

Heston Community School

Book Suggestions Regarding Sensitive and Diverse Subjects



This list is compiled for students dealing with sensitive and diverse situations. It is not required reading for all students. It is only to assist students who are dealing with hard life choices or situations such as: Death, LGBT, Disabilities, Religion, or Race.

Grasshopper Jungle by Andrew Smith (KS4)

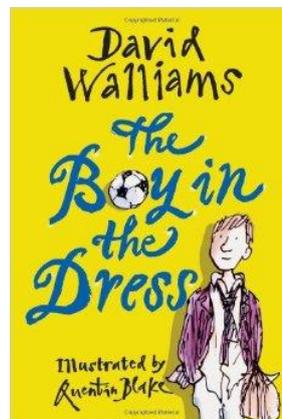
In the small town of Ealing, Iowa, Austin and his best friend Robby have accidentally unleashed an unstoppable army. An army of horny, hungry, six-foot-tall praying mantises that only want to do two things. This is the truth. This is history. It's the end of the world. And nobody knows anything about it.

Boy Meets Boy by David Leviathan (KS4)

Paul has been gay his whole life and he's confident about almost everything. He doesn't have to hide his feelings like best friend Tony or even cope with loving the wrong guy like his other best friend Joni. But heartbreak can happen to anyone. Falling in love changes everything.

Boy in a Dress by David Walliams (KS3)

Dennis was different. Why was he different, you ask? Well, a small clue might be in the title of this book...



Drama by Raina Telgemeier (KS3)

Graphic Novel about the lives of three drama geeks trying to put together a high school play while dealing with DRAMA!

Beautiful Music for Ugly Children by Kirstin Conn-Mills (KS4)

My birth name is Elizabeth, but I'm a guy. Gabe. My parents think I've gone crazy and the rest of the world is happy to agree with them, but I know I'm right. I've been a boy my whole life. When you think about it, I'm like a record. Elizabeth is my A side, the song everybody knows, and Gabe is my B side-not heard as often, but just as good.

Oranges Are Not the Only Fruit by Jeanette Winterson (KS5)

This is the story of Jeanette, adopted and brought up by her mother as one of God's elect. Zealous and passionate, she seems destined for life as a missionary, but then she falls for one of her converts.

Perks of Being a Wallflower by Stephen Chbosky (KS4)

A coming-of-age story that will spirit you back to those wild and poignant roller-coaster days known as growing up.

This Book is Gay by James Dawson (KS4)

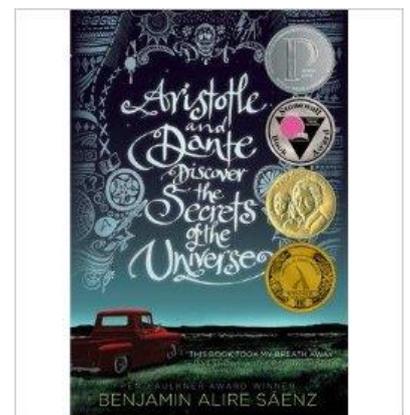
An uncensored look at what it's like to grow up as LGBT. Including testimonials from people 'across the spectrum',

Will Grayson, Will Grayson by John Green (KS4)

One cold night, in a most unlikely corner of Chicago, Will Grayson crosses paths with . . . Will Grayson. Two guys with the same name, running in two very different circles, suddenly find their lives going in new and unexpected directions, and culminating in epic turns-of-heart and the most fabulous musical ever to grace the high-school stage.

Aristotle and Dante Discover the Secrets of the Universe by Benjamin Alire Saenz (KS4)

Aristotle is an angry teen with a brother in prison.
Dante is a know-it-all who has an unusual way of looking at the world.
When they meet at the swimming pool, they seem to have nothing in common. But as the two loners start spending time together, they discover that they share a special kind of friendship—the kind of friendship that changes lives and lasts a lifetime.

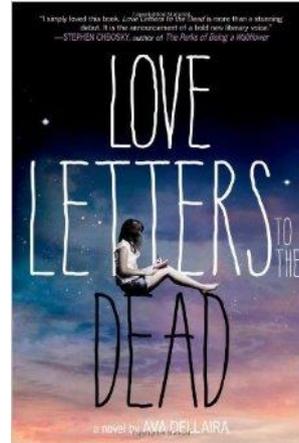


Thirteen Reasons Why by Jay Asher (KS4)

Clay Jensen returns home to find a strange package with his name on it. Inside he discovers several cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker - his classmate and first love - who committed suicide. Hannah's voice explains there are thirteen reasons why she killed herself and Clay is one of them. If he listens, he'll find out why.

Love Letters to the Dead by Ava Dellaira (KS3)

It begins as an assignment for English class: write a letter to a dead person - any dead person. Laurel chooses Kurt Cobain - he died young, and so did Laurel's sister May - so maybe he'll understand a bit of what Laurel is going through.



My Sister Lives on a Mantelpiece by Annabel Pitcher (KS3)

Ten-year-old Jamie Matthews has just moved to the Lake District with his Dad and his teenage sister, Jasmine for a 'Fresh New Start'. Five years ago his sister's twin, Rose, was blown up by a terrorist bomb. His parents are wrecked by their grief, Jasmine turns to piercing, pink hair and stops eating. The family falls apart. But Jamie hasn't cried in all that time. To him Rose is just a distant memory.

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath (KS5)

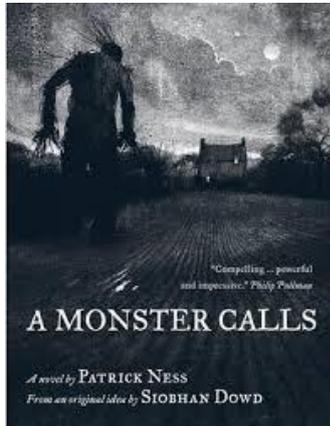
Esther Greenwood is at college and is fighting two battles, one against her own desire for perfection in all things - grades, boyfriend, looks, career - and the other against remorseless mental illness. As her depression deepens she finds herself encased in it, bell-jarred away from the rest of the world.

Lob by Linda Newberry (KS3)

For as long as she can remember, Lucy has wanted to catch a glimpse of the mysterious green man who lives in Grandpa Will's garden: *Lob*. You have to be very special to see him; that's what Grandpa says. Lucy's parents think *Lob*'s just imaginary, but Lucy knows he exists. And she can't believe it when she finally spots *Lob* in the gooseberry bushes. But Lucy's world is about to be shattered by a terrible event. What will happen to *Lob* now - and will she ever see him again?

Bird by Crystal Chan (KS3)

Twelve-year-old Jewel never knew her brother, but all her life she has lived in his shadow. Then one night, on her birthday, she finds a mysterious boy sitting in her oak tree. His name is John. And he changes everything.



A Monster Calls by Patrick Ness (KS3)

Conor has the same dream every night, ever since his mother first fell ill, ever since she started the treatments that don't quite seem to be working. But tonight is different. Tonight, when he wakes, there's a visitor at his window. It's ancient, elemental, a force of nature. And it wants the most dangerous thing of all from Conor. It wants the truth.

If I Stay by Gayle Forman (KS4)

Life can change in an instant. A cold February morning . . . a snowy road . . . and suddenly all of Mia's choices are gone. Except one. As alone as she'll ever be, Mia must make the most difficult choice of all.

Vernon God Little by DBC Pierre (KS5)

Teenager Vernon Gregory Little's life has been changed by the Columbine-style slaughter of a group of students at his high school. Soon his small town is blanketed under a media siege, and Vernon finds himself blamed for the killing.

Bridge to Terabithia by Katherine Paterson (KS3)

Join Jess and Leslie as they form an unlikely friendship and create the imaginary land of Terabithia. There they rule as king and queen, until a terrible tragedy occurs that helps Jess understand just how much he has learned from Leslie.

Wonder by R.J. Palacio (KS3)

Born with a terrible facial abnormality, Auggie has been home-schooled by his parents his whole life. Now, for the first time, he's being sent to a real school - and he's dreading it. All he wants is to be accepted - but can he convince his new classmates that he's just like them, underneath it all?



The Curious Incident of the Dog in Night Time by Mark Haddon (KS4)

Christopher is fifteen and has Asperger's Syndrome. He knows a very great deal about maths and very little about human beings. He loves lists, patterns and the truth. He hates the colours yellow and brown and being touched. He has never gone further than the end of the road on his own, but when he finds a neighbour's dog murdered he sets out on a terrifying journey which will turn his whole world upside down.

Mockingbird by Kathryn Erskine (KS3)

11-year-old Caitlin has Asperger's syndrome, and has always had her older brother, Devon, to explain the confusing things around her. But when Devon is killed in a tragic school shooting, Caitlin has to try and make sense of the world without him.

Counting by 7s by Holly Goldberg Sloan (KS3)

Willow Chance is a twelve-year-old genius, obsessed with nature and diagnosing medical conditions, who finds it comforting to count by 7s. It has never been easy for her to connect with anyone other than her adoptive parents, but that hasn't kept her from leading a quietly happy life ...until now.

All the Truth That's in Me by Julie Berry (KS4)

Four years ago, Judith and her best friend disappeared from their small town of Roswell Station. Two years ago, only Judith returned, permanently mutilated, reviled and ignored by those who were once her friends and family. But when Roswell Station is attacked, long-buried secrets come to light, and Judith is forced to choose: continue to live in silence, or recover her voice, even if it means changing her world, and the lives around her, forever.

I, Funny by James Patterson (KS3)

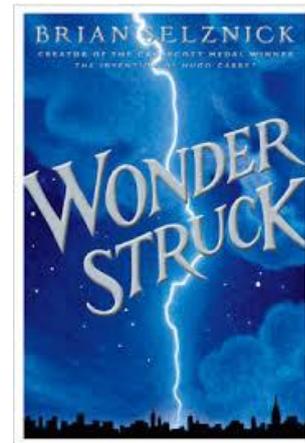
Built around the notion of a middle-grade stand-up comedian who delivers jokes sitting down because he is confined to a wheelchair, this tale is written as an extended monologue in which Jamie Grimm introduces loyal school friends, his mostly loving adoptive family, and Stevie—his new brother, who is also a vicious bully both online and in person—then proceeds to savage them all indiscriminately from a talent-contest stage.

She is Not Invisible by Marcus Sedgwick (KS4)

Laureth Peak's father has taught her to look for recurring events, patterns, and numbers--a skill at which she's remarkably talented. Her secret: She is blind. But when her father goes missing, Laureth and her 7-year-old brother Benjamin are thrust into a mystery that takes them to New York City where surviving will take all her skill at spotting the amazing, shocking, and sometimes dangerous connections in a world full of darkness.

Wonderstruck by Brian Selznick (KS3)

Ben and Rose secretly wish their lives were different. Ben, partially deaf, longs for the father he has never known. Rose dreams of a mysterious actress whose life she chronicles in a scrapbook. When Ben discovers a puzzling clue in his mother's room and Rose reads an enticing headline in the newspaper, both children set out alone on desperate quests to find what they are missing.



Deenie by Judy Blume (KS3)

When Deenie sees the brace for the first time, she wants to scream, "Forget it... I'm never going to wear that thing. Everyone will know. Everyone!" But the words won't come out. And Deenie, beautiful Deenie, who everyone says should be a model, is stuck wearing a brace from her neck to her hips. For four years-or longer. How will she ever face the hard times ahead?

Maggot Moon by Sally Gardner (KS3)

Set in an alternative 1950s Britain, where Standish Treadwell and Gramps live with the rest of the undesirables in Zone 7, and all stand terrified under the brutal regime of the Motherland. But severely dyslexic Standish sees the world through different eyes to most, and through his vision and courage he has to track down his best friend Hector, who has disappeared completely, and ultimately find a way to bring down the oppressive forces of the Motherland.

The Kite Runner by Khaled Hosseini (KS4)

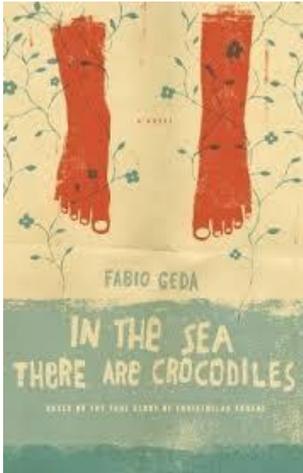
A sweeping story of family, love, and friendship told against the devastating backdrop of the history of Afghanistan over the last thirty years.

The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian by Sherman Alexie (KS4)

The story of Junior, a budding cartoonist growing up on the Spokane Indian Reservation. Determined to take his future into his own hands, Junior leaves his troubled school on the rez to attend an all-white farm town high school where the only other Indian is the school mascot.

I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou (KS4)

Sent by their mother to live with their devout, self-sufficient grandmother in a small Southern town, Maya and her brother, Bailey, endure the ache of abandonment and the prejudice of the local "powhitetrash." At eight years old and back at her mother's side in St. Louis, Maya is attacked by a man many times her age—and has to live with the consequences for a lifetime. Years later, in San Francisco, Maya learns that love for herself, the kindness of others, her own strong spirit, and the ideas of great authors will allow her to be free instead of imprisoned.



In the Sea There Are Crocodiles by Fabio Geda (KS3)

In early 2002, Enaiatollah Akbari's village fell prey to the Taliban. His mother, fearing for his life, led him across the border. So began Enaiat's remarkable and often publishing five-year ordeal—trekking across bitterly cold mountains, riding the suffocating false bottom of a truck, steering an inflatable raft in violent waters—through Iran, Turkey, Pakistan, and Greece, before he eventually sought political asylum in Italy, all before he turned fifteen years old.

Things Fall Apart by Chinua Achebe (KS4)

Two intertwining stories, both centring on Okonkwo, a "strong man" of an Ibo village in Nigeria. The first, a powerful fable of the immemorial conflict between the individual and society, traces Okonkwo's fall from grace with the tribal world. The second, as modern as the first is ancient, concerns the clash of cultures and the destruction of Okonkwo's world with the arrival of aggressive European missionaries. These perfectly harmonized twin dramas are informed by an awareness capable of encompassing at once the life of nature, human history, and the mysterious compulsions of the soul.

Before We Say Goodbye by Gabriella Ambrosio (KS4)

It is seven a.m. on a spring morning in Jerusalem. Eighteen-year-old Dima trudges through the mud to college and reflects on many things, including her forthcoming marriage to her cousin Faris. Seventeen-year-old Myriam skips school to sit on the tree-lined hill overlooking the city and think about her friend Michael, whose death she still mourns. And Dima's and Myriam's families - one Palestinian, one Israeli - go about their ordinary, separate lives; for today is like every other day. Yet in seven hours' time, everything will have changed. For ever.

Into That Forest by Louis Nowra (KS3)

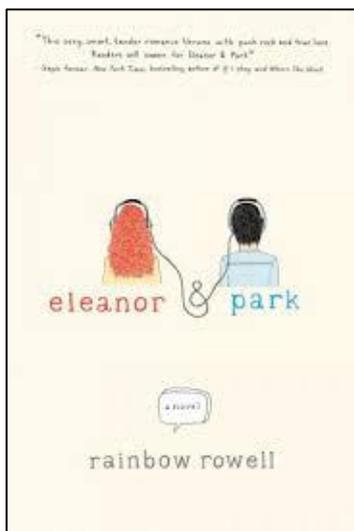
Two girls survive a terrible flood in the Tasmanian bush and are rescued by a pair of Tasmanian tigers who raise them in the wild. Their story of survival is remarkable, as they adapt to the life of the tiger, learning to hunt and to communicate without the use of human language. When they are discovered and returned to civilization, neither can adapt to being fully human after their extraordinary experience.

A Step from Heaven by An Na (KS3)

A young girl describes her family's bittersweet experience in the United States after their emigration from Korea. Four years old on the flight to California, Young Ju concludes that America is heaven. But when they arrive, they are weighed down by the difficulty of learning English, their insular family life, and the traditions of the country they left behind.

House of Spirits by Isabel Allende (KS4)

Here is patriarch Esteban, whose wild desires and political machinations are tempered only by his love for his ethereal wife, Clara, a woman touched by an otherworldly hand. Their daughter, Blanca, whose forbidden love for a man Esteban has deemed unworthy infuriates her father, yet will produce his greatest joy: his granddaughter Alba, a beautiful, ambitious girl who will lead the family and their country into a revolutionary future.



Eleanor & Park by Rainbow Rowell (KS4)

Set over the course of one school year in 1986, this is the story of two star-crossed misfits—smart enough to know that first love almost never lasts, but brave and desperate enough to try. When Eleanor meets Park, you'll remember your own first love—and just how hard it pulled you under.

Does My Head Look Big in This by Randa Abdel-fattah (KS4)

Sixteen-year-old Amal makes the decision to start wearing the hijab full-time and everyone has a reaction. Her parents, her teachers, her friends, people on the street. But she stands by her decision to embrace her faith and all that it is, even if it does make her a little different from everyone else.

Drawing a Veil by Lari Don (KS3)

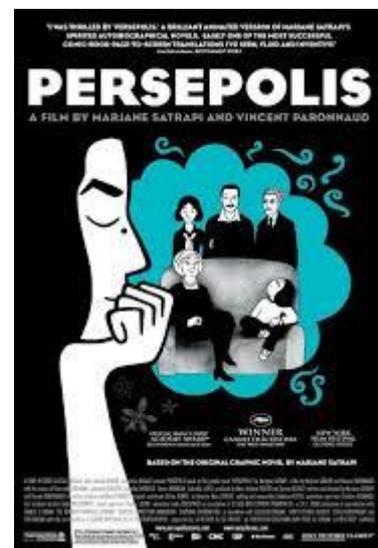
Ellie and Amina are best friends. But when Amina decides to start wearing the hijab, it attracts the attention of the bullies. Now Ellie's loyalties are being tested. Has Amina changed? Does it matter if best friends have different beliefs? Is she ready to stand up for Amina? A thought-provoking story about friendship, religion and modern life.

Everything Beautiful by Simmone Howell (KS3)

Riley Rose, atheist and bad girl, has been tricked into attending Spirit Ranch, a Christian camp. There she meets Dylan Kier, alumni camper and recent paraplegic, who arrives with a chip on his shoulder and a determination to perfect all of his bad habits. United in their personal suffering and in their irritation at their fellow campers, they turn the camp inside out as they question the meaning of belief systems, test their faith in each other, and ultimately settle a debate of the heart.

Persepolis by Marjane Satrapi (KS4)

A memoir of growing up in Iran during the Islamic Revolution. In powerful black-and-white comic strip images, Satrapi tells the story of her life in Tehran from ages six to fourteen, years that saw the overthrow of the Shah's regime, the triumph of the Islamic Revolution, and the devastating effects of war with Iraq. The intelligent and outspoken only child of committed Marxists and the great-granddaughter of one of Iran's last emperors, Marjane bears witness to a childhood uniquely entwined with the history of her country.



The Book Thief by Markus Zusak (KS3)

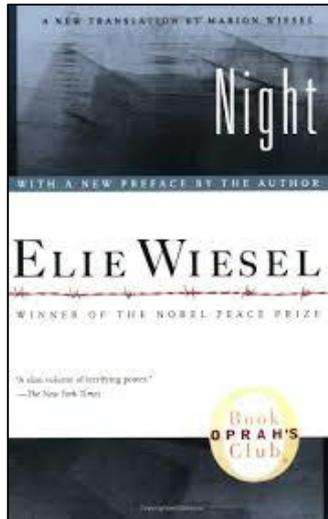
Liesel Meminger is a foster girl living outside of Munich, who scratches out a meager existence for herself by stealing when she encounters something she can't resist—books. With the help of her accordion-playing foster father, she learns to read and shares her stolen books with her neighbors during bombing raids as well as with the Jewish man hidden in her basement.

Breadwinner by Deborah Ellis (KS3)

Eleven-year-old Parvana lives with her family in one room of a bombed-out apartment building in Kabul, Afghanistan's capital city. Parvana's father, a history teacher until his school was bombed and his health destroyed, works from a blanket on the ground in the marketplace, reading letters for people who cannot read or write. One day, he is arrested for the crime of having a foreign education, and the family is left without someone who can earn money or even shop for food. As conditions for the family grow desperate, only one solution emerges. Forbidden to earn money as a girl, Parvana must transform herself into a boy, and become the breadwinner.

Guantanamo Boy by Anna Perera (KS4)

Khalid, a fifteen-year-old Muslim boy from England, is abducted from Pakistan while on holiday with his family. He is taken to Guantanamo Bay and held without charge, where his hopes and dreams are crushed under the cruellest of circumstances. An innocent denied his freedom at a time when most boys are finding theirs, he tries to understand what's happening to him.



Night by Elie Wiesel (KS4)

A candid, horrific, and deeply poignant autobiographical account of his survival as a teenager in the Nazi death camps.

Buddha Boy by Kathe Koja (KS3)

The kids at school call Jinsen "Buddha Boy"—he wears oversize tie-dyed dragon T-shirts, shaves his head, and always seems to be smiling. He's clearly a freak. Then Justin is paired with him for a class project. As he gets to know Jinsen and his incredible artistic talent, Justin questions his own beliefs. But being friends with Buddha Boy isn't simple, especially when Justin realizes that he's going to have to take sides. What matters more: the high school social order or getting to know someone extraordinary?