

20 Empowering, Modern Young Adult Novels to read during Sexual Assault Awareness Month in the Alexandria Public Library System

Family-Centered Stories

Lawless Spaces by Corey Ann Haydu

Trying to understand her place in the world, Mimi dives into the uncovered journals of her grandmother, great-grandmother, and beyond. She immerses herself in each of their lives, learns of their painful stories and their beautiful sprits. And as Mimi grows closer to each of these women, she starts to forge her own path. But it isn't until her mother's story comes to light that Mimi learns about the unyielding bonds of family and the relentless spirit of womanhood.

Rani Patel In Full Effect by Sonia Patel

Rani Patel, almost seventeen and living on remote Moloka'i island, is oppressed by the cultural norms of her Gujarati immigrant parents. But when Mark, an older man, draws her into new experiences, red flags abound. He leads Rani into 4eva Flowin', an underground hip hop crew--and into other things she's never done. Rani ignores the red flags. Her naive choices look like they will undo her but ultimately give her the chance to discover her strengths and restore the things she thought she'd lost, including her mother.

He Must Like You by Danielle Younge-Ullman

Libby's having a rough senior year. Her older brother absconded with his college money and is bartending on a Greek island. Her dad just told her she's got to pay for college herself, and he's evicting her when she graduates so he can Airbnb her room. A drunken hook-up with her coworker Kyle has left her upset and confused. So when Perry Ackerman, serial harasser and the most handsy customer at The Goat where she waitresses, pushes her over the edge, she can hardly be blamed for dumping a pitcher of sangria on his head. Unfortunately, Perry is a local industry hero, the restaurant's most important customer, and Libby's mom's boss. As timely as it is timeless, *He Must Like You* is a story about consent, rage, and revenge, and the potential we all have to be better people.

Everybody Looking by Candice Iloh

A mixed-heritage dancer's coming of age within the African diaspora is shaped by abuse at the hands of a cousin, her mother's descent into addiction, and her father's efforts to create a Nigerian-inspired home in America.

What I Leave Behind by Alison McGhee

Sixteen-year-old Will spends most of his days the same way: working at the Dollar Only store, trying to replicate his late father's famous cornbread recipe, and walking the streets of Los Angeles. Will started walking after his father committed suicide, and three years later he hasn't stopped. But there are some places Will can't walk by: the blessings store with the chest of 100 Chinese blessings in the back, the bridge on Fourth Street where his father died, and his childhood friend Playa's house. When Will learns Playa was raped at a party--a party he was at, where he saw Playa, and where he believes he could have stopped the worst from happening if he hadn't left early--it spurs Will to stop being complacent in his own sadness and do some good in the world.

Navigating High School

Foul Is Fair by Hannah Capin

Jade and her friends Jenny, Mads, and Summer rule their glittering LA circle. Untouchable, they have the kind of power other girls only dream of. Every party is theirs and the world is at their feet. Until the night of Jade's sweet sixteen, when they crash a St. Andrew's Prep party. The night the golden boys choose Jade as their next target. They picked the wrong girl.

A Girl Like That by Tanaz Bhathena

In Jeddah, Saudi Arabia, sixteen-year-old half-Hindu/half-Parsi Zarin Wadia is the class troublemaker and top subject for the school rumor blogs, regularly leaving class to smoke cigarettes in cars with boys. She also desperately wants to grow up and move out of her aunt and uncle's house, perhaps realizing too late that Porus, another non-Muslim Indian who risks deportation but remains devoted to Zarin, could help her escape.

Tradition by Brendan Kiely

At Fullbrook Academy, where tradition reigns supreme, James Baxter and Jules Devereux take on privilege, sexism, and the importance of consent.

Pandemic by Yvonne Ventresca

Even under the most normal circumstances, high school can be a painful and confusing time. Unfortunately, Lilianna's circumstances are anything but normal. Only a few people know what caused her sudden change from model student to the withdrawn pessimist she has become, but her situation isn't about to get any better. When people begin coming down with a quick-spreading illness that doctors are unable to treat, Lil's worst fears are realized. With friends and neighbors dying all around her, Lil does everything she can just to survive. But as the disease rages on, so does an unexpected tension as Lil is torn between an old ex and a new romantic interest. Just when it all seems too much, the cause of her original trauma shows up at her door. In this thrilling debut from author Yvonne Ventresca, Lil must find a way to survive not only the outbreak and its real-life consequences, but also her personal demons.

Empty by K. M. Walton

Deeply depressed after her father cheated on and divorced her mother, seventeen-year-old Adele has gained over seventy pounds and is being bullied and abused at school. Dell is used to disappointment. No one--not even her best friend--understands all the pain she's going through. So Dell hides behind self-deprecating jokes and forced smiles. Then the one person she trusts betrays her. Dell is beyond devastated. Without anyone to turn to for comfort, her depression and self-loathing spin out of control. But just how far will she go to make all of heartbreak and the name-calling stop?

Swagger by Carl Deuker

When high school senior Jonas moves to Seattle, he is glad to meet Levi, a nice, soft-spoken guy and fellow basketball player. Suspense builds like a slow drumbeat as readers start to smell a rat in Ryan

Hartwell, a charismatic basketball coach and sexual predator. When Levi reluctantly tells Jonas that Hartwell abused him, Jonas has to decide whether he should risk his future career to report the coach. Pitch-perfect basketball plays, well-developed characters, and fine storytelling make this psychological sports novel a slam dunk.

The Way I Used To Be by Amber Smith

Eden was always good at being good. Starting high school didn't change who she was. But the night her brother's best friend rapes her, Eden's world capsizes.

Told in four parts--freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior year--this provocative debut reveals the deep cuts of trauma. But it also demonstrates one young woman's strength as she navigates the disappointment and unbearable pains of adolescence, of first love and first heartbreak, of friendships broken and rebuilt, and while learning to embrace a power of survival she never knew she had hidden within her heart.

Unraveling Truths

Grown: A Novel by Tiffany D. Jackson

When legendary R&B artist Korey Fields spots Enchanted Jones at an audition, her dreams of being a famous singer take flight. Until Enchanted wakes up with blood on her hands and zero memory of the previous night. Who killed Korey Fields? Before there was a dead body, Enchanted's dreams had turned into a nightmare. Because behind Korey's charm and star power was a controlling dark side. Now he's dead, the police are at the door, and all signs point to Enchanted. A #MeToo story.

Inexcusable by Chris Lynch

Keir Sarafian may not know much, but he knows himself. He is a good guy. A guy who's a devoted son and brother, a loyal friend, and a reliable teammate. And maybe most important of all, a guy who understands that when a girl says no, she means it. But that is not what Gigi Boudakian, childhood friend and Keir's lifelong love, says he is. What Gigi says he is seems impossible to Keir....It is something inexcusable -- the worst thing he can imagine, the very opposite of everything he wants to be.

As Keir recalls the events leading up to his fateful night with Gigi, he realizes that the way things look are definitely not the way they really are -- and that it may be all too easy for a good guy to do something terribly wrong.

Off the Record by Camryn Garrett

Ever since seventeen-year-old Josie Wright can remember, writing has been her identity, the thing that grounds her when everything else is a garbage fire. So when she wins a contest to write a celebrity profile for Deep Focus magazine, she's equal parts excited and scared, but also ready. She's got this. But when a young actress lets her in on a terrible secret, the answer is clear: she's in over her head. A moving testament to the #MeToo movement and all the ways women stand up for each other.

All the Rage by Courtney Summers

After being assaulted by the sheriff's son, Kellan Turner, Romy Grey was branded a liar and bullied by former friends, finding refuge only in the diner where she works outside of town. When a girl with ties to both Romy and Kellan goes missing and news of him assaulting another girl gets out, Romy must decide whether to speak out again or risk having more girls hurt.

LGBTQ Stories

The Music of What Happens by Bill Konigsberg

It is summer in Phoenix, Arizona. Seventeen-year-old Maximo offers to help Jordan, a fellow student, with the food truck that belonged to Jordan's deceased father, which may be the only thing standing between homelessness for Jordan and his mom. The boys are strongly attracted to each other, but as their romance develops, it is threatened by the secrets they are hiding--and by the racism and homophobia of those around them.

Somebody Told Me by Mia Siegert

After an assault, bigender seventeen-year-old Aleks/Alexis is looking for a fresh start--so they voluntarily move in with their uncle, a Catholic priest. In their new bedroom, Aleks/Alexis discovers they can overhear parishioners in the church confessional. Moved by the struggles of these "sinners," Aleks/Alexis decides to anonymously help them, finding solace in their secret identity: a guardian angel instead of a victim.

Then, Aleks/Alexis overhears a confession of another priest admitting to sexually abusing a parishioner. As they try to uncover the priest's identity before he hurts anyone again, Aleks/Alexis is forced to confront their own abuser and come to terms with their past trauma.

Girl Made of Stars by Ashley Herring Blake

Mara and Owen are as close as twins can get, so when Mara's friend Hannah accuses Owen of rape, Mara doesn't know what to think. Can her brother really be guilty of such a violent act? Torn between her family and her sense of right and wrong, Mara feels lost, and it doesn't help that things are strained with her ex-girlfriend, Charlie. As Mara, Hannah, and Charlie come together in the aftermath of this terrible crime, Mara must face a trauma from her own past and decide where Charlie fits into her future. With sensitivity and openness, this timely novel confronts the difficult questions surrounding consent, victim blaming, and sexual assault.

Fantasy Novels

The Mirror Season by Anna-Marie McLemore

Graciela Cristales' whole world changes after she and a boy she barely knows are assaulted at the same party. She loses her gift for making enchanted pan dulce. Neighborhood trees vanish overnight, while mirrored glass appears, bringing reckless magic with it.

But when the boy, Lock, shows up at Ciela's school, he has no memory of that night, and no clue that a single piece of mirrored glass is taking his life apart. Ciela decides to help him, which means hiding the

truth about that night. Because Ciela knows who assaulted her, and him. And she knows that her survival, and his, depend on no one finding out what really happened.

The Hollow Girl by Hillary Monahan

Bethan is the apprentice to a green healer named Drina in a clan of Welsh Romanies. Her life is happy and ordered and modest, as required by Roma custom, except for one thing: Silas, the son of the chieftain, has been secretly harassing her.

One night, Silas and his friends brutally assault Bethan and a half-Roma friend, Martyn. As empty and hopeless as she feels from the attack, she asks Drina to bring Martyn back from death's door. "There is always a price for this kind of magic," Drina warns.

She gives the boys who assaulted her a chance to come forward and apologize. And when they don't, she knows exactly where to collect her ingredients for the spell to save Martyn.