

Bullying and Harassment

Fiction

***American Born Chinese* by Gene Luen Yang**

2006 National Book Award Finalist for Young People's Literature, the winner of the 2007 Eisner Award for Best Graphic Album: New, an Eisner Award nominee for Best Coloring, a 2007 Bank Street Best Children's Book of the Year, and a *New York Times* bestseller.

Jin Wang starts at a new school where he's the only Chinese-American student. When a boy from Taiwan joins his class, Jin doesn't want to be associated with an FOB like him. Jin just wants to be an all-American boy, because he's in love with an all-American girl. Danny is an all-American boy: great at basketball, popular with the girls. But his obnoxious Chinese cousin Chin-Kee's annual visit is such a disaster that it ruins Danny's reputation at school, leaving him with no choice but to transfer somewhere he can start all over again. The Monkey King has lived for thousands of years and mastered the arts of kung fu and the heavenly disciplines. He's ready to join the ranks of the immortal gods in heaven. But there's no place in heaven for a monkey. Each of these characters cannot help himself alone, but how can they possibly help each other? They're going to have to find a way—if they want to fix the disasters their lives have become.

***Awkward* by Svetlana Chmakova (10+)**

Peppi Torres knows that rule #1 in a new school is not to get noticed by the mean kids, and rule #2 is to find a group to protect you. But she fumbles rule #1 badly when she bumps into Jaime Thompson in the hallway and immediately gets labeled the "nerder girlfriend." To defend herself, though, she treats Jaime badly and can't help but feel ashamed. But the group she's settling into, the art club, and Jaime's group, the science club, are archrivals. How can Peppi find a way to make up for her poor behavior? It turns out that sometimes you have to break all the social rules to survive middle school. This newly released graphic novel conveys a powerful message about compassion in the midst of the chaos of middle school.

***Be Prepared* by Vera Brosgol (10+)**

Vera is desperate to fit in with her suburban friends — but for a Russian immigrant with a single mother, that's not easy. The other girls in the neighborhood all go to summer camp, so when she finds out that her family's church will help pay for a Russian Orthodox camp, she convinces her mother to let her go. But it turns out that camp is a struggle too, particularly with older "cool girl" cabinmates and fellow campers who mock and exclude her. Fortunately, with time, Vera achieves some real triumphs and learns how to find — and be — a real friend. Author / illustrator Vera Brosgol deftly combines emotional honesty and belly laughs in this graphic novel, which is based in part on her own camp experience.

***Confessions of a Former Bully* by Trudy Ludwig (8-12)**

In this unique book, Katie starts keeping a notebook about bullying after she's required to visit the school counselor for bullying a friend on the playground. As Katie explores why she acted as she did, and learns more about bullying in general, she also develops ideas about how to atone for her mistakes. The story also includes sidebars with statistics, quotes, and other factual information about physical, emotional, and Internet bullying. Since part of the challenge for older girls can be the realization that almost everyone has engaged in teasing or bullying at some point — including themselves — it can help to show that it is possible to make things right if you've made a mistake.

***Crossing Lines* by Paul Volponi**

Adonis is a jock. He's on the football team and he's dating one of the prettiest girls in school. Alan is the new kid. He wears lipstick and joins the Fashion Club. Soon enough the football team is out to get him. Adonis is glad to go along with his teammates . . . until they come up with a dangerous plan to humiliate Alan. Now Adonis must decide whether he wants to be a guy who follows the herd or a man who does what's right.

From critically acclaimed author Paul Volponi comes this discussable and finely wrought story of bullies, victims, and the bystanders caught in between.

***Does My Head Look Big in This?* By Randa Abdel-Fattah (13+)**

When young Australian Muslim Amal decides to wear the hijab as an expression of her religious devotion, she discovers how much prejudice can be wrapped up in a piece of cloth. Suddenly, her head covering is all anyone wants to talk about, and classmates who used to have no problem with Amal now see her as a “towel-head” instead of a peer. And strangers in the street — and even prospective employers — seem to feel free to judge her on her choice as well. Teens interested in tolerance-related issues will be particularly intrigued to see how peoples' opinions can change depending on how well someone blends into the majority culture.

***How to Disappear Completely* by Ali Standish (10-13)**

12-year-old Emma used to treasure weekends with her Gram in her small town of Lanternwood, full of imaginative games and a shared journal where they could write anything. Then Gram admitted she had terminal cancer, and Emma and her family moved to her cottage to help in her last days. Now, Emma is starting school in a new town, grieving the loss of Gram, and getting bullied by a classmate for her newly diagnosed vitiligo. As she struggles to deal with all of that — and discovers that someone is still writing back to her in Gram's journal — Emma will have to figure out how to be herself when everything around her has changed... and the stories she and Gram shared might just be the key.

***If This Were a Story* by Beth Turley (10-13)**

Ten-year-old Hannah has always been good at holding in her emotions, even when life at home is hard. But when she finds a note that says "nobody likes Hannah" on the floor of her classroom, she

starts getting support from an unexpected place: voices from objects around her, from her lucky pennies to her stuffed elephant, Ambrose. She also gets help from her teacher and from the school counselor, Ms. Meghan, but they can't help her if she won't reveal what's going on — and as Hannah herself thinks, "We are all unreliable narrators." This touching debut addresses bullying, as well as the importance of story, through the eyes of an insightful and empathetic main character.

***Karma Khullar's Mustache* by Kristi Wientge (8-12)**

Everything seems to be going against Karma as she prepares to enter middle school: her best friend has found another, blonder best friend; her beloved *dadima* has passed away; her father has become the new stay-at-home parent while her mother spends most of her time at work; and perhaps worst of all, she's spotted *seventeen* hairs sprouting on her upper lip. As her classmate's taunts about her mustache grow, Karma wonders if someone like her — half white and half Indian, half Methodist and half Sikh — belongs anywhere. With everyone busy elsewhere, Karma will have to figure out her own way to define her own destiny. Debut author Kristi Wientge tackles body hair, self-image, and bullying in this relatable novel which encourages tweens to imagine themselves in Karma's shoes.

***Let's Pretend We Never Met* by Melissa Walker (9-12)**

Mattie's family had to move during the middle of the school year, and at first she expects to spend her winter break worrying about fitting in. Instead, she meets Agnes, a next-door neighbor and soon-to-be classmate, and they quickly become friends: Agnes is funny, smart, and inventive. Except when school starts, Mattie learns that Agnes is considered a "freak of nature" — and that the popular kids may not want anything to do with Mattie if she's Agnes' friend. Mattie will have to decide whether Agnes or others are more important — or perhaps, find a way to bridge this seemingly enormous gap. This honest and insightful middle grade novel will get kids thinking about friendship, peer pressure, and how to build healthy relationships.

***Out of Place* by Jennifer Blecher (9-12)**

12-year-old Cove has never been off the island of Martha's Vineyard, and her mother insists they'll never leave. But when her best friend Nina moves to New York City, Cove becomes the target of her school's bullies, leaving her feeling more isolated than ever before. When a new possible friend shows her a kids-only reality TV show for would-be designers, Cove figures that's her ticket to getting to New York. But when her desperation leads to bad decisions, Cove will have to figure out how to make up for her mistakes — and maybe how to make her own place, wherever she is. This gentle coming-of-age story explores loneliness, bullying, and the power of finding your voice.

***Orchards* by Holly Thompson (14+)**

Sometimes you can't make up for what you've said or done. In this book, Kana, an American girl who is half Japanese and half Jewish, has worked hard to blend in with the popular crowd — a

crowd that spent some of its time harassing Ruth. But Ruth was struggling with bipolar disorder and committed suicide during the school year. Kana's parents send her to her grandparents' orange groves in Japan for the summer to work — and reflect on the things she has done. In free verse, often directed to Ruth, Kana struggles with coming to terms with the responsibility she may hold for Ruth's death. While there are no definite answers, Kana does realize that, had she stepped in, she may have been able to change things for the better.

***Real Friends* by Shana Hale (9-12)**

Shannon and Adrienne have been best friends forever, but things start to change when Adrienne starts hanging out with Jen, the leader of the elementary school's popular clique known as The Group. To be in The Group, you have to do everything Jen says — even if that means bullying others. Shannon will need to decide whether being part of The Group is worth it... and figure out how to stand up for herself if it's not. Young Shannon's day dreams hint at her future as a bestselling author, while LeUyen Pham's appealing illustrations still underscore how alienated Shannon feels with The Group and how comfortable she feels with other friends. This graphic novel memoir from beloved author Shannon Hale about relational aggression and the power of finding true friends will speak to many tweens.

***Some Girls Are* by Courtney Summers**

Climbing to the top of the social ladder is hard—falling from it is even harder. Regina Afton used to be a member of the *Fearsome Fivesome*, an all-girl clique both feared and revered by the students at Hallowell High... until vicious rumors about her and her best friend's boyfriend start going around.

Now Regina's been "frozen out" and her ex-best friends are out for revenge. If Regina was guilty, it would be one thing, but the rumors are far from the terrifying truth and the bullying is getting more intense by the day. She takes solace in the company of Michael Hayden, a misfit with a tragic past who she herself used to bully. Friendship doesn't come easily for these onetime enemies, and as Regina works hard to make amends for her past, she realizes Michael could be *more* than just a friend... if threats from the *Fearsome Foursome* don't break them both first.

Tensions grow and the abuse worsens as the final days of senior year march toward an explosive conclusion.

"This story takes an unflinching look at the intricacies of high school relationships Fans of the film *Mean Girls* will enjoy this tale of redemption and forgiveness." — *School Library Journal*

***Stargirl* by Jerry Spinelli (12+)**

The perplexing and unique Stargirl captivates everyone at Mica High when she arrives — including Leo, the story's narrator. The adoration turns sour, however, and soon Stargirl realizes she either has to change herself to be "normal" enough to fit in, or remain true to herself and accept her classmates' taunts. Leo pushes her to change, so that they can continue their relationship without him being isolated along with her. But when it comes time for the choice, Stargirl knows she has to

choose what's right for herself, not Leo or anyone else. It's important that tweens and teens know that they shouldn't change who they are for the sake of gaining popularity; this book captures that message beautifully.

***Sticks and Stones* by Abby Cooper (10-13)**

Elyse has an unusual condition: ever since she was a baby, the words people use to describe her appear on her skin. Words like "cute" and "adorable" are just an oddity, but as she gets older, she starts seeing words like "loser" and "pathetic" that itch and pull at her skin — and worse, some of them are her own thoughts about herself. Now that's she's twelve, the situation seems dire: the friends who used to accept her are drifting away just as she starts middle school. And then she gets an anonymous message, from someone who says they know what's going on and they want to help. Author Abby Cooper uses Elyse's medical condition as a fascinating metaphor for both self-esteem problems and the impact that words can have upon a person's confidence.

***Symptoms of Being Human* by Jeff Garvin (14+)**

A new school and an ultra-conservative congressman father running for re-election are stressful enough, but Riley has a secret: Riley is genderfluid, identifying as a boy some days and a girl others. The strain of playing a role for the community and media is building, so on a therapist's recommendation, Riley starts an anonymous blog about what it's like to be a genderfluid teen. But just as Riley gets settled at school, the blog goes viral — and an unnamed commenter discovers Riley's identity and threatens to expose it to the world. Riley faces a choice: walk away from support, understanding, and a newfound cause, or come out — and risk everything. Jeff Garvin has created a story that tackles online, gender-based bullying in an uplifting way, with a fascinating protagonist, one who faces prejudice and still keeps a sense of humor and stands up for what is right for Riley.

***The Humiliations of Pippi McGee* by Beth Vrabel (10-13)**

Every year she's been in school, Pippi has suffered some sort of humiliation — from an embarrassing kindergarten self-portrait to having a leak during her period in seventh grade — and mean-girl Kara has often been the one broadcasting it to the world. Now in eighth grade, Pippi is determined to remake herself before high school — and to get a little revenge along the way. But her quest is threatening her few real friendships, and she's also discovering some of the people on her list are a little more complicated than she thought.... Both painful and funny, this authentic novel asks the question of whether loving yourself might be the best "revenge" of all.

***The Girls* by Amy Goldman Koss**

Maya has been part of the group ever since the day Candace asked her if she wanted to "do lunch" in the cafeteria. Yet when Candace suddenly deems her unworthy, Maya's so-called friends just blow her off. While Maya just wants the girls back like they used to be, she knows that can never happen-because whatever Candace wants, Candace gets, no matter who gets hurt. Maya isn't sure exactly where things went wrong for her, but she knows she has to find out who her real friends are, and who among the girls she can trust.

"[A] suspenseful and realistic portrayal of a popular middle school clique Readers will identify with and remember these characters." (*Publishers Weekly*, starred review)

***The Second Life of Abigail Walker* by Fanny Britt (9-12)**

Helene has been inexplicably ostracized by the other girls in her class, and she's struggling with her emotions without help from the adults around her. She finds solace in her favorite book, *Jane Eyre*, but that won't help when she finds herself on a school trip with no escape from humiliation. The sighting of a fox provides comfort for a while, but even that is denied to her before long. Then Helene meets Geraldine, a new girl in school who doesn't seem to care that befriending the outcasts puts herself at social risk. Perhaps bullies have exactly the power that you give them... This stunning, emotionally powerful graphic novel illustrates one way kids can invert the power dynamic between the bullies and the bullied.

***The Skin I'm In* by Sharon Flake (13+)**

Maleeka has long heard constant comments about her dark black skin, which makes it hard for her to see herself as beautiful — or valuable. But a new teacher at the school, whose blotched face draws the same negative attention, shows Maleeka how to hold her head high despite the attacks against her, and when one of the cutest boys in school declares that her "sweet cocoa brown skin" is beautiful, Maleeka begins to see how bullies make you see the world through their lens, rather than your own. This unflinching look at racially-based bullying will open teen readers' eyes to the many cultural facets involved in our response to bullies.

***The Truth About Alice* by Jennifer Mathieu (15+)**

Everyone "knows" that Alice is a slut: she had sex with two boys at a party...or maybe she had sex in exchange for math answers. And then, when Brandon, the quarterback, dies in a car crash, rumors really spin out of control: it was Alice's obsessive texts that caused the accident, surely. As multiple narrators tell the story of how Alice went from the girl who didn't care about being popular to the demonized target of a school's rage, readers piece together how destructive the desire for popularity can be — and how the faster pace of texting and social media turn gossip into a destructive force that seems unstoppable. Equally importantly, the book highlights how, by excusing bullying because "she deserved it," the whole community is culpable.

***What Happened to Lani Garver?* By Carol Plum-Uci (14+)**

Sexual orientation or gender nonconformity can make someone a target of bullies. In this gripping novel, Lani arrives at school and becomes the subject of intense curiosity, since he dresses androgynously and refuses to define his gender or his sexual orientation. Claire may be in with the popular crowd, but she still feels like an outsider after a year out of school; she befriends Lani, the only person genuinely concerned about who she really is. But on Hackett Island, you fit in or else and soon the harassment against Lani and, by extension, Claire, becomes outright threatening. This powerful book is a harsh reminder that bullying can't just be treated as "part of growing up".

***Yaqui Delgado Wants to Kick Your Ass* by Meg Medina**

Winner of the 2014 Pura Belpré Author Award

In Meg Medina's compelling new novel, a Latina teen is targeted by a bully at her new school — and must discover resources she never knew she had.

One morning before school, some girl tells Piddy Sanchez that Yaqui Delgado hates her and wants to kick her ass. Piddy doesn't even know who Yaqui is, never mind what she's done to piss her off. Word is that Yaqui thinks Piddy is stuck-up, shakes her stuff when she walks, and isn't Latin enough with her white skin, good grades, and no accent. And Yaqui isn't kidding around, so Piddy better watch her back. At first Piddy is more concerned with trying to find out more about the father she's never met and how to balance honors courses with her weekend job at the neighborhood hair salon. But as the harassment escalates, avoiding Yaqui and her gang starts to take over Piddy's life. Is there any way for Piddy to survive without closing herself off or running away? In an all-too-realistic novel, Meg Medina portrays a sympathetic heroine who is forced to decide who she really is.

Nonfiction

***Dear Bully: Seventy Authors Tell Their Story* by Meghan Kelly Hall and Carrie Jones**

Today's top authors for teens and young people come together to share their stories about bullying—as bystanders, as victims, and as the bullies themselves—in this moving and deeply personal collection.

Lauren Oliver, R. L. Stine, Ellen Hopkins, Carolyn Mackler, Kiersten White, Mo Willems, Jon Scieszka, Lauren Kate, and many more contributed 70 heartfelt and empathetic stories from each corner of the schoolyard.

In addition, *Dear Bully* includes resources for teens, educators, and parents, and suggestions for further reading. For those working to support social and emotional learning and anti-bullying programs, *Dear Bully* can help foster reflection and empathy.

***It Gets Better: Coming Out, Overcoming Bullying, and Creating a Life Worth Living* by Dan Savage and Terry Miller**

Growing up isn't easy. Many young people face daily tormenting and bullying, and this is especially true for LGBT kids and teens. In response to a number of tragic suicides by LGBT students, syndicated columnist and author Dan Savage uploaded a video to YouTube with his partner, Terry Miller. Speaking openly about the bullying they suffered, and how they both went on to lead rewarding adult lives, their video launched the It Gets Better Project YouTube channel and initiated a worldwide phenomenon.

It Gets Better is a collection of original essays and expanded testimonials written to teens from celebrities, political leaders, and everyday people, because while many LGBT teens can't see a positive future for themselves, we can.

***Please Stop Laughing at Me: One Woman's Inspirational True Story* by Jodee Blanco**

While other children were daydreaming about dances, first kisses, and college, Jodee Blanco was trying to figure out how to go from homeroom to study hall without being taunted or spit upon as she walked through the halls.

This powerful, unforgettable memoir chronicles how one child was shunned—and even physically abused—by her classmates from elementary school through high school. It is an unflinching look at what it means to be the outcast, how even the most loving parents can get it all wrong, why schools are often unable to prevent disaster, and how bullying has been misunderstood and mishandled by the mental health community.

You will be shocked, moved, and ultimately inspired by this harrowing tale of survival against insurmountable odds. This vivid story will open your eyes to the harsh realities and long-term consequences of bullying—and how all of us can make a difference in the lives of teens today.

***Vicious: True Stories by Teens About Bullies* edited by Hope Vanderberg**

Essays by teens address bullying: physical, verbal, relational, and cyber. These stories will appeal to readers because the cruelty and hurt are unmistakably real—and the reactions of the writers are sometimes cringe-worthy, often admirable, and always believable.

Teens open up to tell personal stories that tackle difficult, real-life issues. Direct, revealing, and often raw, these voices will ring true for any teen reader who has faced bullying, anger, or stress. Each piece has been selected and edited to appeal to reluctant and emerging readers as young as seventh grade. Readers will be inspired by the writers' courage and strength in working hard to overcome problems both large and small.