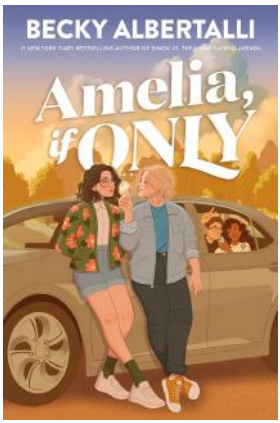
Keeping It Real

Realistic Fiction for Teens

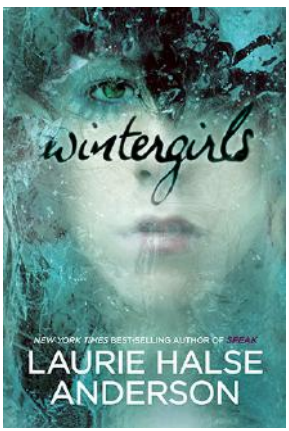
Some Titles May Contain Mature Content



Keeping It Real



Albertalli, Becky
Amelia, If Only (9-12)
Amelia is "slightly" obsessed with chaotic YouTuber Walter—so much so that she convinces her friends to take a pre-graduation road trip to meet him. But as she drags her cynical best friend Natalie along for the ride, Amelia begins to realize that the sparks she's been chasing might not be for the guy on the screen after all.

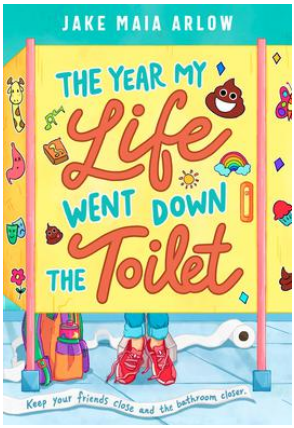


Anderson, Laurie Halse
Wintergirls (7-12)
Lia and Cassie are best friends, wintergirls frozen in fragile bodies, competitors in a deadly contest to see who can be the thinnest. But then Cassie suffers the ultimate loss—her life—and Lia is left behind, haunted by her friend's memory, and feeling guilty for not being able to help save her.



Archer, Jennifer E.
Into the Deep Blue (7-12)
Bonded by the shared loss of their mothers, best friends Nick and Fiona insist they are strictly platonic. However, a weekend trip on the anniversary of their tragedy forces them to confront their buried feelings and decide if they are brave enough to risk their friendship for a chance at love.

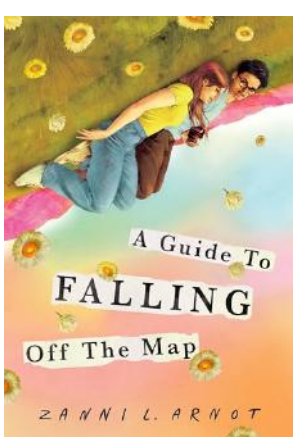
Keeping It Real



Arlow, Jake Maia
The Year My Life Went Down the Toilet (6-9)
Al is hiding two secrets: she has mysterious stomach pain and she's crushing on girls. When she's finally diagnosed with Crohn's disease, Al finds the reality of a chronic illness embarrassing and isolating. Despite pressure from her mom and doctors to join a support group, Al struggles to open up about her health—and her identity—to a world that suddenly wants her to share everything.



Arnold, Marie
Split the Sky (7-12)
Fifteen-year-old cellist Lala Russell just wants to focus on her music, but she is burdened by a hereditary gift of foresight. When she envisions the racially charged murder of a Black teenager in her divided Texas town, she sets out to save him. However, her grandmother reveals a conflicting vision: the boy's death is the necessary spark for a massive social revolution. Lala is forced to decide if she can sacrifice one life to secure a better future for many.

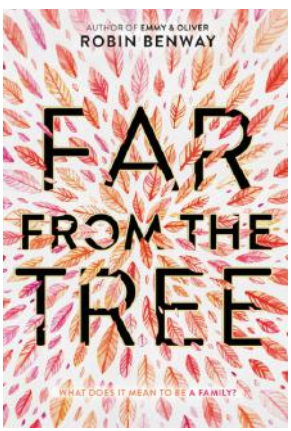


Arnot, Zanni L.
A Guide to Falling Off the Map (7-9)
Vinnie's perfect NYC plans are crumbling due to failing health and a best friend's betrayal, so she pivots to "fixing" her struggling childhood friend, Roo. To escape her collapsing life and failing health, the pair sets off on a road trip across the Australian outback in an old Kombi. But as Vinnie's headaches worsen and romantic sparks fly, she is forced to confront her buried grief before her entire world collapses.

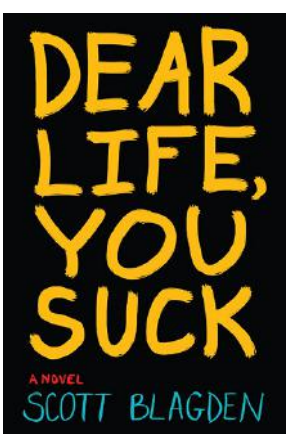
Keeping It Real



Bauer, Joan
Hope Was Here (7-10)
Moving to small-town Wisconsin to run a diner, Hope is surprised when the owner, G.T., launches a mayoral campaign against a corrupt incumbent. As Hope finds her footing in the diner, she becomes swept up in G.T.'s vision for the future, discovering that even a girl named Hope needs something to believe in.

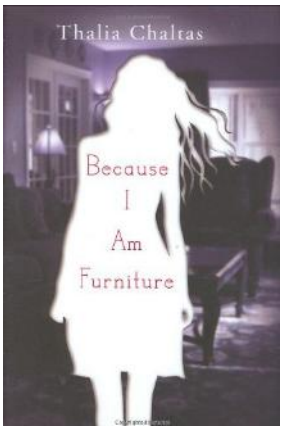


Benway, Robin
Far From the Tree (8-12)
After placing her own baby for adoption, only-child Grace discovers she's actually a middle sibling and tracks down her biological family. She finds Maya, a younger sister struggling to fit into her adoptive family, and Joaquin, an older brother hardened by seventeen years in foster care. Together, the three biological siblings must navigate their messy pasts and different upbringings to figure out what "family" truly means.

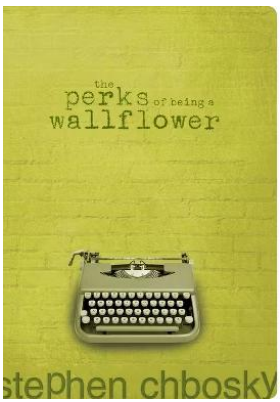


Blagden, Scott
Dear Life, You Suck (9-12)
Seventeen-year-old Cricket is a foulmouthed ward at a Maine Catholic boys' home with a bleak future and a darker outlook. Convinced his best path is a final cliff dive, his perspective shifts when he meets Wynona Bidaban, who makes him realize life might be worth living after all.

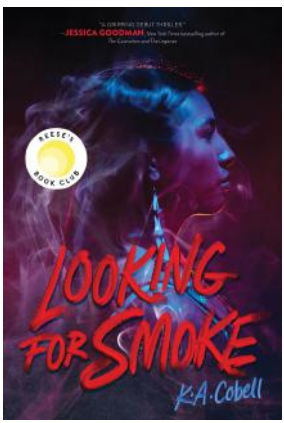
Keeping It Real



Chaltas, Thalia
Because I Am Furniture **(7-12)**
Anke lives as a silent, invisible witness to her father's abuse of her siblings. Her world changes when she joins the school volleyball team, where the physical demands and team spirit ignite her confidence. By learning to shout for the ball on the court, Anke discovers a voice that has been silenced for years—a voice she hopes will finally be strong enough to save her family.

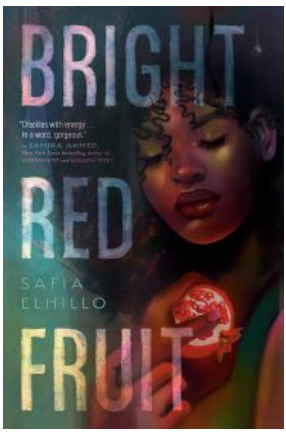


Chbosky, Stephen
Perks of Being a Wallflower **(9-12)**
Through a series of intimate letters, high school freshman Charlie navigates the "uncharted territory" of adolescence—from first dates and mixtapes to the complexities of sex, drugs, and family trauma. As he balances the desire to participate in life with the urge to run from it, Charlie finds solace in a new circle of friends and the fleeting, "infinite" moments of youth.



Cobell, K.A.
Looking for Smoke **(9-12)**
After joining a Blackfeet Giveaway to honor a missing girl, newcomer Mara and three others—Loren, Brody, and Eli—become the prime suspects in the murder of their peer, Samantha White Tail. Despite their mutual distrust and shared complicated histories with the victim, the group must work together to find the real killer and clear their names—knowing full well the murderer might be among them.

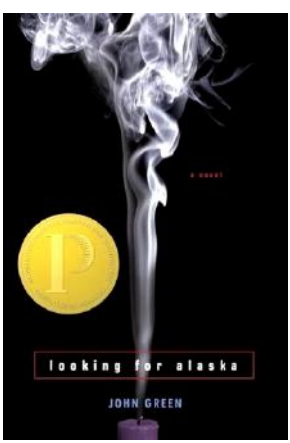
Keeping It Real



Elhillo, Safia
Bright Red Fruit (9-12)
Samira can't shake her "bad girl" reputation, despite her best efforts. Her plans for a perfect DC summer vanish when a scandalous rumor leaves her grounded. Seeking solace in an online poetry forum, she falls for Horus, an older, charismatic poet. But as their secret relationship deepens, Samira risks confirming everyone's worst fears and losing her place in her community.

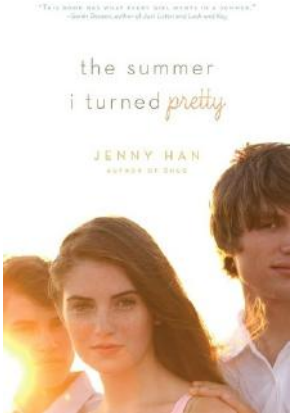


Gardner, Faith
Girl on the Line (7-12)
Journey survived her ending; now she has to survive the aftermath. Living with bipolar II and a family that walks on eggshells, she feels swallowed by the past—until meeting the magnetic Etta and joining a volunteer hotline. In the company of others who are "simultaneously strong and broken," Journey finally begins to uncover a future worth living.

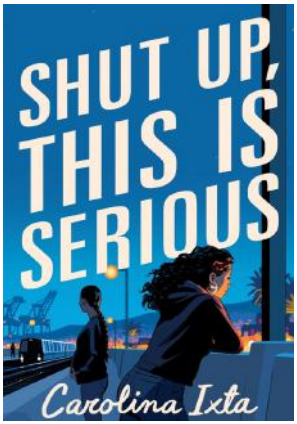


Green, John
Looking For Alaska (9-12)
Tired of his "safe" life, Miles "Pudge" Halter heads to Culver Creek Boarding School in search of the "Great Perhaps." There, he falls under the spell of the brilliant, self-destructive Alaska Young, who pulls him into her chaotic world and steals his heart. But after a life-altering turning point, nothing will ever be the same.

Keeping It Real



Han, Jenny
The Summer I Turned Pretty (7-12)
Belly's life is defined by the months she spends at the beach house with Susannah and her sons, Jeremiah and Conrad. They've been her brothers, her crushes, and her everything—but this summer is different. Over one "terrible and wonderful" season, relationships shift and old dynamics shatter, leading Belly exactly where she was always meant to be.

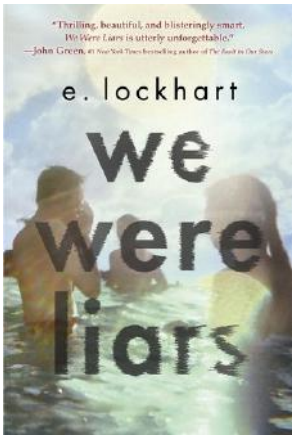


Ixta, Carolina
Shut Up, This Is Serious (9-12)
Belén wants a normal life, but East Oakland is anything but. Between her father's disappearance, a looming risk of failing out of school, and her best friend Leti's secret pregnancy, Belén is drowning in "hella complicated" problems. As she uses distractions to mask a deepening depression, she is forced to confront a haunting question: in a world moving on without her, what kind of future is left for a girl like her?



Lo, Catherine
How It Ends (9-12)
Opposites Jessie and Annie are "friends-at-first-sight," each envying what the other has: Jessie craves Annie's confidence, while Annie longs for Jessie's stable home life. But their bond shatters during a tumultuous sophomore year fueled by bullying and backstabbing. Told in alternating perspectives, this story explores how assumptions and fear can tear even the best of friends apart.

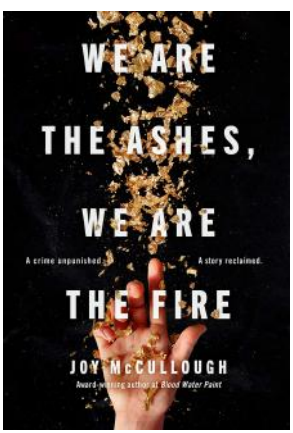
Keeping It Real



Lockhart, E.
We Were Liars (7-12)
The distinguished Sinclair family spends every summer on their private island, but beneath the surface of wealth and privilege lies a destructive bond between four friends known as "the Liars." When a secret revolution leads to a tragic accident, a web of lies begins to unravel. Now, one brilliant, damaged girl must sift through the deception to uncover the devastating truth.

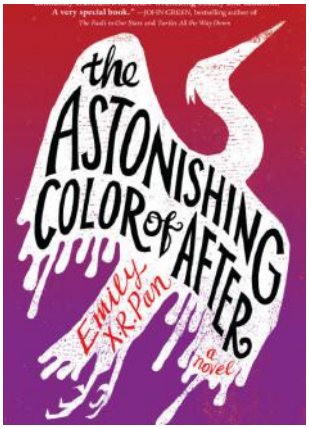


Loutzenhiser, Katy
The Girl Least Likely (9-12)
Gretchen has always been an underdog, but suddenly her life has turned into a real-life rom-com. Between a confusing crush on her best friend Samuel and a "bad boy" comedian who knows her only as her alter-ego "Sabrina," Gretchen is juggling two identities and two potential loves. She's finally discovering who she really is, but as any movie fan knows, a double life always has an expiration date.

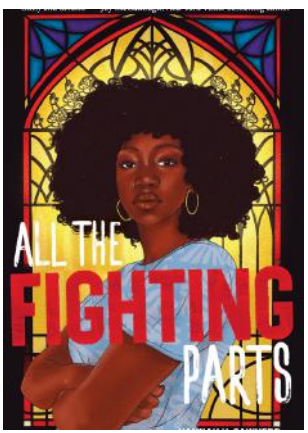


McCullough, Joy
We Are the Ashes, We Are the Fire (9-12)
After Em's social media advocacy helps secure a rare guilty verdict for her sister's rapist, her victory is shattered by a judge's sentence of zero prison time. Consumed by rage and viral infamy, Em struggles to help her family heal in the face of injustice. She eventually finds a path forward through the legend of Marguerite de Bressieux, a 15th-century noblewoman who became an avenging knight for survivors.

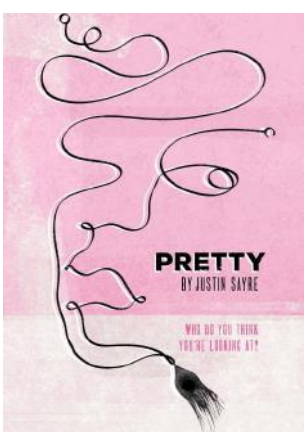
Keeping It Real



Pan, Emily X. R.
The Astonishing Color of After (9-12)
Following her mother's suicide, Leigh travels to Taiwan, convinced her mother has transformed into a bird. As she meets her maternal grandparents for the first time, Leigh uncovers long-buried family secrets and chases literal and figurative ghosts. Amidst her grief, she struggles to reconcile the joy of her first kiss with her best friend, Axel, and the tragedy that occurred on that same life-changing day.



Sawyerr, Hannah V.
All the Fighting Parts (9-12)
After a traumatic assault by her church's charismatic pastor, loud and proud Amina falls into a protective silence. While her community remains divided over the "holy" man's true nature, Amina must navigate the isolation of her secret and the pressure of a public trial. To heal, she must rediscover the strength of her voice and find the courage to testify against a community icon.



Sayre, Justin
Pretty (6-9)
Sophie appears confident and stylish at school, but her home life is a nightmare fueled by her mother's spiraling addiction. When her Auntie Amara steps in to help, Sophie begins to unearth her family heritage and rethink her place in her Brooklyn neighborhood. Through Amara's guidance, Sophie learns to look past superficial labels of beauty and gender to discover her true self.

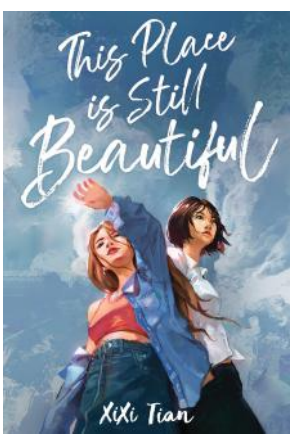
Keeping It Real



Stewart, Erin
The Words We Keep (7-12)
Three months after discovering her sister Alice's self-harm, Lily is struggling to maintain a facade of normalcy. As Alice returns from treatment, Lily's own repressed anxiety and compulsions begin to surface. With the help of Micah—a new student who shared Alice's treatment program—Lily begins a poetry project that forces her to finally voice the secrets she's been desperately trying to swallow.

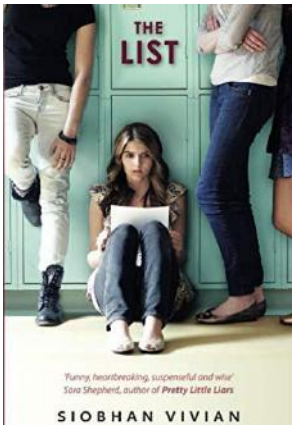


Thomas, Angie
The Hate U Give (9-12)
After witnessing the fatal shooting of her unarmed best friend by a police officer, Starr is thrust into the center of a national controversy. Torn between her two worlds —her "hood" and her fancy prep school— Starr must find the courage to use her voice as a weapon for justice, even as intimidation from both the law and the streets threatens her family's safety.

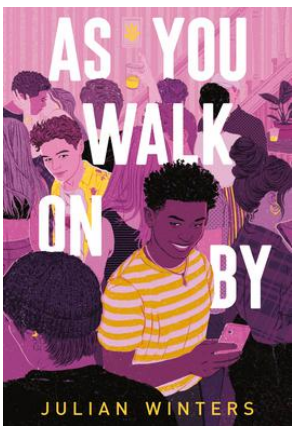


Tian, Xixi
This Place is Still Beautiful (8-12)
When a racial slur targets their home, estranged sisters Margaret and Annalie are forced to confront their opposing worldviews. Margaret demands accountability, while Annalie clings to her "normal" life, causing their relationship to fracture further. Amidst the tension of summer romances and family pressure, they must navigate their shared trauma before a devastating secret tears them apart forever.

Keeping It Real



Vivian, Siobhan
The List (8-12)
Every year, an anonymous list names one "pretty" and one "ugly" girl from each high school grade. The damage is instant. This is the story of eight girls—freshman to senior—navigating the fallout as they grapple with the toxic gap between how they see themselves and how the world labels them.



Winters, Julian
As You Walk On By (7-9)
After a humiliating public rejection, star athlete Theo hides in a bedroom during a massive party. He soon finds he isn't the only one seeking an escape; joined by a group of diverse classmates, Theo spends the night questioning his father's rigid plans and his own identity. It's a transformative night of connection that proves none of them are who they appear to be on the outside.



Yoon, Nicola
Everything, Everything (7-12)
Maddy lives in a sterile, indoor world, cut off from society by a life-threatening illness. When the mysterious and adventurous Olly moves in next door, their instant connection challenges Maddy's safety and her perspective on life. Forced to choose between a long life in a bubble or a short life lived to the fullest, Maddy must decide if falling in love is worth the ultimate price.



Compiled by:
Brooke Sarfati
2026