Young Adult Literature:
What’s New? What’s Different? What Teachers Should Know?

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The Outsiders
by S. E. Hinton

First published by Viking in 1967, The Outsiders immediately resonated with young adults. This groundbreaking novel was like nothing else out there—it was honest and gritty, and was a deeply sympathetic portrayal of Ponyboy, a young man who finds himself on the outside of regular society. Forty years later, with over thirteen million copies sold, the story is as fresh and powerful to teenagers today as it ever was.
The Face on the Milk Carton
by Caroline B. Cooney

Fifteen-year-old Janie is in for a rude Awakening when she discovers that the face of the missing three-year-old on the side of the milk carton is – her. How can that be? Was she kidnapped? Are her parents not her real parents? And if not, who are they? And more importantly – who is she? This is delicious read for kids who love mysteries and life-affirming lessons.
For thirty-five years, the acclaimed, bestselling first-person account of a teenage girl's harrowing decent into the nightmarish world of drugs has left an indelible mark on generations of teen readers. As powerful -- and as timely -- today as ever, Go Ask Alice remains the definitive book on the horrors of addiction.
In a world with no poverty, no crime, no sickness and no unemployment, and where every family is happy, 12-year-old Jonas is chosen to be the community's Receiver of Memories. Under the tutelage of the Elders and an old man known as the Giver, he discovers the disturbing truth about his utopian world and struggles against the weight of its hypocrisy. With echoes of Brave New World, in this 1994 Newbery Medal winner, Lowry examines the idea that people might freely choose to give up their humanity in order to create a more stable society. Gradually Jonas learns just how costly this ordered and pain-free society can be, and boldly decides he cannot pay the price.
Since his debut in 1951 as *The Catcher in the Rye*, Holden Caulfield has been synonymous with "cynical adolescence." Holden narrates the story of a couple of days in his sixteen-year-old life, just after he's been expelled from prep school, in a slang that sounds edgy even today and keeps this novel on banned book lists.
Are You There God?
It’s Me, Margaret
by Judy Blume

The story of a thirteen-year-old Margaret Simon’s coming of age. Readers revel in her awakening to puberty, boys and religion. To learn more about herself, Margaret talks to God about everything from the mundane to the profound, hoping to find an answer to how to live her confused adolescent life. Blume was one the first young adult authors to frankly discuss human sexuality.
Jerry Renault, freshman at Trinity Academy, refuses to sell chocolates for a school fundraiser. The result - the entire school, students and faculty, gang up on Jerry’s refusal to participate. In the end, Jerry is a pawn of a school society that is determined to ‘break him.’ This is a classic young adult, written by a master of the English language.
Hope Was Here
by Joan Bauer

Sixteen-year-old Hope is a teenage waitress who is in search for a sense of belonging. She takes pride in serving good food, making people happy, taking unexpected journeys, and finding people to deeply love.
One stormy night a strange visitor comes to the Murray house and beckons Meg, her brother Charles Wallace, and their friend Calvin O’Keefe on a most dangerous and fantastic journey that will threaten their lives and our universe. A coming of age fantasy story that demonstrates how family ties can conquer great evil.
Hole in My Life
by Jack Gantos

An autobiographical account of a 16 year-old young man who finds himself in prison for becoming involved in drug smuggling. Compelling in its strong narrative, Gantos underscores how he found writing to be a most satisfying substitute for a life of crime. A must cautionary read for all adolescents.
Bo Brewster has been at war with his father as long as he can remember. Angry outbursts at his English teacher and football coach only make his life worse. So, Bo decides to do the only thing he can do to channel his anger – become a triathlete, an Ironman. This is a funny, heartbreaking story of one young man’s passion for physical challenge and a father’s love. It is about being heard – and learning to listen.
Hatchet
by Gary Paulsen

After a plane crash, thirteen-year-old Brian spends fifty-four days in the wilderness, learning to survive with only the aid of a hatchet given to him by his mother. While alone, he comes to grips with not only his instincts, but the pain of his parents’ divorce. The book is an excellent read for understanding what living in the wilds really means – and how survival is truly for the fittest.
To fourteen-year-old Lauren Allen, life is not fair. Her parents rule the roost and Lauren wants her freedom. So, Lauren fights back. After enrolling in a high school law class, Lauren learns that she does have some rights and decides to fight back. What results is a humorous take on one adolescent’s struggle to be herself – despite her parents’ doting, her school’s demands, and life’s pressures. A fun read for kids who feel at odds with the world.
High school teens Halley and Scarlett are best friends – with Halley always trying to compete with Scarlett’s charm, looks and brains. Yet, life takes a dramatic turn for Scarlett when her boyfriend is killed in a motorcycle accident and Scarlett learns that she is carrying his baby. Suddenly, Scarlett needs Halley’s friendship more than ever. A heartbreaking tale of young love and how true friendship can help soothe deepen and abiding sadness.
Firestorm
by David Klass

Seventeen-year-old Jack Danielson’s life has always been normal – hanging out, playing sports, etc. Until one day, Jack learns that he is very different – he has special powers and that he has been sent to earth to save the planet. What follows is a whirlwind adventure whereby Jack travels through time combat the evil forces that are bent on destroying the earth. Teens will revel in Jack’s quest to define himself in a world suddenly turned upside-down.
Homecoming
By Cynthia Voigt

Homecoming is the powerful, gripping tale about four young children who are abandoned by their mother and forced to find a home on their own.

Dicey, the eldest, sensed something was wrong when her mother said ‘goodbye’ to them as she and her siblings waited outside the supermarket in their car. What follows is Dicey’s treacherous journey across America so she and her siblings can live with their favorite aunt.
The Lovely Bones
by Alice Sebold

Told from the perspective of a character who has died, this is a moving exploration of loss and mourning that ultimately puts its faith in the living. After being brutally murdered, the lead character, 14 year-old Susie Salmon, struggles to accept her death while still clinging to the lost world of the living. This is a touching fantasy-fable of great dignity, whimsy and daring.
Two fifth graders, Jess and Leslie, spend a special summer together, creating a secret kingdom in the woods named Terabithia. Here they reign as king and queen, fighting imaginary giants and plotting against schoolmates who tease them. All is idyllic, until tragedy strikes, and then, their lives are changed forever. Katherine Paterson has written a haunting novel that will stay in your heart forever.
Ten-year-old Bud, not Buddy, runs away from an abusive foster home, set in Depression era (1930s) Michigan. Relying on ingenuity and good luck, Bud makes it to Grand Rapids, where he comes upon Herman E. Calloway, a stand up bass player, who he believes is his long lost father. Misadventures ensue as Bud tries to ingratiate himself with this bewildered band leader, but in the end, Bud learns self-reliance, faith in one fellow’s man, and true affection and friendship.
Sixteen-year-old Gail begins receiving anonymous threats. Phone calls and notes haunt her daily existence. Her best friend Alison tells her to ignore everything – until she no longer can. One night, her nightmare becomes fact and suddenly, Gail finds herself utterly alone. The story of a crime where the victim is punished and the criminal seemingly goes free is a suspenseful and cautionary tale for teens and adults alike.
Everyone hates the local high school English teacher. Cranky and uppity, he is not their version of ‘Mr. Wonderful.’ What begins, though, as cruel trick to scare Mr. Griffin, turns into a deadly nightmare. Duncan’s scared straight ‘keep you on the edge of your seat’ melodrama raises issues far beyond who did what to whom. The question becomes when do teenagers become adults and how responsible are they for their actions?
“I stand in the center aisle of the auditorium, a wounded zebra in a National Geographic Special.” Such is the life of high school freshman Melinda, a social outcast among her classmates who refuses to speak.

Why? Some think because she called the police about a wild summer party, resulting in the arrest of her teenage friends. The truth, though, is deeper. Melinda harbors a deep dark secret and shame – she was raped that summer night and, now she hides her anger and fear in silence. Only through close friends and understanding adults, does she find her voice.
Keep Smiling Through
by Ann Rinaldi

Do your students wonder what life was like during WWII? This smart piece of historical fiction vividly recreates the WWII era as told through the eyes of young Kay, a teenager wrapped up in the world war drama that is happening overseas. Young Kay longs to do her part to help the war effort, listening intently to the comings and goings of the history on her crystal radio. One day, quite unexpectedly, Kay gets the chance to help her country – much to her parent’s amazement. What follows makes for a compelling historical read.
Ever heard of Camp Green Lake? It’s not your typical summer camp. It’s motto is, “if you take a bad boy and make him dig a hole every day in the hot sun, it will turn him into a good boy.” Sound logical, no? Not too our teen hero, Stanley, who lands in this juvenile detention center as result of case of mistaken identity. Forced to do abusive manual labor, Stanley finds himself caught up in a plot to dig for a mysterious treasure. This is a fun mixture of social commentary and magic realism.
A high school clique plans to make over a social outcast go tragically awry. What begins with a complete makeover – a new haircut, wardrobe, and social attitude – backfires when the social outcast shows an evil and dark side. His geeky nature turns into a cruel act of defiance that leaves everyone quaking in his wake. Reminiscent of Golding’s Lord of the Flies and Cormier’s The Chocolate War, this harrowing read demonstrates the power of following a charismatic, but amoral leader.
Breathing Underwater
by Alex Flinn

Sixteen-year-old Nick has the nasty habit of using his fist when his anger gets out of control. The trouble is it's his girlfriend, Caitlin, who sustains the blows. The story is told from two points of view – the love that this Nick has for Caitlin and the struggle that Nick undergoes to understand and overcome his anger. Both stories are worth telling – the love, the anger, and the redemption. Adolescents will find solace in this story of ugly turned good.
Maniac Magee
by Jerry Spinelli

Whimsical best describes this delightful ‘tall tale’ concerns a young super-athlete who sheer grit and determination brings two rival factions in his small town – one Black, one White – together to reconcile their differences and learn to live in harmony. Funny, wise, and quick are the elements that make up this most likeable hero, Jerry Lionel “Maniac” Magee who manages to save the day and himself as well. This is a great read for pre-teens.
Sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon is accused of serving as a lookout for the robbery of a Harlem drugstore. The owner was shot and killed and now Steve is in jail awaiting trial for murder. Told in the voice of Steve, an aspiring filmmaker, this movie like-retelling of his life’s story is drawn vividly to demonstrate to the reader that Steve is more than the sum of his parts. Is Steve guilty of accessory to murder? Or was he in the wrong place at the wrong time? Only the reader knows for sure.
Freak the Mighty
by Rodman Philbrick

Two eighth-grade misfits, one physically impaired, the other with a learning disability, become fast friends, and together, stand up against those who are bent on destroying them. Made fun of because they are ‘different,’ they set out to conquer their universe through courage, humor, and perseverance. Tragedy befalls them, but not before their undying loyalty to each other teaches them that life is simply what you do to make the world a better place.
Boot Camp
by Todd Strasser

In this vivid and realistic novel, Strasser describes the violence experienced by teens sent to a disciplinary boot camp. Fifteen-year-old Garret plots to escape, only to run into complications. This is not an easy read, but worth pursuing for its hard look at the flip side of programs that purport to help troubled teens.
One of Those Hideous Books Where the Mother Dies
by Sonya Sones

Fifteen-year-old Ruby’s mom has recently succumbed to cancer. What follows is the story of a feisty teen – mad at her father who divorced her mother before she was born and at the world for the injustice of her mother’s death. Told with humor, Ruby learns to cope with grief, accept her estranged father, and reaffirm her passion for life. What makes this book special is its told in a breezy poetic-prose style.
Inexcusable
by Chris Lynch

High school senior Keir is considered a lovable rogue and as he tells his story, he is always going to the edge – bullying others, getting drunk, doing drugs, crippling football opponents, - until he steps too far. He dates rape his girlfriend. What follows is the story of Keir’s defense and his self-delusional rationalizations for his criminal behavior. Lynch raises fierce, painful questions about human behavior and how far people will go to justify the inexcusable.
Nothing but the Truth:
A Documentary Novel
by Avi

Told through a series of journal entries, memos, letters and dialogues, this is a witty satire of how a harmless high school incident blows up and becomes a national incident. High school freshman, Phillip Malloy, hums the Star Spangled Banner – instead of singing it – and the next thing he knows, he is being punished for showing a disregard for an American tradition. Soon, Phillip becomes the attention of the national media. Teens will love the smart glimpses of high school life. This is a funny and poignant story for teens of all ages.
Considered a young adult classic, this is the moving story of two high school sophomores, John and Lorraine, who are wandering aimlessly through school and home life until they meet Mr. Albert Pignati, a lonely, old man who has a zest for life that infuses his young admirers with a desire to look closely at who they are and what they believe. Told with in a wry and engaging manner, this smart read will delight teens longing for a life larger than themselves.
Seventeen-year-old Kristina Snow becomes involved in a deadly game – taking drugs. The drug is crystal meth or ‘crank, and her addiction leads to a bitter struggle to survive as she meets unscrupulous boys and an unwanted pregnancy. Told in free-verse poems, Hopkins paints a painfully sharp portrait of a teenager whose world is spiraling out of control. Teenagers will enjoy this bare bones story for its haunting portrait of the horrors of drug addiction.
An overweight fourteen-year-old boy, Bobby, experiences a summer filled with one disaster after another – his parents are fighting, his best friend has deserted him and his boss of his lawn care job, is working him to death. What’s worse is a local bully is torturing him because he is ‘fat and slow.’ Life at summer camp proves no better until Bobby learns to stick up for himself and in so doing, renews his faith in himself and his fellow human beings. This is a good read for all teens who know the face of bullying.
Out of the Dust
by Karen Hesse

Written in free-verse, this slice of life tale is set during the Great Depression when the Oklahoma dust storms are destroying the lives and towns of the brave people who must struggle to survive. Fourteen-year-old Billie-Jo decides to separate herself from her grim realities of home by jumping a train west – only to find that one cannot escape one’s problems, only face them directly. Hesse’s award-winning book is an elegant portrait of her heroine’s brittle emotions.
Walk Two Moons
by Sharon Creech

Thirteen-year-old Samantha Sugar Maple Tree Hiddle, better known as Sal, is looking for her mother. A year ago, her mother left her family in despair and has not returned. Traveling with her grandparents from Ohio to Idaho, Sal searches for her mother. Bravely, Sal calls upon her Native American ancestry to cope with her loss and ponder who she really is. Sadly, she realizes that she cannot know her mother because she has not ‘walked two moons in her moccasins.’
Buddha Boy
By Kathe Koja

Prejudice and hostility are the themes of this young adult novel about two high school kids – one who lives under the radar, Justin, and one who looks like a Buddha (shaved head, outsize clothing, perpetual smile) who are paired together for a school project.

Soon, Justin learns to appreciate the Buddha boy’s incredible artistic talent. Others, though, do not and hurl insults at ‘the kid they find most peculiar.’ This is a compelling read about how callous human behavior can often become.
Seventeen-year-old Hope Weaver is simply distraught. Her best friend has moved away, leaving her to contend with high school kids who care only about boys and shopping. Feeling like a fish out of water, Hope embodies all the ‘teenage angst’ that comes with identity-shaping and truth-seeking. Told in a wry and whimsical voice, this is one of the few adolescent novels where social observation of everyday events take precedence over heavy melodrama. Teens will enjoy this funny, poignant look at the ‘ups and downs’ of daily adolescent life.
City of Thieves
by David Benioff

Two teenage boys encounter cannibals, murderers, prostitutes, and assassins as they struggle to complete an impossible task during the freezing Siege of Leningrad in this funny, shocking, and briskly written tome.
The Dragons of Babel
by Michael Swanick

In this original steampunk fantasy, young Will embarks on a quest that takes him to the dizzying heights and gritty depths of the postindustrial world of Babel.
Finding Nouf
by Zoë Ferraris

After a 16-year-old girl from a wealthy Saudi family is found dead in the middle of the desert, a devout Muslim guide and a young medical examiner seek to unravel the mystery while facing the sanctions of Middle Eastern society.
In this suspenseful and unpredictable adventure, Ren, a one-handed eighteenth-century orphan, becomes apprenticed to a con man. Surprisingly, Ren seems born to it.
Just After Sunset
by Stephen King

Modern terrors abound—a porta-potty prison, class warfare on an apocalyptic afternoon—in this wickedly compelling collection of macabre, absurd, and gleefully vulgar stories. Scary, dirty fun.
Mudbound
by Hillary Jordan

At the close of WW II, two soldiers return to their home in the South to find racial tensions as explosive as the battlefields of Europe. This beautifully written story casts a spell as inescapable as the mud fields of the Mississippi Delta.
Over and Under
by Todd Tucker

Andy and Tom’s fourteenth summer is defined by adventures in the woods and caves near their home, a strike that polarizes their small town, and secrets that test their friendship.
The Oxford Project
by Stephen G. Bloom

In this riveting sociological study, the residents of Oxford, Iowa were photographed in 1984 and then again in 2005. Their compelling life stories, vividly expressed in brief biographical sketches, show just how much someone can change in 21 years.
Sharp Teeth
by Toby Barlow

A fast-paced ride through the brutality of L.A.’s wilderness of drugs, gangs, and the connections people make with one another. The fact that most of the characters in this bloody, sexy, free-verse tale are mostly lycanthropes is almost incidental.
Three Girls and Their Brother
by Theresa Rebeck

This witty satire of show-biz politics, told from the perspective of four New York teenage siblings in the eye of a publicity tornado, provides a fascinating insider’s look at the world of the rich and famous.
American Shaolin
by Matthew Polly

A college student tells his fascinating, funny story about traveling from Kansas to China’s Shaolin Temple, where he attempts to master kung fu and find courage. A 2008 Best Book for Young Adults.
Bad Monkeys
by Matt Ruff

Jane Charlotte earns her living by killing bad people for good reasons in this high-octane, clever thriller of conspiracies, revenge, and secret government agencies.
Genghis: Birth of an Empire
by Conn Iggulden

Temujin, the abandoned son of a khan, survives the harsh Asian tundra to become one of the world’s greatest military leaders in this absorbing historical tale.
The God of Animals
by Aryn Kyle

After her older sister elopes, 12-year-old Alice is left behind on the family’s rundown Colorado horse farm to cope with her distant parents and the unsolved murder of a classmate.
A long way gone: memoirs of a boy soldier
by Ishmael Beah

Beah tells, in his own words, his harrowing experiences as a child soldier in the Sierra Leone civil war. A 2008 Best Book for Young Adults.
Mister Pip
by Lloyd Jones

On a war-torn Pacific island, 13-year-old Matilda describes how an eccentric white teacher fires the imaginations of the village children by reading Great Expectations aloud. A 2008 Best Book for Young Adults.
Homeless thief Kvothe wins a place at the school of magic, where he hopes to learn more about the mysterious Chandrian, who murdered his parents.
Asa, a Minnesota boy growing up in the nineteenth century, learns secrets about his family’s violent, complicated past following the bloody Dakota Conflict of 1862.
The Spellman Files
by Lisa Lutz.

Isabel can’t quit her private investigator job; she works for her family, and they’ll kill her if she tries to leave. A quickly paced, quirky mystery.
Tales From the Farm
by Jeff Lemire

In this stark, moving graphic novel, Lester, a recently orphaned 10-year-old, finds escape in a private fantasy world of aliens and superheroes with his friend, a former hockey player.
The Book of Lost Things
by John Connolly

Stephen King meets the Brothers Grimm in this gruesome fairy tale about a motherless boy transported to a world where the path home leads home through a quest for the Book of Lost Things.
Rose, "who can’t cook but doesn’t bite" arrives in Montana, bringing joy and order to three motherless boys and their father.
Eagle Blue: A Team, a Tribe, and a High School Basketball Season in Arctic Alaska
by Michael D’Orso

Life in a remote Alaskan village is transformed by the championship aspirations of the high-school basketball team.
Water for Elephants
by Sara Gruen

Suddenly orphaned and penniless during the Depression, a veterinary student jumps a third-rate circus train and finds romance, danger, and a bond with a special elephant named Rosie.
Color of the Sea
by John Hamamura

Raised in the samurai tradition, a teenager struggles to live within this code, even as he decides to fight for the U.S. after the bombing of Pearl Harbor.
Toby, 72, is about to lose the family ranch when Lila, her pregnant granddaughter comes for the summer. Lila uncovers family secrets while trying to decide whether to keep her baby.
A dying woman’s wish leads an abused 15-year-old from the streets of Memphis to a loving family, an education, and a professional football career.
Black Swan Green
by David Mitchell

In the British village of Black Swan Green, 13-year-old Jason survives ghost sightings, bullies, a first kiss, and his parents divorce.
The World Made Straight
by Ron Rash

When 17-year-old Travis Shelton discovers a marijuana farm in the Appalachian woods, he begins a confrontation with the subtle evils within his rural world.
Margaret, a shy, unknown biographer, has to sift truth from fiction as she becomes the first person to hear the secrets of a reclusive best-selling author’s mysterious past.
Haunted by the past, Taylor Markham reluctantly leads the students of the Jellicoe School in their secret territory wars against the Townies and the Cadets. Marchetta’s lyrical writing evokes the Australian landscape in a suspenseful tale of raw emotion, romance, humor and tragedy.
Caught in the crossfire of the American Revolution, escaped slave Octavian joins the British army in hopes of finally securing his own freedom.
The Disreputable History of Frankie Landau-Banks
by B. Lockhart

Can the old-boy network at her elite boarding school survive the mal-doings of Frankie Landau-Banks?
Nation
by Terry Pratchett

Pratchett’s trademark humor leavens this epic tale of ravaged islands, shipwrecked nobles and survival.
Tender Morsels
by Margo Lanagan

In utterly original language, Lanagan re-imagines “Snow White and Rose Red” and explores the brutality and beauty of life.
The White Darkness
by Geraldine McCaughrean

Fourteen-year-old Symone's exciting vacation to Antarctica turns into a desperate struggle for survival when her uncle's obsessive quest leads them across the frozen wilderness into danger.
Dreamquake
by Elizabeth Knox

In this inventive and richly imagined finale of the Dreamhunter series, Tziga Hame discovers that he can enter the Place and share his dreams with other people. When he disappears, his daughter knows that the art of projecting dreams has turned sour--leaving a puzzle only she can unravel, a puzzle having to do with the very nature of the Place itself.
Sophomore Lily Samson considers herself the only sane person in a family of dreamers and oddballs. Carefully written character portraits explore Lily’s grandmother’s imaginary friend, her grandfather’s anger issues, a brother who can’t succeed in anything, and her mother, Marigold, who continually brings home elderly clients from work. Determined to create some sense of happiness and family unity, Lily plans her grandfather’s 80th birthday party, hoping for the impossible. What she discovers is love, tenderness, and a surprising camaraderie.
Repossessed
by A. M. Jenkins

In this devilishly funny look at the complexities of being a teen, Jenkins tells the story of an unforgettable--and irresistibly endearing--demon's sojourn on earth, where he learns more than he ever expected about humans and himself.
Your Own, Sylvia: A Verse Portrait of Sylvia Plath
by Stephanie Hemphill

In 1963, young American poet Sylvia Plath died by her own hand and passed into myth. With photos and an extensive list of facts and sources, this biography-in-verse is a welcoming introduction for newcomers to Plath's work.
American-Born Chinese
by Gene Luen Yang

Yang draws from American pop culture and ancient Chinese mythology in his groundbreaking work. Expertly told in words and pictures, Yang’s story in three parts follows a Chinese American teenager’s struggle to define himself against racial stereotypes.
The Astonishing Life of Octavian Nothing, Traitor to the Nation: The Pox Party
by M. T. Anderson

Various diaries, letters, and other manuscripts chronicle the experiences of Octavian, a young African American, from birth to age 16, as he is brought up as part of a science experiment in the years leading up to and during the Revolutionary War. Candlewick Press
An Abundance of Katherine

by John Green

When it comes to relationships, Colin Singleton's type happens to be girls named Katherine. And when it comes to girls named Katherine, Colin is always getting dumped. Nineteen times, to be exact. He's also a washed-up child prodigy with ten thousand dollars in his pocket, a passion for anagrams, and an overweight, Judge Judy-obsessed best friend. Colin's on a mission to prove The Theorem of Underlying Katherine Predictability, which will predict the future of all relationships, transform him from a fading prodigy into a true genius, and finally win him the girl.
Surrender
by Sonya Hartnett

As life slips away, Gabriel looks back over his brief twenty years, which have been clouded by frustration and humiliation. A small, unforgiving town and distant, punitive parents ensure that he is never allowed to forget the horrific mistake he made as a child. He has only two friends - his dog, Surrender, and the unruly wild boy, Finnigan, a shadowy doppelganger with whom the meek Gabriel once made a boyhood pact. But when a series of arson attacks grips the town, Gabriel realizes how unpredictable and dangerous Finnigan is. As events begin to spiral violently out of control, it becomes devastatingly clear that only the most extreme measures will rid Gabriel of Finnigan for good.
The Book Thief
by Markus Zusak

A foster girl living outside of Munich during World War II, Liesel 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 before he is marched to Dachau.