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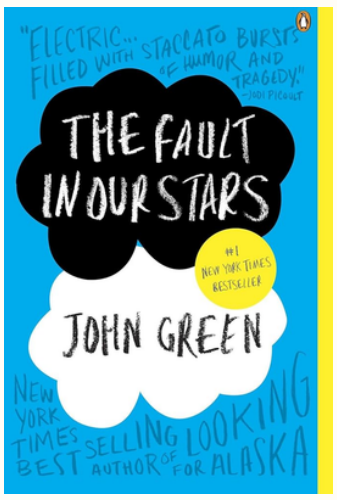
TEEN GRIEF & LOSS BOOK RECOMMENDATIONS



The Fault in Our Stars

By: John Green

Despite the tumor-shrinking medical miracle that has bought her a few years, Hazel has never been anything but terminal, her final chapter inscribed upon diagnosis. But when a gorgeous plot twist named Augustus Waters suddenly appears at Cancer Kid Support Group, Hazel's story is about to be completely rewritten.

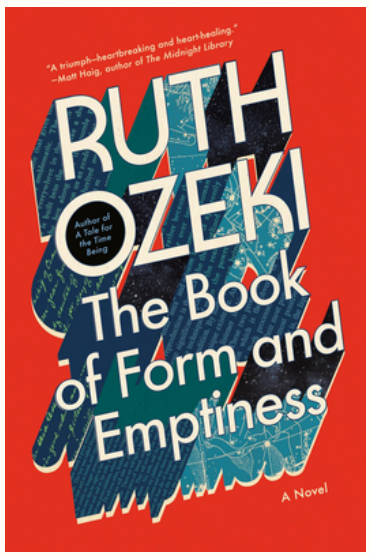
We Are Okay

By: Nina LaCour

Marin hasn't spoken to anyone from her old life since the day she left everything behind. No one knows the truth about those final weeks. Not even her best friend, Mabel. But even thousands of miles away from the California coast, at college in New York, Marin still feels the pull of the life and tragedy she's tried to outrun. Now, months later, alone in an emptied dorm for winter break, Marin waits. Mabel is coming to visit, and Marin will be forced to face everything that's been left unsaid and finally confront the loneliness that has made a home in her heart.

The Book of Form and Emptiness

By: Ruth Ozeki



After the tragic death of his beloved musician father, fourteen-year-old Benny Oh begins to hear voices. The voices belong to the things in his house--a sneaker, a broken Christmas ornament, a piece of wilted lettuce. Although Benny doesn't understand what these things are saying, he can sense their emotional tone; some are pleasant, a gentle hum or coo, but others are snide, angry and full of pain. When his mother, Annabelle, develops a hoarding problem, the voices grow more clamorous.

At first, Benny tries to ignore them, but soon the voices follow him outside the house, onto the street and at school, driving him at last to seek refuge in the silence of a large public library, where objects are well-behaved and know to speak in whispers. There, Benny discovers a strange new world, where "things happen." He falls in love with a mesmerizing street artist with a smug pet ferret, who uses the library as her performance space. He meets a homeless philosopher-poet, who encourages him to ask important questions and find his own voice amongst the many.

And he meets his very own Book--a talking thing--who narrates Benny's life and teaches him to listen to the things that truly matter.

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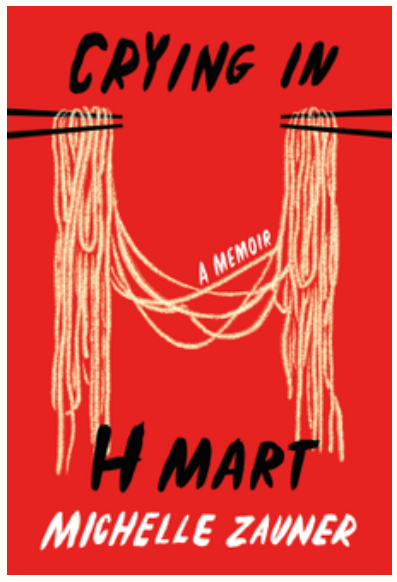
Crying in H Mart

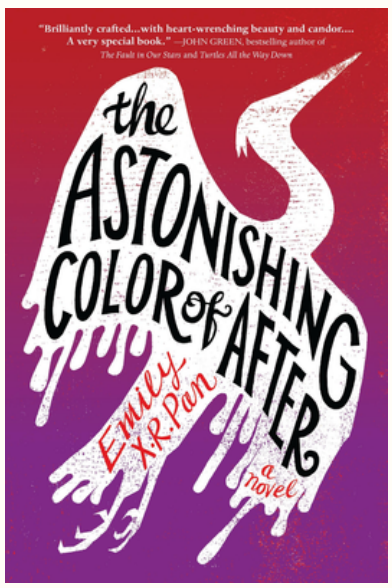
By: Michelle Zauner



In this exquisite story of family, food, grief, and endurance, Michelle Zauner proves herself far more than a dazzling singer, songwriter, and guitarist. With humour and heart, she tells of growing up the only Asian-American kid at her school in Eugene, Oregon; of struggling with her mother's particular, high expectations of her; of a painful adolescence; of treasured months spent in her grandmother's tiny apartment in Seoul, where she and her mother would bond, late at night, over heaping plates of food. As she grew up, moving to the east coast for college, finding work in the restaurant industry, performing gigs with her fledgling band – and meeting the man who would become her husband – her Koreanness began to feel ever more distant, even as she found the life she wanted to live.
It was her mother's diagnosis of terminal pancreatic cancer, when Michelle was twenty-five, that forced a reckoning with her identity and brought her to reclaim the gifts of taste, language, and history her mother had given her.

The Astonishing Color of After

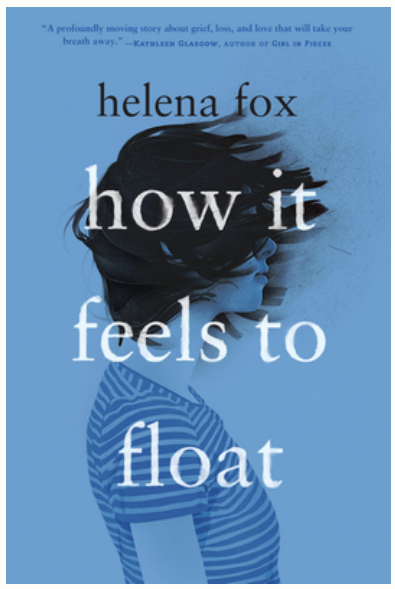
By: Emily X.R. Pan



Leigh Chen Sanders is absolutely certain about one thing: When her mother died by suicide, she turned into a bird.
Leigh, who is half Asian and half white, travels to Taiwan to meet her maternal grandparents for the first time. There, she is determined to find her mother, the bird. In her search, she winds up chasing after ghosts, uncovering family secrets, and forging a new relationship with her grandparents. And as she grieves, she must try to reconcile the fact that on the same day she kissed her best friend and longtime secret crush, Axel, her mother was taking her own life.
Alternating between reality and magic, past and present, hope and despair, The Astonishing Color of After is a luminous debut novel about finding oneself through family history, art, bravery, and love.

How It Feels to Float

By: Helena Fox



Biz knows how to float. She has her people, her posse, her mom and the twins. She has Grace. And she has her dad, who tells her about the little kid she was, who loves her so hard, and who shouldn't be here but is. So Biz doesn't tell anyone anything. Not about her dark, runaway thoughts, not about kissing Grace or noticing Jasper, the new boy. And she doesn't tell anyone about her dad. Because her dad died when she was six. And Biz knows how to float, right there on the surface–normal okay regular fine.
But after what happens on the beach–first in the ocean, and then in the sand--the tethers that hold Biz steady come undone. Dad disappears, and with him, all comfort. It might be easier, better, sweeter to float all the way away? Or maybe stay a little longer, find her father, bring him back to her. Or maybe–maybe maybe maybe–there's a third way Biz just can't see yet.

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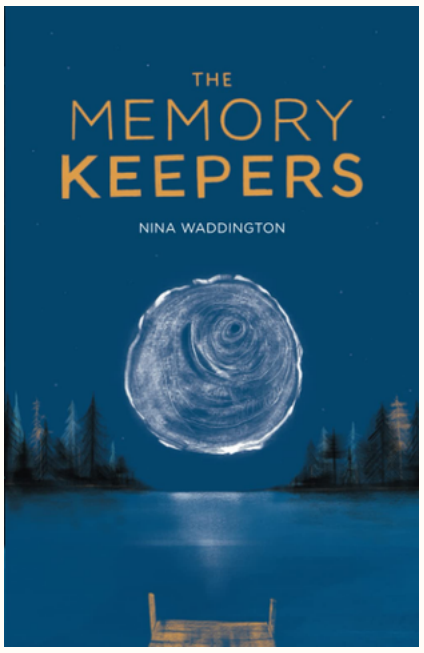


The Memory Keepers

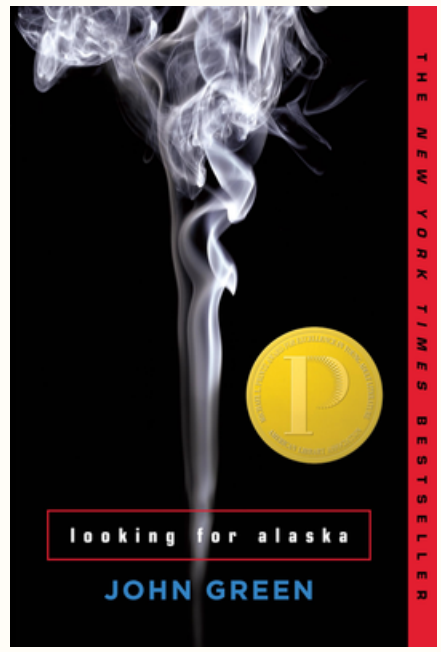
By: Nina Waddington

They always loved it when they noticed those symbols and how they sparked memories of loved ones now gone. Sometimes it was a song, or sometimes it was a smell. Or simple words written on a page. Beautiful coincidences, they had always assumed.
Kelton only learned in the moment of his death that these symbols existed at all. A flashing memory put him back in high school, on a stormy winter's day, watching the girl he loved. "Maybe death is just a crossroad," she had said. "Maybe, there isn't an end. But a new beginning."
Kelton had been lucky, rewarded with a second chance and a job of the most incredible importance. He was now sent on complicated tasks to leave symbols for people who'd lost a loved one. Those symbols weren't coincidences after all. They were the work of The Memory Keepers.

Looking for Alaska

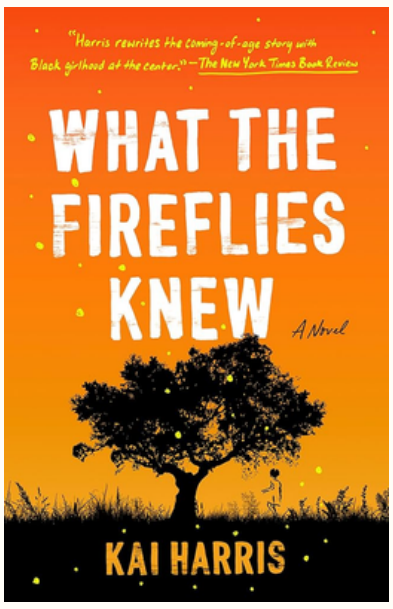
By: John Green

Before. Miles "Pudge" Halter is done with his safe life at home. His whole life has been one big non-event, and his obsession with famous last words has only made him crave "the Great Perhaps" even more (Francois Rabelais, poet). He heads off to the sometimes crazy and anything-but-boring world of Culver Creek Boarding School, and his life becomes the opposite of safe. Because down the hall is Alaska Young. The gorgeous, clever, funny, sexy, self-destructive, screwed up, and utterly fascinating Alaska Young. She is an event unto herself. She pulls Pudge into her world, launches him into the Great Perhaps, and steals his heart. Then. . . .
After. Nothing is ever the same.



What the Fireflies Knew

By: Kai Harris



After her father dies of an overdose and the debts incurred from his addiction cause the loss of the family home in Detroit, almost-eleven-year-old Kenyatta Bernice (KB) and her teenage sister, Nia, are sent by their overwhelmed mother to live with their estranged grandfather in Lansing.
Over the course of a single, sweltering summer, KB attempts to get her bearings in a world that has turned upside down--a father who is labeled a fiend; a mother whose smile no longer reaches her eyes; a sister, once her best friend, who has crossed the threshold of adolescence and suddenly wants nothing to do with her; a grandfather who is grumpy and silent; the white kids across the street who are friendly, but only sometimes. And all of them are keeping secrets.
Pinballing between resentment, abandonment, and loneliness, KB is forced to carve out a different identity for herself and find her own voice. As she examines the jagged pieces of her recently shattered world, she learns that while some truths cut deep, a new life--and a new KB--can be built from the shards.

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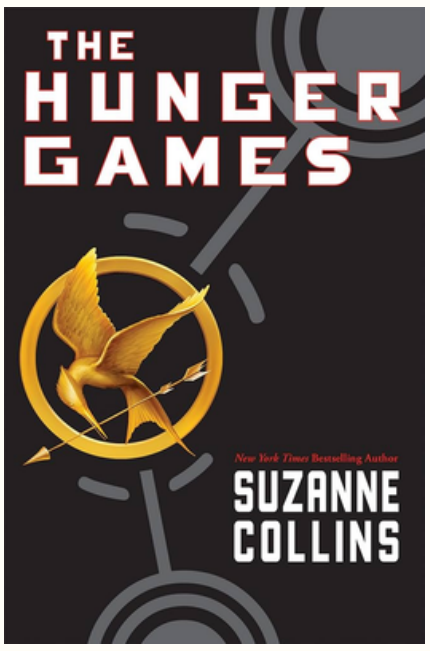
All the Blues in the Sky

By: Renée Watson

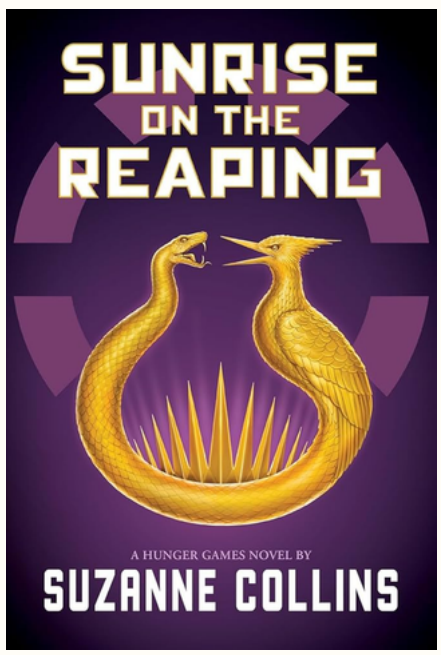
Sage's thirteenth birthday was supposed to be about movies and treats, staying up late with her best friend and watching the sunrise together. Instead, it was the day her best friend died. WIthout the person she had to hold her secrets and dream with, Sage is lost. In a counseling group with other girls who have lost someone close to them, she learns that not all losses are the same, and healing isn't predictable. There is sadness, loneliness, anxiety, guilt, pain, love. And even as Sage grieves, new, good things enter her life -- and she just may find a way to know that she can feel it all.

The Hunger Games

By: Suzanne Collins



Winning means fame and fortune. Losing means certain death. The Hunger Games have begun. . . .
In the ruins of a place once known as North America lies the nation of Panem, a shining Capitol surrounded by twelve outlying districts. The Capitol is harsh and cruel and keeps the districts in line by forcing them all to send one boy and one girl between the ages of twelve and eighteen to participate in the annual Hunger Games, a fight to the death on live TV.
Sixteen-year-old Katniss Everdeen regards it as a death sentence when she steps forward to take her sister's place in the Games. But Katniss has been close to dead before-and survival, for her, is second nature. Without really meaning to, she becomes a contender. But if she is to win, she will have to start making choices that weigh survival against humanity and life against love.



Sunrise on the Reaping

By: Suzanne Collins

As the day dawns on the fiftieth annual Hunger Games, fear grips the districts of Panem. This year, in honor of the Quarter Quell, twice as many tributes will be taken from their homes.
Back in District 12, Haymitch Abernathy is trying not to think too hard about his chances. All he cares about is making it through the day and being with the girl he loves.
When Haymitch's name is called, he can feel all his dreams break. He's torn from his family and his love, shuttled to the Capitol with the three other District 12 tributes: a young friend who's nearly a sister to him, a compulsive oddsmaker, and the most stuck-up girl in town. As the Games begin, Haymitch understands he's been set up to fail. But there's something in him that wants to fight . . . and have that fight reverberate far beyond the deadly arena.

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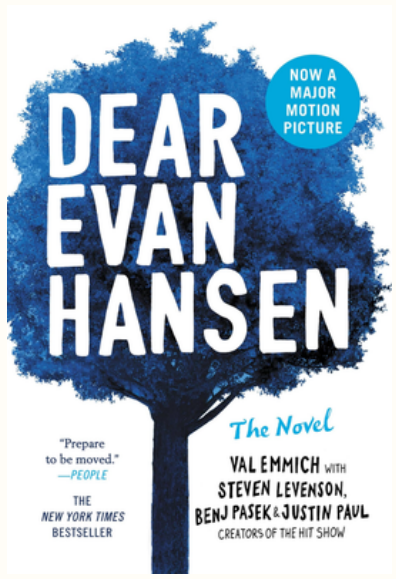
Dear Evan Hansen

By: Val Emmich

Dear Evan Hansen,
Today's going to be an amazing day and here's why...
When a letter that was never meant to be seen by anyone draws high school senior Evan Hansen into a family's grief over the loss of their son, he is given the chance of a lifetime: to belong. He just has to stick to a lie he never meant to tell, that the notoriously troubled Connor Murphy was his secret best friend.
Suddenly, Evan isn't invisible anymore--even to the girl of his dreams. And Connor Murphy's parents, with their beautiful home on the other side of town, have taken him in like he was their own, desperate to know more about their enigmatic son from his closest friend. As Evan gets pulled deeper into their swirl of anger, regret, and confusion, he knows that what he's doing can't be right, but if he's helping people, how wrong can it be?
No longer tangled in his once-incapacitating anxiety, this new Evan has a purpose. And a website. He's confident. He's a viral phenomenon. Every day is amazing. Until everything is in danger of unraveling and he comes face to face with his greatest obstacle: himself.



The Thing About Jellyfish

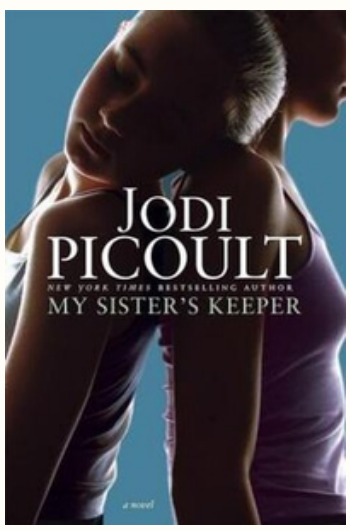
By: Ali Benjamin

After her best friend dies in a drowning accident, Suzy is convinced that the true cause of the tragedy must have been a rare jellyfish sting--things don't just happen for no reason. Retreating into a silent world of imagination, she crafts a plan to prove her theory--even if it means traveling the globe, alone. Suzy's achingly heartfelt journey explores life, death, the astonishing wonder of the universe...and the potential for love and hope right next door.

My Sister's Keeper

By: Jodi Picoult

Anna is not sick, but she might as well be. By age 13 she has undergone countless surgeries, transfusions, and shots so that her older sister, Kate, can somehow fight the leukemia that has plagued her since childhood. The product of preimplantation genetic diagnosis, Anna was conceived as a bone marrow match for Kate–a life and a role that she has never challenged ... until now. Like most teenagers, Anna is beginning to question who she truly is. But unlike most teenagers, she has always been defined in terms of her sister–and so Anna makes a decision that for most would be unthinkable, a decision that will tear her family apart and have perhaps fatal consequences for the sister she loves.



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How the Light Gets In

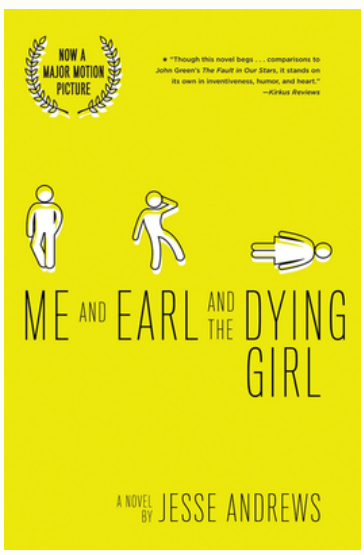
By: Katy Upperman

Since her sister's tragic death, seventeen-year-old Callie Ryan has basically given up. Her grades have plummeted, she's quit her swim team, and she barely recognizes the people her parents have become.
When she returns to her aunt's run-down coastal Victorian one year after Chloe's death, Callie resigns herself to a summer of guilt and home renovations. She doesn't expect to be charmed by the tiny coastal town or by Tucker Morgan, a local boy brimming with sunshine.
But even as her days begin to brighten, Callie's nights are crowded with chilling dreams, unanswered questions, and eerie phenomenon that have her convinced she's being haunted. Will Callie be able to figure out what her sister is trying to communicate before it's too late?

Winter Garden

By: Kristin Hannah

Meredith and Nina Whitson are as different as sisters can be. One stayed at home to raise her children and manage the family apple orchard; the other followed a dream and traveled the world to become a famous photojournalist. But when their beloved father falls ill, Meredith and Nina find themselves together again, standing alongside their cold, disapproving mother, Anya, who even now, offers no comfort to her daughters. As children, the only connection between them was the Russian fairy tale Anya sometimes told the girls at night. On his deathbed, their father extracts a promise from the women in his life: the fairy tale will be told one last time–and all the way to the end. Thus begins an unexpected journey into the truth of Anya's life in war-torn Leningrad, more than five decades ago. Alternating between the past and present, Meredith and Nina will finally hear the singular, harrowing story of their mother's life, and what they learn is a secret so terrible and terrifying that it will shake the very foundation of their family and change who they believe they are.



Me and Earl and the Dying Girl

By: Jesse Andrews

Greg Gaines is the last master of high school espionage, able to disappear at will into any social environment. He has only one friend, Earl, and together they spend their time making movies, their own incomprehensible versions of Coppola and Herzog cult classics.
Until Greg's mother forces him to rekindle his childhood friendship with Rachel. Rachel has been diagnosed with leukemia–cue extreme adolescent awkwardness–but a parental mandate has been issued and must be obeyed. When Rachel stops treatment, Greg and Earl decide the thing to do is to make a film for her, which turns into the Worst Film Ever Made and becomes a turning point in each of their lives.
And all at once Greg must abandon invisibility and stand in the spotlight.