

# Recommended Tough Topic Titles



## **Speak** *by Laurie R. King* **YA FIC ANDERSON OR YA GRAPHIC NOVEL ANDERSON**

Melinda is friendless and outcast, and becomes increasingly isolated, practically stopping talking altogether. Only her art class offers any solace, and it is through her work on an art project that she is finally able to face what really happened at a terrible party: she was raped by a guy who still attends Merryweather. Her healing process has just begun when she has another violent encounter with him. But this time Melinda fights back, refuses to be silent, and thereby achieves a measure of vindication.



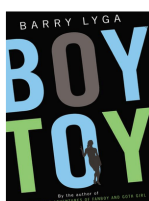
## **Thirteen Reasons Why** *by Jay Asher* **YA FIC ASHER**

Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a strange package with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers several cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker—his classmate and crush—who committed suicide. Hannah's voice tells him that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life. Clay is one of them. If he listens, he'll find out why. He becomes a firsthand witness to Hannah's pain, and as he follows Hannah's recorded words throughout his town, what he discovers changes his life forever.



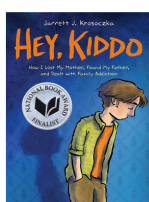
## **This is Where It Ends** *by Marieke Nijkamp* **YA FIC NIJKAMP**

Minutes after the principal of Opportunity High School in Alabama finishes her speech welcoming the student body to a new semester, they discover that the auditorium doors will not open and someone starts shooting as four teens, each with a personal reason to fear the shooter, tell the tale from separate perspectives.



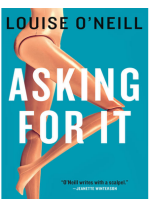
## **Boy Toy** *by Barry Lyga* **YA FIC LYGA**

Five years ago, Josh's life changed. And everyone in his school, his town—seems like the world—thinks they understand. But they can't. And now Josh is trying to sort through the pieces. There's Rachel, the girl he thought he'd lost years ago. Then there are college decisions to make, and the toughest baseball game of his life coming up. And then there's Eve. Her return brings with it all the memories of Josh's past. It's time for Josh to face the truth about what happened.



## **Hey, Kiddo** *by Jarrett J. Krosoczka* **YA GRAPHIC NOVEL KROSOCZKA**

Hey, Kiddo is the graphic memoir of author-illustrator Jarrett J. Krosoczka. Raised by his colorful grandparents, who adopted him because his mother was an incarcerated heroin addict, Krosoczka didn't know his father's name until he saw his birth certificate when registering for a school ski trip. Hey, Kiddo traces Krosoczka's search for his father, his difficult interactions with his mother, his day-to-day life with his grandparents, and his path to becoming an artist.



## **Asking for It** *by Louise O'Neill* **YA FIC ONEILL**

It's the beginning of the summer in a small town in Ireland. One night, there's a party. Everyone is there. All eyes are on Emma O'Donovan. The next morning, she wakes on the front porch of her house. She can't remember what happened, she doesn't know how she got there. She doesn't know why she's in pain. But everyone else does. Photographs taken at the party show, in explicit detail what happened to Emma that night. But sometimes people don't want to believe what is right in front of them, especially when the truth concerns the town's heroes.



## **Deep Dark Blue: A Memoir of Survival** *by Polo Tate* **YA 362.883 TAT**

At eighteen, Polo Tate finds herself in Basic Training at the United States Air Force Academy. She does everything right, but no one prepares her for the physical, sexual, and emotional abuse at the hands of her superior, betrayal at the highest levels of authority, and harassment from her peers who refuse to believe her story. Deep Dark Blue is about breaking boundaries but also setting them. It's about learning to trust your instincts.



## Aftermath *by Clara Kensie*

**YA FIC KENSIE**

Charlotte survived four long years as a prisoner in the attic of her kidnapper, sustained only by dreams of her loving family, but losing her has torn her family apart. Her parents have divorced: Dad's a glutton for fame, Mom drinks too much, and Charlotte's twin is a zoned-out druggie. Charlotte is obsessed with the other girl who was kidnapped, who never got a second chance at life—the girl who nobody but Charlotte believes really existed. Until she can get justice for that girl, even if she has to do it on her own, Charlotte will never be free.



## I Have the Right To *by Chessy Prout*

**YA 362.88 PRO**

In 2014, Chessy Prout was a freshman at St. Paul's School, a prestigious boarding school in New Hampshire, when a senior boy sexually assaulted her as part of a ritualized game of conquest. Chessy bravely reported her assault to the police and testified against her attacker in court. Then, in the face of unexpected backlash from her once-trusted school community, she shed her anonymity to help other survivors find their voice.



## Now Is Everything *by Amy Giles*

**YA FIC GILES**

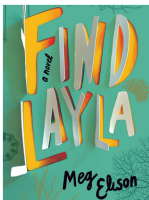
The McCauleys look perfect on the outside. But this family is hiding a dark secret. Hadley will do anything to keep her sister safe from their father. But when her forbidden relationship with Charlie Simmons deepens, the violence at home escalates, culminating in an explosive accident. When Hadley attempts to take her life at the hospital post-accident, everyone wants to know why. Only Hadley knows what happened, and she's not talking.



## Furious Thing *by Jenny Downham*

**YA FIC DOWNHAM**

*Bad things happen when you're around. Lex...* That's what her stepfather tells her, what she believes about herself. If only she could stop losing her temper and behave herself, her stepfather would accept her, her mom would love her like she used to, and her stepbrother would declare his crushing desire to spend the rest of his life with her. She's determined to swallow her anger and make her family proud. But pushing fury down doesn't make it disappear. Instead, it simmers below the surface, waiting to erupt. There'll be fireworks when it does...



## Find Layla *by Meg Elison*

**YA FIC ELISON**

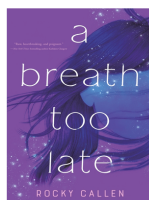
All Layla Bailey wants to do is indulge in her love of science, protect her younger brother, and steer clear of her unstable mother. When a school competition calls for a video of a biome, she chooses her own home. She captures it all: mushrooms growing in her brother's dresser, black mold blooming up the walls, things living in the dead fridge. Then the video goes viral. When Child Protective Services comes to call, Layla loses her family and her home. Now she has to figure out how to stay whole and stand behind the truth she has shown the world.



## I Kill Giants *by Joe Kelly*

**YA GRAPHIC NOVEL KELLY**

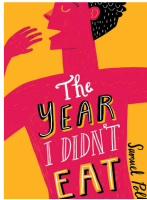
Barbara is an angry elementary-school girl who is known as a freak and claims to be a killer of giants. She faces bullies and storms with no fear, but cannot face what she hides from at home.



## A Breath Too Late *by Rocky Callen*

**YA FIC CALLEN**

Ellie had no hope left. Yet the day after she dies by suicide, she finds herself a spectator, swaying between past and present, retracing the events that unfolded prior to her death. But there are gaps in her memory that Ellie is desperate to reassemble. There's her mother, a songbird who wanted to break free from her oppressive cage. The boy made of brushstrokes and goofy smiles who brought color into a gray world. Her brooding father, with his sad-puppy eyes and clenched fists. And Ellie's determined to find out why a piece of her was left behind.



## The Year I Didn't Eat *by Samuel Pollen*

**YA FIC POLLEN**

Max is fourteen, and anorexic. His eating disorder has pretty much taken over his whole life. When his brother, Robin, gives him a geocache for Christmas, Max hides it in the forest near his house. Before long, he gets a note from 'E'. But who is E? Is it Evie, the new girl at school, playing a trick on him? In the midst of a family crisis, Max's eating disorder quickly deteriorates. Anorexia pulls him further and further away from his family and friends, until he feels totally alone. Can anyone help him find a way out?



## Unpregnant *by Jenni Hendriks*

**YA FIC HENDIRCKS**

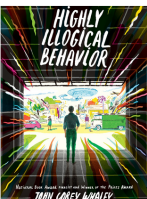
Veronica needs an abortion, but the closest place she can legally get one is over nine hundred miles away. Too ashamed to ask her friends or family for help, Veronica turns to the one person she believes won't judge her: Bailey Butler—Veronica's ex-best friend. Once on the road, Veronica quickly remembers nothing with Bailey is ever simple and that means two days of stolen cars, shotguns, crazed ex-boyfriends, truck stop strippers with pro-life agendas, and a limo driver named Bob. When their fighting leads to a brutal moment of truth, Bailey abandons Veronica. Now Veronica must risk everything in order to repair the hurt she's caused.



## How to Make Friends with the Dark *by Kathleen Glasgow*

**YA FIC GLASGOW**

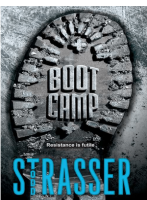
Here is what happens when your mother dies. It's the brightest day of summer and it's dark outside. It's dark in your house, dark in your room, and dark in your heart. You feel like the darkness is going to split you apart. That's how it feels for Tiger. It's always been Tiger and her mother against the world. Then, on a day like any other, Tiger's mother dies. And now it's Tiger, alone. Here is how you learn to make friends with the dark.



## Highly Illogical Behavior *by John Corey Whaley*

**YA FIC WHALEY**

Solomon has agoraphobia and hasn't left his house in three years. Lis wants to get into a great college, so she thinks if she can befriend Solomon, cure his agoraphobia, and then write about it in her admissions essay, she'll be a shoo-in. She drags her boyfriend Clark to help earn Solomon's trust, but when all three develop a genuine friendship, exposing the truth about how they all met becomes more important than ever.



## Boot Camp *by Todd Strasser*

**YA FIC STRASSER**

In the middle of the night Garrett is taken from his home to Harmony Lake, a boot camp for troubled teens. Subjected to brutal physical and psychological abuse, he tries to fight back, but the battle is futile. He won't be allowed to leave until he's admitted his "mistakes" and conformed to Harmony Lake's standards of behavior. And there's no way to fake it. Beaten, humiliated, and stripped of his pride, Garrett's spirit is slowly ebbing away. Then he hears whispers of an escape plot. It's incredibly risky — if he's caught, the consequences will be unthinkable — but it may be his only way out.



## The Place Between Breaths *by An Na*

**YA FIC NA**

Grace's mom has schizophrenia and she struggled for years before disappearing altogether, afraid she's hurt her family. Now, Grace and her father are devoted to the lab that is researching a cure. Grace interns with the genome sequencing team, and one day she thinks that she might have found a vital discovery...but is the discovery really significant, or a sign that she's inherited her mother's illness?



## Fighting Words *by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley*

**YT FIC BRADLEY**

Ten-year-old Della has always had her older sister, Suki: When their mom went to prison, Della had Suki. When their mom's boyfriend took them in, Della had Suki. When that same boyfriend did something so awful they had to run fast, Della had Suki. Suki is Della's own wolf—her protector. But who has been protecting Suki? Della might get told off for swearing at school, but she has always known how to keep quiet where it counts. Then Suki tries to kill herself, and Della's world turns so far upside down, it feels like it's shaking her by the ankles. Maybe she's been quiet about the wrong things. Maybe it's time to be loud.



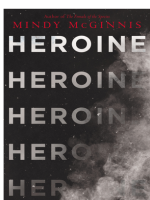
**Clean** *by Amy Reed*  
**YA FIC REED**

Olivia, Kelly, Christopher, Jason, and Eva have one thing in common: They're addicts. Addicts who have hit rock bottom and been stuck together in rehab to face their problems, face sobriety, and face themselves. None of them wants to be there. None of them wants to confront the truths about their pasts. And they certainly don't want to share their darkest secrets and most desperate fears. But they'll all have to deal with themselves, and one another if they want to learn how to live. Because when you get that high, there's nowhere to go but down, down, down.



**Go Ask Alice** *by Anonymous*  
**YA FIC GO**

It started when she was served a soft drink laced with LSD in a dangerous party game. Within months, she was hooked, trapped in a downward spiral that took her from her home and loving family to the mean streets of an unforgiving city. It was a journey that would rob her of her innocence, her youth—and ultimately her life.



**Heroine** *by Mindy McGinnis*  
**YA FIC MCGINNIS**

When a car crash sidelines Mickey just before softball season, she has to find a way to hold on to her spot as the catcher for a team expected to make a historic tournament run, and the painkillers she's been prescribed can help her get there. The pills do more than take away pain; they make her feel good. But as the pressure to be Mickey Catalan heightens, her need increases, and it becomes less about pain and more about want.



**What Kind of Girl** *by Alyssa Sheinmel*  
**YA FIC SHEINMEL**

It all started when Mike Parker's girlfriend walked into the principal's office and said Mike hit her. Why did she go to the principal and not the police? Why did she stay with Mike if he was hurting her? Obviously, if it's true, Mike should face the consequences. But is it true? As rumors about what really happened spread, the students will question what it means to be guilty or innocent, right or wrong.



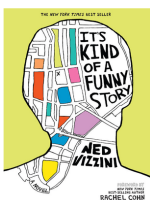
**I Felt a Funeral, In My Brain** *by Will Walton*  
**YA FIC WALTON**

For most of his young life Avery has dealt with his alcoholic mother with the help of his grandfather Pal. Now that high school is over for the summer, he makes out with his best friend Luca (who understands about alcoholic mothers), but the death of his grandfather creates a hole in his life that he cannot seem to crawl out of.



**List of Ten** *by Halli Gomez*  
**YA FIC GOMEZ**

For Troy Hayes, a 16-year-old suffering from Tourette Syndrome and Obsessive-Compulsive Disorder, the number ten dictates his life. Finally, fed up with the daily humiliation, loneliness, and physical pain he endures, Troy writes a list of ten things to do by the tenth anniversary of his diagnosis—culminating in suicide on the actual day. But working his way through the list changes Troy's life: he becomes friends with Khory, a smart, beautiful classmate who has her own troubled history. Khory unwittingly helps Troy cross off items on his list, moving him ever closer to his grand finale, even as she shows him that life may have more possibilities than he imagined.



**It's Kind of a Funny Story** *by Ned Vizzini*  
**YA FIC VIZZINI**

Ambitious New York City teenager Craig Gilner is determined to succeed at life. But once Craig aces his way into Manhattan's Executive Pre-Professional High School, the pressure becomes unbearable. He stops eating and sleeping until, one night, he nearly kills himself. Craig's suicidal episode gets him checked into a mental hospital, where his new neighbors include a transsexual sex addict, a girl who has scarred her own face with scissors, and the self-elected President Armelio. There, Craig is finally able to confront the sources of his anxiety.