

Realistic Fiction Books for Teens
Akron-Summit County Public Library

Asphyxia. **The Words in My Hands**, 2021. TEEN ASPHYXIA Words

Piper's mom had always wanted Piper to be "normal." She enrolled her in public school rather than a school for the deaf, but growing up reading lips has always made Piper feel like she couldn't truly be herself. Her art journal has always been her way of truly expressing herself, especially after her mother loses her job and they have to move to the guest house during a food and energy shortage ravaging her country. Then she meets Marley, a Child of Deaf Adult (CODA), who teaches her sign language. Together they become activists and Piper learns a new and exciting way to express herself.

Choi, Mary H.K. **Yolk**, 2021. TEEN CHOI Yolk

Jayne and June are two sisters from Seoul, South Korea living in New York City and their personalities could not be more different. Once very close, they have drifted apart as teenagers. Then Jayne gets cancer and the only one who can help her is her sister. This is a funny and emotional story about two estranged sisters who, through a tough situation, learn about each other and themselves.

Coles, Michelle. **Black Was the Ink**, 2022. TEEN COLES Black

Malcolm is unhappy living with his mother in DC. There is growing violence in his neighborhood and it seems that nothing good happens to teens like him in the city. Then his mother sends him to their family farm in Mississippi, and through the help of a ghostly ancestor that he encounters while exploring the farmhouse attic he is sent on a journey through Reconstruction-era America to experience life through the eyes of his ancestor. The experience helps him find his place in modern-day America.

Deaver, Mason. **The Ghosts We Keep**, 2021. TEEN DEAVER Ghosts

Everything happens for a reason, at least that's what everyone keeps telling Liam after his older brother Ethan is suddenly killed in a hit and run. Feeling alone, Liam has to learn to face the world without one of the people he loved most. *The Ghosts We Keep* is a novel about grief, but also about why we live and how we keep moving forward.

Elhillo, Safia. **Home is not a Country**, 2021. TEEN ELHILLO Home

Nima is a first-generation Muslim teenager living in suburban America. She does not feel understood by her mother, who grew up far away in a distant land, or by the town that makes her feel too much like an outsider to fit in, and not enough like an outsider to feel like she belongs someplace else. When her close Muslim friend is nearly killed in a brutal attack, she goes on a mystical journey to her homeland and eventually reaches self-acceptance.

McGinnis, Mindy. **Be Not Far from Me**, 2020. TEEN MCGINNIS Be

Ashley is a wilderness expert, having been taught by her summer camp counselor how to stay dry when it's raining, stay warm when it's cold and stay fed if she's ever lost in the wild. Yet he couldn't teach her everything about surviving life, like how to persevere when her mother left and how to deal with other relationship problems. So when she goes on a hiking trip with friends and is devastated when she catches her boyfriend with another girl, she runs off at night and takes a nasty fall into a ravine, severely injuring herself. Lost and alone, she must try to survive until help arrives. This is a survival tale that weaves real life struggles into the fabric of the story.

Neil, Haley. **Once More with Chutzpah**, 2022. TEEN NEIL Once

Tally's parents send her and her twin brother Max to Israel to learn about religious history and visit their family in Tel Aviv. As Tally and Max make friends with their tour group and get to know their family while visiting Israeli cities and landmarks, Tally is deeply affected by stories of what her great-grandparents went through during World War II. She also learns first-hand about the complexities of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. Her experiences change her view of the world and her life back in the United States.

Woodson, Jacqueline. **Before the Ever After**, 2020. JFIC WOODSON Before

ZJ's pro-football-player dad is everyone's hero, but ZJ's reality is different. His dad has become forgetful and grumpy due to multiple concussions sustained while playing. When his dad embarrasses him in front of his friends, ZJ is afraid that his friends will stop coming over, but instead they help him get through it. This novel celebrates the ability to learn and adapt when life is difficult.

Zentner, Jeff. **In the Wild Light**, 2021. TEEN ZENTNER In

Cash Pruitt's life in small town Tennessee has never been easy. His mother died of an opioid overdose and his grandfather is dying of emphysema. His only salvation is the time he spends hiking and canoeing in the Tennessee wilderness with his closest friend, the misunderstood genius named Delaney Doyle. When Delaney's scientific discovery wins them both a full ride to an elite boarding school, Cash must make a tough decision. Should he stay with his Mamaw and ailing Papaw who saved him, or leave his home for a chance at personal success?

March 2022