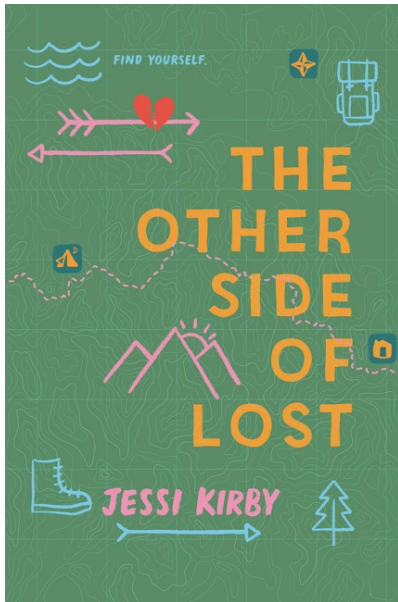


Feel-Good YA Book Reviews



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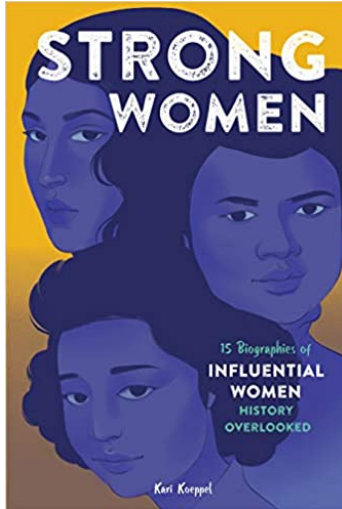
The Other Side of Lost

Jessi Kirby

Kirby, J. (2018). *The other side of lost*. New York, NY: Harper Teen.

This realistic fiction story follows Mari Turner from her 18th birthday. Mari and her “star twin” cousin Bri used to wish on the stars on their shared birthday, making big plans for how they would adventure together when they turned 18. But she and Bri drifted apart as Mari gained an online following by curating her life on social media, while Bri trained to hike the John Muir Trail from Yosemite on their 18th birthday. *The Other Side of Lost* deals with Mari’s grief and guilt following Bri’s death as a result of a tragic accident. Realizing that her perfect-seeming life doesn’t feel so perfect, and with the gift of Bri’s trail pack, Mari makes the decision to fulfil Bri’s dream.

Fast-paced and well-written, *The Other Side of Lost* will grip readers as Mari works through her own insecurities and re-learns how to live in the moment. Kirby’s small cast of characters and vivid descriptions of difficult thru-hiking are effective in making the reader feel connected to Mari and her journey. *The Other Side of Lost* is a great pick for readers looking for an inspirational story about following a big dream, even if that dream seems crazy to everyone else. An emotional read that is hard to put down, Kirby has delivered a great story about the power of friendship, living in the moment, and the fact that even a short life can be a life well-lived.



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Strong Women: 15 Biographies of Influential Women History Overlooked

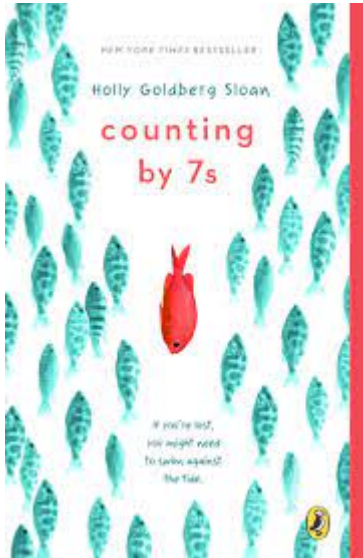
Kari Koepfel

Koepfel, K. (2020). *Strong women: 15 biographies of influential women history overlooked*. Emeryville, CA: Rockridge Press.

Strong Women presents the reader with 15 biographies of women who made change throughout history. The book is in three parts: The Innovators, The Change-Makers, and The Ceiling Breakers. Illustrations by Roberta Oriano stand out as a highlight. Simple, yet colourful and striking, they introduce the reader to each woman before Koepfel provides a brief overview of their life and their impact. This is a great book for those inclined to pick up and skim, as each write-up is brief, and a short bio is included with each portrait, allowing the reader to pick and choose which bios to read.

It's likely that many readers won't have heard of most of the women included. From Ada Lovelace, likely known most for being daughter of Lord Byron, but in fact one of the first computer programmers, to Policarpa Salavarrieta, 19th century Colombian teen revolutionary, to Marsha P. Johnson, leader of LGBTQ+ liberation movements in the 1970s, readers are likely to find a story that resonates. Koepfel notes her emphasis on including 'ordinary' women but presents each woman's story in a way that feels extraordinary.

This title would be a great addition to any collection. While noted as a non-fiction young adult title, the strong writing and vocabulary would make it ideal for older teens and adults. The stories are inspiring without being cloying – Koepfel includes aspects of these women's histories that are problematic or difficult as well as their successes. Koepfel's background as a researcher means this book feels authoritative, while her time spent with BuzzFeed also means the stories are gripping and draw the reader in.



([Image source](#))

Counting By 7's

Holly Goldberg Sloan

Sloan, H.G. (2013). *Counting by 7s*. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers.

Counting By 7's is the story of 12-year-old genius Willow Chance's journey through grief after the tragic loss of her parents in a car accident. Willow is obsessed with nature and medical conditions and finds comfort in counting by 7's. Growing up with autism, Willow has always struggled to connect with people, other than her adoptive parents. Now she must learn how to navigate through a perplexing world on her own. But do not be fooled, this triumphant tale is not a tragedy, but rather carries inspirations for reaching your dreams, never losing hope, and holding onto the love, care, and happiness your family and friends can bring during times of grief and change.

This heartwarming novel tells a realistic and profound story, focused on real-life issues many youth face. Willow is an unforgettable quirky character whose unique story can resonate with anyone. Holly Goldberg Sloan beautifully writes about life as an adolescent person of colour with autism, in a way that focuses on Willow's successes and triumphs, while respectfully acknowledging her struggles. This quirky tale reminds us we can still have a happy ending even if we have a few tragic chapters in our story.



[\(Image Source\)](#)

This One Summer

Mariko Tamaki

Tamaki, M. (2014). *This one summer* (J. Tamaki, illus.). Toronto: Groundwood Books.

Rose has been going to her family's lake house every summer for as long as she can remember. Every year she looks forward to seeing her friend Windy, enjoying her refuge on the beach. But this one summer is different. Rose finds she has less in common with Windy than she did last summer, and her parents won't stop fighting. Searching for a distraction from the chaos at home, Rose and Windy find themselves caught up with a new set of problems when the small-town drama of Awago Beach makes its way to the lake. It's a summer of secrets, growing up, and creating an identity, but luckily Rose and Windy have each other.

This quiet graphic novel is a comforting read for any occasion. The beautiful cool-toned illustrations tell the story in a calming way. This story is a coming-of-age tale where the reader observes Rose's struggle to form an identity, wanting to be a "cool girl" and pushing her boundaries while also wanting to hold onto her childhood. *This One Summer* is an excellent bibliotherapy resource as the emotions and conflicts felt by the characters are easily recognizable. Author Mariko Tamaki and illustrator Jillian Tamaki beautifully create a story that speaks to many the issues and unfair standards young girls face. Much of the action is observed by the characters but the impact is deeply evident. The illustrations tell much of the story which makes for an easy and quick read. The beautiful tones of lavender and blue throughout the book creates an end-of-summer feel that washes over you. *This One Summer* is the perfect book for anyone yearning for summer aesthetic and coming-of-age tales.



[\(Image source\)](#)

Rookie on Love: 45 Voices on Romance, Friendship, and Self-care

Edited by Tavi Gevinson

Gevinson, T. (Ed.). (2018). *Rookie on love: 45 voices on romance, friendship, and self-care*. Razorbill.

Rookie on Love is an anthology of short works about every kind of love: romantic, familial, literary, self-love, even love for your dog. The anthology is edited by Tavi Gevinson, the creator and editor of *Rookie*, the now-defunct online magazine for teens. The collection features 45 contributors, including celebrities like Alessia Cara, Mitski, Rainbow Rowell, John Green, and Gabourey Sidibe, as well as *Rookie* magazine contributors and readers. Exclusive essays, interviews, poems, and graphic short stories are the various formats found within *Rookie on Love*.

The short length of each work in the anthology – typically no more than a few pages each – makes it easy for readers to jump to wherever appeals to them next. Showcasing love as the most universal emotion, the anthology demonstrates the vast number of ways love can manifest and be experienced. The varied depictions of love – and the different outcomes that accompany them – make for an inclusive book that contains a genuine and empathetic experience for almost everyone within its pages. *Rookie on Love* is a non-fiction anthology that would appeal to older teens and even adults and would be a valuable addition to any collection of feel-good resources.



[\(Image source\)](#)

Love & Luck

Jenna Evans Welch

Welch, J. E. (2018). *Love & luck*. Simon Pulse.

Addie and her family are in Ireland for her HGTV-famous aunt's destination wedding. Addie is trying to forget about what happened back home, but her brother Ian won't let her. The once inseparable siblings now have so much tension between them that it results in a fistfight on the Cliffs of Moher after their aunt's ceremony. Addie can't wait to leave to visit her friend Lina in Italy. But a sudden turn of events leads to Addie crammed into a tiny, dilapidated car with Ian and his Irish friend Rowan, on a chaotic road trip through Ireland. Armed with a guidebook she found in the hotel library, *Ireland for the Heartbroken*, Addie hopes the trip will help her take a step towards repairing her broken relationship with her brother – and her broken heart.

Addie's first-person narrative is interspersed with excerpts from the quirky guidebook she carries, which is written in a voice you'd immediately attribute to an odd but kind Irish grandmother. Descriptions of the Emerald Isle will give readers a case of wanderlust. The characters and the relationships between them are vivid, real, and imperfect. *Love & Luck* is a fun, quick read full of heartbreak, love, and adventure. This novel is perfect for readers looking to be reminded that they are valuable, regardless of the people who do or do not choose them.



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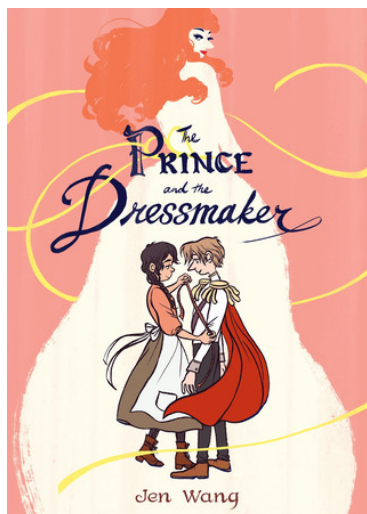
Red, White & Royal Blue

Casey McQuiston

McQuiston, C. (2019). *Red, white & royal blue*. St. Martin's Griffin.

Alex Claremont-Diaz is the first son of the President of the United States, Ellen Claremont. Along with his sister and the Vice President's granddaughter, they have become the White House Trio, the closest thing to royalty this side of the Atlantic. But when a fateful run-in with his sworn enemy, Prince Henry of the UK, leads to a tabloid heyday, a PR clean-up must happen to fix both of their reputations. This involves spending a lot of time together and spending a lot of time together leads Alex and Henry to uncover feelings for each other they never knew they had. As their whirlwind relationship comes to a head, they must ask what they want to be remembered for. How do they want to change history?

Red, White, and Royal Blue is a fun romp of a novel. At the forefront is the romance between Alex and Henry, with politics and loyalty to both of their families in the background. McQuiston isn't afraid to fill the story with fanfiction-level smut, which makes the ride all the better. While the story is at times unrealistic, the romance between Alex and Henry feels genuine and their relationships with other characters makes them seem well-rounded. This novel is pure escapism at its finest, a new classic, and a stylish and well-written Harlequin for teens. It's the perfect beach read, rainy day read, or any kind of day read.



[\(Image source\)](#)

The Prince and the Dressmaker

Jen Wang

Wang, J. (2018). *The prince and the dressmaker*. First Second.

Paris, at the dawn of the modern age: Prince Sebastian is looking for a bride—or rather, his parents are looking for one for him. Sebastian is too busy hiding his secret life from everyone. At night he puts on daring dresses and takes Paris by storm as the fabulous Lady Crystallia—the hottest fashion icon in the world capital of fashion!

Sebastian's secret weapon (and best friend) is the brilliant dressmaker Frances—one of only two people who know the truth: sometimes this boy wears dresses. But Frances dreams of greatness and being someone's secret weapon means being a secret. Forever. How long can Frances defer her dreams to protect a friend? Jen Wang weaves an exuberantly romantic tale of identity, young love, art, and family.

The Prince and the Dressmaker is the kind of book that will make you smile the entire time you're reading it. The characters are colorful, lively, and jump right off the page. The friendship between Sebastian and Frances is sugary sweet and they are supportive of one another's dreams. The Paris setting makes this graphic novel even dreamier. A fairy tale for any age, *The Prince and the Dressmaker* will steal your heart.