Coming of Age Books

Alcott, Louisa May.  Little Women.  759 p.
Chronicles the joys and troubles of the four March sisters--Meg, Jo, Amy, and Beth--as they grow into young ladies and marry in nineteenth-century New England.

In the early 1960s in the Dominican Republic, twelve-year-old Anita learns that her family is involved in the underground movement to end the bloody rule of the dictator, General Trujillo.

Eighteen-year-old Kate, who sometimes chafes at being a preacher's daughter, finds herself losing control in her senior year as she faces difficult neighbors, the possibility that she may not be accepted by the college of her choice, and an unexpected death.

After finally getting noticed by someone other than school bullies and his ever-angry father, seventeen-year-old Tyler enjoys his tough new reputation and the attentions of a popular girl, but when life starts to go bad again, he must choose between transforming himself or giving in to his destructive thoughts.

Atkins, Catherine.  Alt Ed.  198 p.
Susan, an overweight tenth grader, develops a better sense of herself through participation in a special after-school counseling class with other troubled students, and the friendship of a sensitive gay classmate.

Austin, Jane.  Pride and Prejudice.  446 p.
Elizabeth Bennet is the perfect Austen heroine: intelligent, generous, sensible, incapable of jealousy or any other major sin. That makes her sound like an insufferable goody-goody, but the truth is she's a completely hip character, who if provoked is not above skewering her antagonist with a piece of her exceptionally sharp -- but always polite -- 18th century wit. The point is, you spend the whole book absolutely fixated on the critical question: will Elizabeth and Mr. Darcy hook up?

Bauer, Joan.  Hope was Here.  186 p.
When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor.

Bechard, Margaret.  Hanging on to Max.  142 p.
When his girlfriend decides to give their baby away, seventeen-year-old Sam is determined to keep him and raise him alone.

Bennett, Cherie and Jeff Gottesfeld.  Anne Frank and Me.  282 p.
After suffering a concussion while on a class trip to a Holocaust exhibit, Nicole finds herself living the life of a Jewish teenager in Paris during the Nazi occupation.

Binns, B. A.  Pull.  308 p.
After his father kills his mother, seventeen-year-old David struggles to take care of his two sisters--and himself--while dealing with his grief, guilt, and trying to fit in at a tough new school while hiding his past.

In 1945, after surviving a harrowing year in Auschwitz, fourteen-year-old Elli returns, along with her mother and brother, to the family home, now part of Slovakia, where they try to find a way to rebuild their shattered lives.

Borland, Hal.  When the Legends Die.  216 p.
When his father killed another brave, Thomas Black Bull and his parents sought refuge in the wilderness. There they took up life as it had been in the old days, hunting and fishing, battling for survival. But an accident claimed the father's life and the grieving mother died shortly afterward. Left alone, the young Indian boy vowed never to return to the white man's world, to the alien laws that had condemned his father.
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When her mother is accused of embezzling a million dollars and vanishes, spoiled and selfish Ashley must fend for herself by finding a job and a place to live.

A novel based on the experiences of Suzanne David Hall, who, as a teenager in Nazi-occupied France, worked as a spy for the Fr. Resistance while training to be an opera singer.

Carmen decides to discard an old pair of jeans, but Tibby, Lena, and Bridget think they are great and decide that whoever the pants fit best will get them. When the jeans fit everyone perfectly, a sisterhood and a memorable summer begin.

In early nineteenth-century England, an orphaned young woman accepts employment as a governess and soon finds herself in love with her employer who has a terrible secret.

After being taught in a boarding school run by whites that Navajo is a useless language, Ned Begay and other Navajo men are recruited by the Marines to become Code Talkers, sending messages during World War II in their native tongue.

Sixteen-year-old Steph Landry finds an old book on how to be popular and decides to change her social status by following its advice, much to the bafflement of her two best friends.

After an arduous journey, Will Dwinelle and his friend Ben finally reach California in 1849 intending to bring home the man who betrayed the honor of a girl back home in Philadelphia, but find themselves tempted by the riches of the Gold Rush.

Alternates between two stories--contemporarily, seventeen-year-old Jacob visits a daunting Amsterdam at the request of his English grandmother--and historically, nineteen-year-old Geertrui relates her experience of British soldiers's attempts to liberate Holland from its German occupation.

Imagines the young woman in Johannes Vermeer's mysterious painting "The Girl With a Pearl Earring" as a sixteen-year-old Dutch girl named Griet who sparks the interest of the artist when she becomes a maid in his turbulent household.

When a persistent youth offender is caught yet again, he is sentenced to community service as the partner to a blind runner.

A teenage girl living on a tropical island runs away to escape her tribe's customs of arranged marriages and female genital mutilation.

Sixteen-year-old Giselle, who has buried herself in her dance studies and thoughts of her late father for a decade, comes to terms with her relationship with her famous ballerina mother and newly surfaced memories of her father's abuse when she ventures out of the world of the Manhattan elite and meets a charming boy named Will.

Still troubled by his older brother's violent suicide, eighteen-year-old Dillon becomes deeply involved in the terrible secret of his friend Jennifer, who feels she can tell no one what her stepfather is doing to her.
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Crutcher, Chris.  **Ironman.**  228 p.
While training for a triathlon, seventeen-year-old Bo attends an anger management group at school which leads him to examine his relationship with his father.

*Crutcher, Chris.  **King of the Mild Frontier.**  256 p.
Chris Crutcher tells of growing up in Cascade, Idaho, and becoming a writer.

Crutcher, Chris.  **Whale Talk.**  220 p.
Intellectually and athletically gifted, TJ, a multiracial, adopted teenager, shuns organized sports and the gung-ho athletes at his high school until he agrees to form a swimming team and recruits some of the school's less popular students.

DeLaCruz, Melissa.  **Fresh Off the Boat.**  243 p.
When her family emigrates from the Philippines to San Francisco, California, Vicenza Arambullo struggles to fit in at her exclusive, all-girl private school.

The summer following her father's death, Macy plans to work at the library and wait for her brainy boyfriend to return from camp, but instead she goes to work at a catering business where she makes new friends and finally faces her grief.

Deuker, Carl.  **High Heat.**  277 p.
When sophomore Shane Hunter's father is arrested for money laundering at his Lexus dealership, the star pitcher's life of affluence and private school begins to fall apart.

Deuker, Carl.  **Night Hoops.**  250 p.
While trying to prove that he is good enough to play on his high school's varsity basketball team, Nick must also deal with his parents' divorce and erratic behavior of a troubled classmate who lives across the street.

Donnelly, Jennifer.  **A Northern Light.**  380 p.
Sixteen-year-old Mattie, determined to attend college and be a writer against the wishes of her father and boyfriend, takes a job at a hotel in 1906 where the death of a guest renews her determination to live her own life.

Thirteen-year-old Sam endures harsh conditions, battles, and a shipwreck after being pressed into service aboard the HMS Miranda during the Napoleonic Wars.

Draper, Sharon M.  **The Battle of Jericho.**  297 p.
A high school junior and his cousin suffer the ramifications of joining what seems to be a "reputable" school club.

Elliot, L. M.  **Under a War-Torn Sky.**  277 p.
After his plane is shot down by Hitler's Luftwaffe, nineteen-year-old Henry Forester of Richmond, Virginia, strives to walk across occupied France, with the help of the French Resistance, in hopes of rejoining his unit.

The love story of Aku-nna, a young Ibo girl, and Chike, the son of a prosperous former slave.

Flinn, Alex.  **Breaking Point.**  240 p.
Fifteen-year-old Paul enters an exclusive private school and falls under the spell of a charismatic boy who may be using him.

Flinn, Alex.  **Breathing Underwater.**  263 p.
Sent to counseling for hitting his girlfriend, Caitlin, and ordered to keep a journal, sixteen-year-old Nick recounts his relationship with Caitlin, examines his controlling behavior and anger, and describes living with his abusive father.
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Flinn, Alex. *Nothing to Lose.* 277 p.
A year after running away with a traveling carnival to escape his unbearable home life, sixteen-year-old Michael returns to Miami, Florida, to find that his mother is going on trial for the murder of his abusive stepfather.

After a car accident seriously injures her best friend and kills her brother's girlfriend, sixteen-year-old Anna tries to cope with her guilt and grief, while learning some truths about her family and herself.

*Gottlieb, Lori. *Stick Figure: A Diary of My Former Self.* 222 p.
The author shares her childhood diaries, chronicling her experiences as an eleven-year-old anorexic.

Sixteen-year-old Miles’ first year at Culver Creek Preparatory School in Alabama includes good friends and great pranks, but is defined by the search for answers about life and death after a fatal car crash.

When German prisoners of war are brought to her Arkansas town during World War II, twelve-year-old Patty, a Jewish girl, befriends one of them and must deal with the consequences of that friendship.

The author describes her life as the daughter of a woman afflicted with Munchausen by proxy, a form of child abuse in which a parent, most often a mother, invents or induces illness in a child in order to gain attention from medical professionals, tells how she was able to save herself, and discusses her efforts to have another young girl removed from her mother's care.

An American ambulance officer serving on the Austro-Italian front deserts to join an English nurse after the retreat of Caporetto.

After a lifetime of conforming to the image of what her parents and high school friends want her to be, Sarah must come to terms with her own identity when her destructive best friend tries to commit suicide. Told in the form of free-verse poems.

Jessie and the other rebellious teenage members of a wilderness survival school team abandon their adult leader and try to run the dangerous white water of the Grand Canyon.

At the age of fifteen, Sam Jones's girlfriend gets pregnant and Sam's life of skateboarding and daydreaming about Tony Hawk changes drastically.

Hughes, Dean. *Search and Destroy.* 216 p.
Recent high school graduate Rick Ward, undecided about his future and eager to escape his unhappy home life, joins the army and experiences the horrors of the war in Vietnam.

Hughes, Dean. *Soldier Boys.* 162 p.
Two boys, one German and one American, are eager to join their respective armies during World War II, and their paths cross at the Battle of the Bulge.

Popular sophomore baseball star Colt Trammel faces a personal crisis when his girlfriend dumps him, his failing grades threaten to bump him from the team, and he finds himself drawn to a new, green-haired girl at school.
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Lin Kong struggles to balance his life between the two women he loves and the country that is trying to rule his life.

When seventeen-year-old Ginny receives a packet of mysterious envelopes from her favorite aunt, she leaves New Jersey to criss-cross Europe on a sort of scavenger hunt that transforms her life.

Sixteen-year-old Tomas Wanninger persuades his mother to let him leave Germany to volunteer at a kibbutz in Israel, where he experiences a violent political attack and finds answers about his own past.

Konigsburg, E. L.  *The Outcasts of 19 Schuyler Place*.  296 p.
Upon leaving an oppressive summer camp, twelve-year-old Margaret Rose Kane spearheads a campaign to preserve three unique towers her grand uncles have been building in their back yard for over forty years.

Fifteen-year-old Jess, living with her mum, separated from her father in Cornwall, and with a best friend who seems to do everything perfectly, finds her own assets through humor.

While navigating his first year of high school and awaiting the birth of his new baby brother, Scott loses old friends and gains some unlikely new ones as he hones his skills as a writer.

The author tells the story of her painful childhood in China where she lived until the age of fourteen with her father, stepmother, and siblings, all of whom considered her bad luck because her mother died shortly after giving birth to her.

Seventeen-year-old Molly Montgomery learns the cost of fame when her band, The Hormones, a group started with her friends just for fun, suddenly becomes all the rage.

The summer that Hattie turns twelve, she meets the childlike uncle she never knew and becomes friends with a girl who works at the carnival that comes to Hattie’s small town.

After his father is killed in the attack on Pearl Harbor, Adam, his mother, and sister are evacuated from Hawaii to California, where he must deal with his feelings about the war, Japanese internment camps, his father, and his own identity.

 Presents a collection of poems by Billy Merrell in which he explores themes of love, sadness, and happiness.

Vulnerable following his brother’s suicide, a high school boy comes under the thrall of a darkly violent classmate and events at home and at school go chillingly out of control.

In nineteenth-century Scotland, following the death of his mother during surgery, Robbie decides to take revenge on the surgeon who performed the operation, Dr. Robert Knox, and in the process, makes a gruesome discovery about the lengths the medical profession will go to advance its knowledge of anatomy.

Still reeling from his drug-dealing father’s murder, moving in with the wealthy mother he never knew, and transferring to a private school, fifteen-year-old Jude is tricked into pleading guilty to a crime he did not commit.
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An eleven-year-old African-American girl in Ohio, in the early 1940s, prays for her eyes to turn blue so that she will be beautiful.

Author Walter Dean Myers describes his childhood in Harlem in the 1940s and 1950s, discussing his loving stepmother, his problems in school, his reasons for leaving home, and his beginnings as a writer.

A young Korean girl and her family find it difficult to learn English and adjust to life in America.

In a novel based on Chinese Cinderella tales, fourteen-year-old stepchild Xing-Xing endures a life of neglect and servitude, as her stepmother cruelly mutilates her own child's feet so that she alone might marry well.

A Puerto Rican girl coming of age in the 1950s struggles to negotiate her own terms of survival within the confines of her culture.

Janice Wills, not quite seventeen and an aspiring anthropologist, reports on the socio-cultural ordeals of being a teenager in Melva, North Carolina, including "Beautiful Rich Girls," parties, and the Miss Livermush pageant, but her anthropological certainties are torn asunder when an attractive boy in her school begins to express an interest in Janice and she will need to reassess where she really fits in.

Chronicles the mental breakdown of Esther Greenwood—a brilliant, beautiful, talented and successful young woman.

Eulinda, a house slave on a Georgia plantation in 1864, turns to Clara Barton, the eventual founder of the American Red Cross, for help in finding her brother Neddy who ran away to join the Northern war effort and is rumored to be at Andersonville Prison.

With their father away most of the time advocating independence for the American colonies, the children of Patrick Henry try to raise themselves, manage the family plantation, and care for their mentally ill mother.

In 1921 thirteen-year-old Luke finds himself torn between accepting his left-handedness or conforming to the belief of his preacher-father that such a condition is evil and must be overcome.

Presents the true story of Brent Runyon, who at fourteen set himself on fire and sustained burns over eighty percent of his body and describes the months of physical and mental rehabilitation that followed as he attempted to pull his life together.

Shane rides into a Wyoming valley in 1889 and becomes involved in a feud between big cattle dealers and homesteaders.

Abby has always felt she could never measure up to her older sister Tess, but when Tess is left in a coma after a car accident, Abby's life is put on hold and she must find a way to bring Tess back, even if it means sacrificing a chance at happiness with the mysterious Eli.
Coming of Age Books

Smith, Betty. A Tree Grows in Brooklyn. 420 p.
A Tree Grows in Brooklyn is the story of young, sensitive, and idealistic Francie Nolan -- and her erratic, eccentric family -- in the turn-of-the-century Williamsburg slums of Brooklyn.


A younger sister has a difficult time adjusting to life after her older sister has a mental breakdown.

This Italian-American Newbery Medalist presents a humorous account of his childhood and youth in Norristown, Pennsylvania.

Seventeen-year-old Josh, a loner-philosopher who wants to make a difference in the world, tries to maintain his secret identity as the author of a web site that is receiving national attention.

Prequel to: Roll of thunder, hear my cry. Paul-Edward, the son of a part-Indian, part-African slave mother and a White plantation owner father, finds himself caught between the two worlds of his parents as he pursues his dream of owning land in the aftermath of the Civil War.

In his senior year, high school star linebacker Hampton Greene finally begins to think for himself and discovers that he might be interested in more than just football.

In 1849, fifteen-year-old Nick and his older brother, longing to be whalers, sign on as hands on the whaling ship Sea Hawk, and find that the journey is full of hardship and unexpected dangers.

Voigt, Cynthia. Homecoming. 312 p.
Abandoned by their mother, four children begin a search for a home and an identity.

Eighteen-year-old Eli discovers a shocking secret about his life and his family while working for a Nobel Prize-winning scientist whose specialty is genetic engineering.