class explores seasonal holidays, further emphasizing differences and universal connections.

Excerpt:

When Mrs. Green told the class that they were about to break into pairs and play the game, Zoe looked for Anna to be her partner. They both had lots of practice at dreidl.

But Anna's desk was empty. For a moment, Zoe had forgotten that her friend was home that day, because she had a cold.

Zoe looked down at Ella sitting beside her. This was another one of those times when her beautiful dog couldn't do anything to help; she couldn't be her partner in the game. Everyone else in the class was finding a partner fast. On every table Zoe looked at, there was a top spinning, with people playing and laughing.

Description: Junior realistic fiction; themes include self-discovery and self-acceptance as well as multiculturalism.

Read-ons: Elizabeth Helfman's (1993) title *On Being Sarah* presents another girl who yearns for adventure and uses supports for a physical disability, as does Jean Little's (1962) *Mine for Keeps*. Beverly Cleary's (1968) *Ramona* books offer a similarly spunky heroine, beginning with *Ramona the Pest*. Multicultural themes for similar age groups are found in Rachna Gilmore's (2000) *Mina's Spring of Colors* and *Christmas at Wapos Bay* by Jordan Wheeler and Dennis Jackson (2005).

Nugent, C. (2004). *Francesca and the Magic Bike*. Vancouver, BC: Raincoast Books.

A new friendship between 10 year old Francesca and an elderly neighbor who is visually impaired blossoms into an adventure that moves them both into happier contexts. Augusta offers Frankie a chance to find a family heirloom while Augusta guides Ron, Frankie's dad, into a healthier lifestyle that social services won't object to in terms of raising a daughter. Riding Hippogriff, a bike whose 'emotionally responsive metal' offers intuitive support, and with Augusta's dog Dan for company, Frankie sets out to find a ring that's been lost since Augusta's childhood and whose recovery, in the end, brings two feuding sisters together again.

Excerpt:

"Now!" announced Augusta, "for five minutes I want you to feel how I feel, to know how impossible it is to be blind." The old lady untied a silk scarf from her neck, and pulling Frankie forward, felt her face with cool, papery hands. She tied the smooth, heavy silk around Frankie's eyes, then slumped back exhausted against the pillows. "What do you see?" she asked.

"Nothing."

"Precisely! Nothing."

They sat in silence except for the thump thump of Frankie's heels against the side of the bed.

"Where's my walking stick?" Augusta asked suddenly.

“By the door.”

“Well, go and get it for me, child. Don’t dawdle.” Frankie reached up to pull off the blindfold but Augusta put a hand on her arm and said, “Do it with the blindfold on.”

Frankie slid down and started confidently for the door, but as she stepped forward, her hand caught the bedside table. Bottles of pills, drops and syrups clashed together on their porcelain tray and a glass of water skipped off and bounced on the carpet. Water arced through the air and splashed on Frankie’s legs. “Eek!”

Description: Intermediate magic realism; themes include the power of imagination and family relationships.

Read-ons: Susan Patron’s (2006) *The Higher Power of Lucky* has a protagonist of a similar age and character engaging in a remarkable journey. *Inkheart* by Cornelia Funk (2003) offers fantasy for this age group, also reminiscent of *The Bad Beginning* and other work by Lemony Snicket (1999), Arthur Slade’s (2008) *Jolted: Newton Starker’s Rules for Survival*, and Roald Dahl’s (1980) *The Twits* where the Dickensian technique of attaching names representative of characters is employed.

Oppel, K. (2007). *Darkwing*. Toronto: HarperCollins.

Set in the Paleocene epoch, this is a prequel to Oppel’s previous bat books (*Silverwing*, *Sunwing*, and *Firewing*). Dusk is the lead character and a youthful ‘chiropter’ who at first is stigmatized for his physical differences from the other members of his clan, then respected as a

more evolved form of the arboreal gliders. In a poignant conversation with his sister, Dusk asks, "Is different wrong?" and much of the storyline revolves around this theme.

Excerpt:

The tree had never seemed so high.

Dusk laboured up the trunk of the giant sequoia, sinking his claws into the soft, reddish bark. Pale lichen grew along the ridges; here and there, pitch glistened dully in the furrows. Warmed by the dawn's heat, the tree steamed, releasing its heady fragrance. All around Dusk, insects sparkled and whirred, but he wasn't interested in them just now.

His father, Icaron, climbed beside him and, though old, moved more swiftly than his son. Dusk hurried to keep up. He'd been born with only two claws on each hand instead of three, and hauling himself up the trunk was hard work.

"Will my other claws ever grow in?" he asked his father.

"They may."

"If they don't?"

"You'll have less to grip and pull with," Icaron said. "But you have unusually strong chest and shoulder muscles."

Dusk said nothing, pleased.

"That will help make up for your weak legs," his father added matter-of-factly.

Description: Intermediate fantasy; includes universal themes of belonging and self-discovery as well as an exploration of being different.

Read-ons: Good connecting books include: Monica Hughes's (1984) fantasy *The Guardian of Isis* in which the gifted Jody is as much of an outcast from his community as Darkwing is from his; Lois Lowry's (2000) *Gathering Blue*, about a futuristic society that discards people with physical disabilities; Virginia Frances Schwartz's (2003) *Initiation*, a story of self-discovery set on the West Coast of North America during the fifteenth century; Sara Winthrow's (1998) *Bat Summer*, the story of Lucy, a girl who walks the line between reality and fantasy to save herself from a traumatic memory; and Patricia C. Wrede's (2009) look at exceptionality through the steampunk genre of *Thirteenth Child*.

Porter, P. (2005). *The crazy man*. Toronto: Groundwood Books.

The setting of this verse novel is rural Saskatchewan, 1965, where the shadow of the local mental hospital looms large on the landscape. The story is told from the first-person viewpoint of 11 year old Emaline following the farm accident that left her leg seriously injured, her dog dead, and her father gone--blaming himself for her tragedy. Her mother hires Angus, a previous resident of the mental hospital, as a farm hand, and both Emaline and Angus are the recipients of stereotypical remarks from neighbours. To many in the surrounding community, they seem reduced to "Hopalong" and "Subhuman". The friendship between Em and Angus transcends difference and offers each the power to shape their identity in ways beyond the physical.

Excerpt:

I pushed through the heavy doors

and out into the sun, blinked back

the light.

Glanced down at my leg.

It was just a little shriveled-up stick

compared to my other leg. Looked like

somebody'd marked all over it with a fat

red pen.

My shoe that I was so happy about

felt heavy and clunky. And just like that,

I felt ugly.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction verse novel, winner of a Governor General's Award for Children's Fiction (text); themes include friendship, dealing with loss, and acceptance of diversity.

Read-ons: Kristin Butcher's (2001) *The Gramma War*, Glen Huser's (2006) *Skinnybones and the Wrinkle Queen*, Beverley Brenna's (2007) *The Moon Children*, and William Bell's (2003) *Alma* make good companion reads as they deal with changing family dynamics as well as deepening friendships at first unlikely to succeed. Karen Hesse's (1997) Newbery Award winning *Out of the Dust*, with its similar style and setting, Cora Taylor's (1985) *Julie* with its farm setting as well as a protagonist who must learn to deal with her own gifts and challenges, and Sharon Creech's (2001) *Love That Dog*—another verse novel—are three other connected titles.

Roorda, J. (2007). *Wings of a bee*. Toronto: Sumach Press.

This is the tender story of a young girl whose sister eventually dies from an illness complicated by her cerebral palsy. Bronwyn experiences typical sibling rivalries with Carey, and is sometimes jealous of the attention Carey receives because of her disability, but there are also many happy times that, related in the warm, sure voice of reminiscence, make this title a positive yet realistic depiction of family life. The title refers to Bronwyn's belief that her sister has many hidden depths including the ability to read complex texts and write plays, even if her school and community don't believe she can, just as the wings of a bee are invisible to the naked eye. Roorda herself grew up alongside a younger brother with cerebral palsy and includes here a compelling description of a time before inclusion was commonly practiced in communities.

Excerpt:

At first I felt indignation. I looked at Carey, who was watching us. It was true, her limbs were as thin as skin and bones. It was on the tip of my tongue to tell Alannah that she was stupid, that Carey was thin because she had cerebral palsy, when something else occurred to me. Wouldn't it be interesting if I was related to someone who was perhaps part alien? Carey did possess some remarkable qualities.

"She can spell, you know," I said. "She could already last year when she was only four. And do you know what? No one ever taught her how. She just knew." It hadn't occurred to me to claim bragging rights to Carey's achievements before. I had finally uncovered a way to draw some of that fanfare and prestige to myself, by sheer proximity.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include family relationships, living with diversity, loss, and coming-of-age.

Read-ons: Other titles that involve sibling rivalry and loss include Don Aker's (2007) *The Space Between* and Marthe Jocelyn's (2008) *Would You*. Books exploring issues regarding school inclusion for students with disabilities include Heidi Janz's (2004) *Sparrows on Wheels* as well as Christina Minaki's (2007) book for a younger audience: *Zoe's Extraordinary Holiday Adventures*. Jean Little's (1987) autobiographical *Little By Little: A Writer's Education* explores another childhood where disability is negotiated alongside dreams of becoming a writer. Other books for young people that involve a protagonist's consideration of faith include Judy Blume's (1970) *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* and Anita Horrock's (2006) *Amost Eden*. Titles mentioned in *Wings of a Bee* include: the Bible; Laura Ingalls Wilder's 1937 and 1939 titles *On the Banks of Plum Creek* and *On the Shores of Silver Lake*; E. B. White's (1939) *Charlotte's Web*, and C. S. Lewis's "The Chronicles of Narnia" series beginning with the 1950 title *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*.

Shaw, L. (2009). *Thinandbeautiful.com*. Toronto: Second Story Press.

This fictional account of a high school girl's struggle with an eating disorder is told in diary format. Flashbacks in different font allow a richer perspective on Maddie's past as well as her present. Maddie will not admit she is sick, and it isn't until she spends time in a rehabilitation clinic that she begins to acknowledge reality and start the process of healing. One of the threads in the story occurs through emails between Maddie and her online friends via a pro anorexia website. This site supports Maddie's illness through conversations with people who normalize her behaviour; however the eventual death of a friend from this site becomes an important catalyst for change.

Excerpt:

I had to admit that I wasn't as fat as I used to be, but I wasn't anywhere close to skinny. I had so much more work to do before I deserved my online name for real. I couldn't understand what everyone was talking about. My mom, my dad, Annie, the teacher, the doctor, and now Suzanne—everyone talking about my weight, and everyone lying about it, or totally blind to the reality. It was like they were having some sort of mass hallucination, where they had all decided that I had some sort of problem, so they had to make themselves see me as too thin. Crazy, all of them.

I was the only one who could see my reflection clearly and it still covered far too much of the mirror for me to really believe that I could leave my shadows behind.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction that is issues-based; themes include self-acceptance and self-discovery as well as friendships.

Read-ons: Cecily von Ziegesar's (2002) *Gossip Girl* could be a stepping stone into this more realistic title. A book narrated with a similar issues-based slant is Terry Spencer Hesser's (1998) *Kissing Doorknobs*, a fictional, first person account of growing up with Obsessive Compulsive Disorder. Marsha Skrypuch's (2003) *The Hunger*, Diane Tullson's (2006) *Zero*, Lesley Fairfield's (2009) *Tyranny*, Marnelle Tokio's (2003) *More Than You Can Chew*, and K. C. Dyer's (2007) *Ms Zephyr's Notebook* are other titles that include characters with eating disorders. Teresa Toten's (2001) *The Game* also explores the story a teen who is surfacing for help in a residential psychiatric treatment centre.

Skrypuch, M. *The hunger*.

Paula is a contemporary 15 year old girl who is struggling with an eating disorder. As her body becomes ravaged, she metamorphoses into Marta, an orphaned teen living during the 1915 Armenian genocide. The equating of Paula's rejection of food with Marta's enforced starvation gives Paula the strength to battle her illness at Homewood, a treatment program. As Paula tries to research the events in her 'dream,' her grandmother admits her own Armenian roots.

Excerpt:

"That cake and nog probably contained six hundred calories minimum," considered Paula. "It takes running up and down once to burn ten calories. . . so I'll have to run up and down these steps sixty times."

Paula raced up one side of the steps and ran down the other again and again. She could feel her heart beating, and she became light-headed. That probably came from the days of enforced rest at the hospital, she rationalized. Ignoring her fluttering heart, she continued her frenzied pace. All at once she became unutterably tired. Her breath became so laboured that it was like trying to breathe under water. She stumbled to a sitting position on the bottom step and held her head in her hands.

She began to feel a tingling in her left hand and all the way up her arm. She shook her hand to try to get the numbness to go away, but it had no effect. She was aware of a sharp pain in her chest. Where her breathing was once laboured, it was now impossible. Paula was gripped with fear. What had she done to herself?

Description: Young adult historical fiction told through the lens of fantasy and contemporary realism; themes include man's inhumanity to man and the struggle to survive as well as issues related to perfectionism and self-acceptance.

Read-ons: Other novels that explore genocide include *Nobody's Child*—

Marsha Skrypuch's (2003) sequel to *The Hunger*—and Eric Walters' (2006) *Shattered*. Books that deal with eating disorders include Liane Shaw's (2009) *thinandbeautiful.com*, Diane Tullson's (2006) *Zero*, Lesley Fairfield's (2009) *Tyranny*, *Ms Zephyr's Notebook* by K. C. Dyer (2007), and Marnelle Tokio's (2003) *More Than You Can Chew*. Books where protagonists time slip and become historical characters include K.C. Dyer's "Eagle Glen" series beginning with the 2002 title *Seeds of Time*, Lynne Kositsky's (2000) *A Question of Will*, Judith Silverthorne's (2005) *The Secret of the Stone House*, Lois Donovan's (2007) *Winds of L'Acadie*, and Lynne Fairbridge's (1999) *Tangled in Time*, as well as Nicholas Maes' (2009) combination of futuristic science fiction and time travel in *Laughing Wolf*. Characters in Darren Krill's (2006) *The Uncle Duncle Chronicles: Escape from Treasure Island* move into a fictional past. One other connecting fantasy is Barbara Nickel's (2006) *Hannah Waters and the Daughter of Johann Sebastian Bach*.

Stevenson, R. (2008). *Big guy*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

This coming-of-age story is told in the first-person voice of 17 year old Ethan, chatting online to Derek, a new found love interest, but afraid to reveal his true, overweight self. Ethan, a high school dropout, worries about a lot of things, including his single father's reaction to a gay son. A job as a physical care assistant offers Ethan a chance at mutual friendship with Aaliyah, a woman who has been a paraplegic since she experienced a brain aneurism. The two have more

in common than they at first realize, and eventually push each other towards 'seizing the day' and following their dreams.

Excerpt:

She bangs her fist awkwardly on the arm of her chair. "Don't be a coward."

"Excuse me," I say. "I don't think you get to call me a coward. Not after you just dumped your boyfriend for the same reason."

Her eyes are daggers. "It's not the same," she says, spitting the words out.

"Your body's not perfect. Neither is mine. So what's the difference? If I'm a coward, so are you."

"You don't understand anything," she says.

Impulsively, I put my hand on her arm. "Maybe I understand more than you think."

Aaliyah stares at me for a long minute, and I can see her dark eyes starting to shine with tears. She blinks them away and puts her hand over mine.

"Maybe you do," she says, so softly that I have to lean close to hear her. "Maybe we're both cowards."

Description: Young adult realistic fiction with a grade 3.5 reading level consistent with the Orca Soundings label; themes include self-acceptance and prejudice.

Read-ons: Kristyn Dunnion's (2005) *Mosh Pit* is an even edgier read that

explores the journey of a lesbian teen involved in the punk scene. *Skim*, a graphic novel by Mariko Tamaki and illustrated by Jillian Tamaki (2008), explores the life of a “not-slim” wannabe wiccan goth high school student who falls for a female teacher. Lesley Fairfield’s (2009) *Tyranny* and Francis Chalifour’s (2008) *Call Me Mimi* also deal with issues of weight and self-acceptance.

Tokio, M. *More than you can chew*. Tundra Books.

Marty has survived an alcoholic mother, an absent father, and a break with a boyfriend she thinks she loves, but the death of a younger friend named Lily who has been with her at the treatment centre sends her reeling into an attempted suicide.

Excerpt:

Start eating, girls," Nurse Brown says. The smiles fade.

Nurse Brown sits down at the other end. She clasps her fingers tightly in a church and steeple formation. And then tries to hide her religion under the table. She doesn't want me to see the white anger of her knuckles. She stares at me across the sea of food.

"What happens if I don't go get my tray?"

"We strongly encourage you to eat norm... solid food."

"And if I don't solidify?"

"You can consume your daily caloric prescription in liquid form."

"And what's my magic daily number?"

"Five thousand calories."

Description: Semi-autobiographical young adult fiction; this is an issues book whose themes include family dynamics, power and control, and teen sexuality.

Read-ons: Other books about characters reclaiming power over their lives include Beth Goobie's (1997) *The Good, the Bad and the Suicidal* and Brian Doyle's (2003) *Boy O' Boy*.

Trembath, D. (1996). *The Tuesday* café. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Harper Winslow is a high school kid who's trying to get attention from his emotionally distant parents; when he's caught and charged for lighting fires at school, the judge orders him to write an essay on how he's going to turn his life around. The problem is, he doesn't know...until *The Tuesday Café*— a writing class in which his mother's enrolled him— becomes an unexpected source of support.

Excerpt:

She filled me in on everyone. Patty had Down's Syndrome. Debra, Susan, and Billy, were, to varying degrees, "intellectually challenged."

"That is the term they use today," said Del. "So I've been told, anyway. So I'm going to use it. You don't want to insult anyone."

"That's for sure," I said, for lack of anything better.

Lou, she added, calling him, "The shaggy one over there with the gray hair," dropped out of school in grade four and never went back.

"Grade four?" I said. I could not believe that anyone would drop out of school in grade four.

"It was different in those days. All the grades were in the same room. The teacher talked to everyone the same. If she didn't like you, she could make it awfully uncomfortable for you. Lou there didn't get along with too many people."

Description: Realistic young adult fiction; themes include family relationships, self-discovery, and personal writing development.

Read-ons: Similar family dynamics are presented in Lesley Choyce's (2004) young adult title *Smoke and Mirrors*. *Shattered* by Eric Walters (2006) is another story of a teen learning about himself and others through experiencing a local community, in this case, a soup kitchen. Heidi Janz's (2004) *Sparrows on Wheels* narrates the story of another teen intent on becoming a writer.

Tullson, D. (2006). *Zero*. Markham, ON: Fitzhenry & Whiteside.

Kas is attending a school for the arts, hoping to perfect her painting ability. When she begins to suffer from anorexia and bulimia, she tells no one, and since no one recognizes the signs, she becomes very ill until at last her secret is out. Even her new boyfriend, Jason, isn't strong enough to help her, and Kas is filled with self-loathing when her parents take her back home for treatment.

Excerpt:

Outside the drugstore, Kas jumps in place, watching her reflection in the store window.

Fat. Fat. Fat.

Shouldn't have eaten. Ate at breakfast, again at lunch. Too much.

Disgusting and fat.

She pushes the door open. Hair color. Toothpaste. Toilet paper. Kas roves the aisles.

Painkillers. Hair removers.

She calls to the pharmacist behind the counter. "Where are the laxatives?"

Another customer, a gray-haired woman, stops and stares.

"Not the fiber kind. I need something that works fast."

The pharmacist comes out from behind the counter. She points Kas to a display of laxatives.

"Are you feeling all right?"

Kas snatches a pack of laxatives from the display. "Yes. Of course." She laughs loudly. "Oh, you thought they were for me. No, they're for my mother. She's in the worst discomfort."

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include self-acceptance as well as issues related to eating disorders.

Read-ons: Kas' critical internal voice can be contrasted with the self-perception Anubis has learned from her social context in Deborah Ellis's (2006) *Jackal in the Garden*. *Hope's War* by Marsha Skrypuch (2001) relates a different dilemma for a gifted teen attending a school for the arts. Other books about eating disorders include Marsha Skrypuch's (1999) *The Hunger*, Lesley Fairfield's (2009) *Tyranny*, K. C. Dyer's (2007) *Ms Zephyr's Notebook*, Liane Shaw's (2009) *thinandbeautiful.com*, and Marnelle Tokio's (2003) *More Than You Can Chew*.

Waldorf, H. (2008). *Tripping*. Calgary, AB: Red Deer Press.

A group of six teenagers signs on for a cross-Canada summer field trip, each attempting to exorcise personal demons. Rainey—who turns 17 en route—is concerned about her future and about her past as well; the mother she never knew is suddenly available for contact, and during this trip Rainey must decide whether or not to go and see her. A relationship with Alain,

one of the boys in the group, suddenly turns serious, and Rainey doesn't want it to be a temporary fling. One aspect of Rainey's characterization involves the use of a prosthetic leg due to the 'amniotic band syndrome' she was born with. It is her employment of the 'Flexileg,' in a variety of situations, that confirms her true zest for life.

Excerpt:

Not to be deterred, Drunk-guy slid down beside where Alain and I were perched side-by-side on a log. There were some who might say we were holding hands—but I didn't think thumb-wrestling counted.

"Nice legs, baby," Drunk-guy said to me, running a grubby hand over my knee. His hot breath smelled like beer and onions.

"Here," I said, bending down quickly, popping off my Flexileg, and pulling it out from where it was hidden underneath my pant leg. I offered it up to him.

"Take one home with you."

Drunk-guy bolted off the log so fast he lost his balance and almost fell into the fire. Screaming, he scrambled up and ran off down the road and into the night like he'd seen a ghost.

I laughed so hard I fell backwards off the log, taking Alain down with me.

Description: Young adult realistic fiction; themes include coming-of-age, teen sexuality, and mother/daughter relationships.

Read-ons: Other titles that explore coming-of-age and teen sexuality include Beth Goobie's (2006) *Hello Groin* and Susan Juby's (2004) *Miss Smithers* as well as Don Aker's (2007) *The Space*

Between. Julie Johnston's (2001) *In Spite of Killer Bees* further examines a daughter's reunion with a long absent mother.

Walters, E. (2005). *Elixir*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

The setting of this historical fiction novel is the Institute of Biological Research, University of Toronto, in the summer of 1921. The story traces events regarding Banting and Best's discovery of insulin, through the first-person narration of Ruthie, a fictional 12 year old girl who spends time at the Institute while her mother works there as a cleaning lady. Ruthie pities the experimental dogs, and joins demonstrators in hatching a plan for their release; a chance meeting with Emma, a young girl with diabetes, offers Ruthie another perspective and then Ruthie has a decision to make. While Emma's character is a minor one, she has a powerful and heroic role to play within the context of this book and her cameo is evocative of a time and place before the treatment of diabetes.

Excerpt:

"I was a normal thirteen-year-old girl until the diabetes struck."

"You're thirteen?" I'd guessed her to be younger than I.

"I'm fifteen," she said. "How old did you think I was?"

"I don't know," I muttered. I really didn't want to say.

"I think I look around ten. There are times I look at myself in the mirror and I can't believe the face staring back at me. And look at my hair!"

I wasn't sure what she meant by that. Her hair was long and brown

and sort of...sort of frizzy looking.

"It's brittle and it falls out in clumps. It used to be so lovely," she said.

"And now..." She let the sentence trail off and shook her head sadly as she ran a hand through her hair.

"I look like a living, breathing, talking skeleton because I'm not allowed to eat. I'm following a special diet for diabetics. It's called under-nutrition therapy," Emma explained.

Description: Intermediate historical fiction; themes involve the ethics of science and animal rights.

Read-ons: Jerry Spinelli's (1997) *Wringer* and *Crow Medicine*, the second in the "Wildlife Rescue" series by Diane Haynes (2006), offer alternate perspectives on animal rights. Marsha Skrypuch's (1999) *The Hunger* offers two other perspectives on characters and weight loss.

Walters, E. (2000). *Rebound*. Toronto: Stoddart Kids.

Sean is a grade eight kid who is trying to rise above all the trouble he caused at school last year. His new friend, David, gives him some pointers about getting along with girls as well as basketball skills, and, in return, Sean learns to listen to David about his wheelchair use and his hopes of a complete recovery some day from the accident that paralyzed him.

Excerpt:

“If you can get that fade-away hook to drop consistently, it works in combination with your jump shot or a move to the hoop. They may have to double down on you, or at least get outside help, and that lets you rotate it back to the outside for a shot while you crash the boards for the rebound.”

I gave him a questioning look. “You know a lot about basketball.”

“Yeah. Why shouldn’t I?”

“Well...” Had I said something wrong again?

He shook his head slowly. “I’m...in...a...wheelchair...I’m...not...stupid...or...dumb,” he paused on each word. It reminded me of the way Mrs. Burk had spoken to him. Actually, a couple of the teachers talked to him that way, sort of slow, like he wouldn’t understand if they spoke normally.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction; themes include living with disability and making choices.

Read-ons: Don Trembath’s (2000) *Frog Face and the Three boys* is also about kids who are trying to make positive choices about behaviour. Diana Wiener’s (1986) *Last Chance Summer* is a good stepping stone into more literary reading, as it deals with similar issues through more indepth characterization. Beth Goobie’s (2002) *Kicked Out* offers another look at societal response to disability.

Walters, E. (2003). *Run*. Toronto: Penguin Books.

It's 1980, and Terry Fox is undertaking his selfless act of running across Canada after an amputation due to cancer. This fictionalized account of the Terry Fox story brings details to readers through the voice of 14 year old Winston MacDonald, its first-person narrator. Winston, a troubled teen, travels to Nova Scotia with his distant, journalist father, and spends time with Terry Fox and Doug Alward during the Marathon of Hope.

Excerpt:

"That was one godawful shot."

I spun around. It was Terry! He was wearing his track pants and a ratty old sweatshirt, and with his hair mussed up he looked like he'd just rolled out of bed.

"Do you normally shoot that badly?" he asked.

"No, of course not!" I protested. "It was the ball, and the net and—"

"Sounds like a lot of excuses. Go get it."

I ran over and picked the ball up again, shaking away the excess water.

"Pass," Terry said, holding up his hands in front of him.

I whipped over a chest pass and he caught it. He held the ball up in one hand and examined it closely. "You're right, this isn't much of a ball."

"That's what I said. If it was a good ball then—"

He put up a shot and it sailed right into the hoop, cutting me off in mid-

excuse.

I grabbed the ball, and he held up his hands like he wanted me to pass again. Even in the dim light I couldn't help but see a smirk on his face. I passed him the ball. He lined up a shot and for the second time it dropped right in. I corralled the rebound and again he held out his hands.

"Pass."

Description: Intermediate historical fiction; themes include father-son relationships and the power of heroes.

Read-ons: Richard Scrimger's (1998) *The Nose from Jupiter* offers a zany look at a boy of a similar age, with parents strikingly similar to Winston's, solving life's problems in an alternative way. *Run, Billy, Run* by Matt Christopher (1980) is another title about a boy who uses running to improve his life, and Katherine Paterson's (1977) *Bridge to Terabithia* includes a character who takes pride in his speed and endurance and who uses running as a way to gain respect. *Rebound*, also by Eric Walters (2000), explores another perspective on physical disability. Titles that deal with imaginary friends include Lesley Choyce's (2004) *Smoke and Mirrors*, and Deborah Ellis's (1999) *Looking for X*.

Walters, E. (2009). *Special Edward*. Victoria, BC: Orca Books.

Edward is looking for a way to improve his high school grades without working, and he thinks a special education label might be the answer. The results are surprising in that not only does he achieve this goal, he discovers that he actually does have some special learning needs, after all, that he has been hiding from his parents and teachers as well as from himself.

Excerpt:

I'd been doing a lot of reading, trying to decide what special-education thing I was going to become. I'd read about hyperactivity. This was something I could easily do—at least to start.

There were, in fact, thousands of exceptionalities. I figured the safest thing to do was have a whole bunch of them. It was the shotgun approach to special education.

Description: Intermediate realistic fiction with a grade 3.5 reading level consistent of the Orca Soundings imprint; themes include acceptance of diversity.

Read-ons: Valerie Sherrard's (2007) *Speechless* provides another perspective on high-school identity with a protagonist who attempts to escape an oratory assignment through a 'protest of silence' that eventually helps him find his true voice. René Schmidt's (2008) *Leaving Fletchville* portrays a main character with similarly disruptive characteristics at school who also changes his behaviour through the course of the novel.

References to the Annotated Bibliography

**Titles in bold are the Canadian novels in the study sample

**Titles in regular print are books exclusively identified in the Read-ons; these may be novels, non-fiction, short stories, or poetry books and while work by Canadian authors and publishers is foregrounded, the list of titles in regular print is not entirely Canadian.

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