

## It's a Girl Thing

**T**hough girls are often willing to read books with a boy as main character, they just as often want a female in that central role. So, here's a list of girl books where it's the girl's turn to take on tough tasks, face seemingly insurmountable obstacles, and triumph over adversity.

*Angels on the Roof.* Martha Moore. Laurel Leaf, 1999. 192 pp. Shelby is considered "at-risk" at her school, mostly due to the antics of her mother who is obsessed with the late artist, Georgia O'Keefe. Of course, moving from town to town frequently might also be part of the problem. Shelby must come to some understanding of her relationship with her mother in order to survive.

*Angus, Thongs, and Full-frontal Snogging: Confessions of Georgia Nicolson.* Louise Rennison. HarperCollins, 2000. 257pp. The hilarious trials and times of 14-year-old Georgia, told in diary form, logged in minutes and not days, won Rennison critical and popular acclaim. *On the Bright Side, I'm Now the Girlfriend of a Sex God* is the sequel that continues to tell of the angst-ridden yet comical life of a teen.

*Bloomability.* Sharon Creech. HarperCollins, 1998. 273 pp. Dinnie, short for Domenica Santolina Doone, has moved all over the country in the past. Now she is given the chance to spend a year abroad with her aunt and uncle in Switzerland where her uncle will be the headmaster of an American school. New friends and experiences make this year one in

which Dinnie's dreams will change.

*Destiny.* Vicki Grove. Putnam, 2000. 176 pp. Destiny learns more than classical myths from an elderly Latin teacher. She also discovers mythical connections to her dysfunctional family. These connections are important to Destiny, who must help care for her brother and sisters since her mother seems unable to do so.

*Dovey Coe.* Frances O'Roark Dowell. Atheneum, 2000. 192 pp. Dovey Coe is a willful young woman with an opinion on any topic. She is especially critical of Parnell who comes to court her older sister. When Parnell is found murdered with Dovey unconscious next to his body, the evidence seems to suggest murder. Will feisty Dovey Coe, 12, let her slick lawyer handle her defense after she has been falsely accused of murder?

*Drawing Lessons.* Tracy Mack. Scholastic, 2000. 168 pp. Aurora seems to have inherited her father's artistic talent. This link has forged a strong relationship between father and daughter. When her parents separate, though, Aurora finds it difficult to draw anything. Art is a painful reminder of a different time in the life of her family. Eventually, Aurora comes to understand that her art lessons can become life lessons.

*Expecting the Unexpected.* Mavis Jukes. Yearling, 1999. 144 pp. This story tells of 12-year-old River's experiences in her human interactions (sex ed) class. River knows about the mechanics of sex; she has even attended the infamous "Pad Fest" where the school nurse displays all of the options available to her. Her

realization, though, that someone in her home just may be pregnant is jarring. Girls who have enjoyed *Are You There God? It's Me, Margaret* will enjoy this book as well.

*Food Fight.* Janet Bode. Simon & Schuster, 1997. 153 pp. This nonfiction examination of eating disorders and other food issues is a must-read for teens and for their parents. Bode interviewed young girls who suffer from bulimia, anorexia nervosa, and other eating disorders. Their voices resonate alongside helpful advice from psychologists and medical experts.

*Girlhearts.* Norma Fox Mazer. HarperCollins, 2001. 224 pp. When her mother dies suddenly of a heart attack at age 30, Sarabeth's life undergoes a series of changes. She must leave the trailer she and her mother called home. Her belongings go into storage, and Sarabeth is sent to live with her mother's best friend, Cynthia. The only constant seems to be her circle of friends. Sarabeth knows little about any other relatives, but she knows she must find someplace she can call home.

*The Girls.* Amy Goldman Koss. Dial, 2000. 128 pp. Maya suddenly discovers that she is no longer part of the clique. In alternating points of view, five middle school girls narrate the events leading up to one being "in" or being "out."

*Goodbye, Amanda the Good.* Susan Shreve. Knopf, 2000. 160 pp. Amanda is in junior high and finally on her own. Her rebellion to "bad" includes dyed purple hair, black clothes, dark lipstick, and cutting classes. Add dating ninth-grade bad boy Slade, and the combination could be disastrous.

*Harley Like a Person.* Cat Bauer. Winslow Press, 2000. 250 pp. Harley, 14, is so different from her parents. Believing she is adopted, she heads to New York in search of her real parents and true identity.

*Homeless Bird.* Gloria Whelan. HarperCollins, 2000. 216 pp. Newly widowed following an arranged marriage with a dying boy, Koly, 13, struggles to survive

in the city in modern India after her mother-in-law abandons her.

*Hope Was Here.* Joan Bauer. G. P. Putnam's Sons, 2000. 186 pp. Hope, 16, moves from Brooklyn to a small Wisconsin town with her Aunt Addie to work as a waitress and a cook at the Welcome Stairways Diner. Here they help the dying owner run for election against the wicked, corrupt mayor.

*Kissing Tennessee and Other Stories from the Stardust Dance.* Kathi Appelt. Harcourt, 2000. 118 pp. A collection of stories about a group of unforgettable students who attended the middle school's Stardust Dance are funny, bittersweet, and poignant in turns. This is an excellent read-aloud choice.

*Life in the Fat Lane.* Cherie Bennett. Delacorte, 1999. 260 pp. When her weight inexplicably begins to rise, Lara learns what it is like to be judged on her appearance alone. Oh, she has been judged that way in the past, but always before people saw someone smart and pretty and popular. There is much more to people than what meets the eye. Told with humor and poignancy, Lara learns important lessons in friendship and self-esteem.

*My Angelica.* Carol Lynch Williams. Delacorte, 1999. 144 pp. Sage Oliver is writing a romance novel featuring the lovely Angelica. Her friend George cannot bring himself to tell Sage that her novel is, well, bad. His budding feelings of love keep getting in the way of letting Sage know that her story is hackneyed. This light-hearted comedy ends with Sage winning a writing contest (for all the wrong reasons) and realizing that true romance is right in front of her.



*The Princess Diaries.* Meg Cabot. HarperCollins, 2000. 238 pp. Gawky, but sassy 14-year-old New Yorker Mia, daughter of a jetsetter father—learns

she is heir to the throne of the small European Principality, Genovia. Can Grandmere turn her into a Princess? Told in hilarious, chatty diary form. Follow with *Princess in the Spotlight*.

*Rain Catchers*. Jean Thesman. Houghton Mifflin, 1991. 182 pp. Fourteen-year-old Grayling lives in a



family of women. Each evening the women gather to tell their stories, stories of their lives and loves. Grayling longs to join in, but her story is incomplete until she learns more about her past and the accident that killed her father many years earlier.

*Romiette and Julio*. Sharon Draper. Simon and Schuster, 1999. 240 pp. Romiette is African American and her new boyfriend Julio is Hispanic. There are some kids at school who think that the two friends should not be permitted to date. When Romiette and Julio ignore the warnings, the consequences could be dire. This contemporary novel explores the same territory as *Romeo and Juliet* and would serve as an excellent introduction to the play or even alternative to reading it.

*Send Me Down a Miracle*. Han Nolan. Harcourt, 1996. 256 pp. Fourteen-year-old Charity is the daughter of the local pastor. Left to her own devices this summer (her mother is out of town at a convention), Charity is consumed with curiosity about the new neighbor. Eccentric artist, Adrienne Dabney, claims to have had a vision of Jesus in her living room chair. Charity's allegiances are called into question when she is torn between Adrienne's attention to her and her father's outrage over the "vision." What does Charity believe?

*Snail Mail No More*. Paula Danziger and Ann Martin. Scholastic, 2000. 307 pp. Tara and Elizabeth try to stay long-distance best friends by e-mail. Sequel to *P.S. Longer Letter Later* (1998).

*Speak*. Laurie Halse Anderson. Farrar Straus & Giroux, 1999. 198 pp. Melinda's freshman year in high school is marred following a traumatic event near the end of the summer.

*Spindrift*. Colby Rodowsky. Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2000. 112 pp. Cassie, 13, sees her brother-in-law kissing another woman. When the marriage falls apart and her sister and infant come back to the summer home, Cassie's world goes into a spin.

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