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ABSTRACT

Books for children that deal with the real problems of children in grades 3 to 12 are listed in this bibliography. The books are concerned with many social problems such as racial inequality, poverty, adult hypocrisy, desertion, broken homes, drugs, alcohol, sex, mental illness, and death. The entries are listed alphabetically by author. Each entry has a short annotation describing the problem dealt with in the book. (Author/PF)

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A BIBLIOGRAPHY OF BOOKS DEALING WITH THE
PROBLEMS OF OLDER CHILDREN (GRADES 3-12).

(Grade level in
parentheses).

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INTRODUCTION

The following bibliography was presented during a lecture at the Children's Literature Drive-In Conference, Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, on April 26, 1975. The following is an annotated recommended list of titles that deal with the real problems of real children, grades 3-12. The books are concerned with many social problems, such as racial inequality, poverty, adult hypocrisy, desertion, broken homes, drugs, alcohol, sex, mental illness, and death. Since the 60's, many good books have been written to bring social problems to boys and girls who silently suffer society's ills.

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Alcock, Gudren. Run, Westy, Run. Lothrop, 1966. (4-7)

Westy runs away from the prison of his windowless, crowded bedroom, from a life of work with no opportunity for play, and from his overworked parents. At the juvenile home, Westy is fortunate in having skilled and compassionate help.

Arthur, Ruth M. The Whistling Boy. Atheneum, 1969 (6-9)

A teen-age English girl faces adjustment to a new step-mother, befriends a schoolmate who is alcoholic, and helps a boyfriend deal with the supernatural.

Ball, John. Johnny, Get Your Gun. Little, Brown, 1969. (9-)

A young boy takes a gun to shoot the bully who broke his radio and becomes a fugitive from justice at Disneyland.

Bennett, Jay. Masks, a Love Story. Watts, 1971. (9 up)

Jennifer falls in love with a Chinese-American boy, and her parents insist that she end the relationship.

Blue, Rose. Grandma didn't wave back. Watts, 1972. (3-5)

A young girl learns to accept the fact that Grandma is growing old and must be sent to a nursing home.

Blue, Rose. A Month of Sundays. Watts, 1972. (3-5)

Jeffrey, a ten-year-old boy, must leave his friends, school, and home in the suburbs and go to the city to live when his parents divorce. He misses his father, and discovers that having a working mother is not easy.

Blume, Judy. Are you There, God, It's Me, Margaret. Bradbury, 1972. (4 and up) Dell paperback.

When Margaret Limon moves to suburban New Jersey, she has the usual traumas (new girlfriends, new school, older boys to adore), plus the problem of deciding whether she should be Christian or Jewish. Her frequent conversations with God are considerably helpful. Margaret also wants to grow up too fast.

Blume, Judy. Deenie. Bradbury Press, 1973. (6 up)

Popular Deenie avoids outcasts like Barbara Curtis, who has disfiguring eczema. Then Deenie is faced with scoliosis and has to wear a brace. Tasteful discussion of female masturbation.

Blume, Judy. It's Not the End of the World. Bradbury, 1972. (4-6)

Twelve-year-old Karen Newman is unwilling to accept her parents' divorce, and frantically attempts to arrange a reconciliation. When Karen's brother disappears, her father comes to help, and she realizes that the acrimony between her parents makes the separation inevitable.

Blume, Judy. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing. Dutton, 1972. (4-6)

Trials and tribulations of nine-year-old Peter, who is saddled with a pesky, mischievous brother.

Blume, Judy. Then Again, Maybe I Won't. Bradbury, 1971. (5-7)

Tony's family acquires new wealth, his friend is a shop-lifter, and he discovers sexual provocation. In spite of his discoveries and his family's social climbing, Tony becomes mature enough to see the conflicts in his life.

Bonham, Frank. Durango Street. Dutton, 1965. (7 and up)

Rufus Henry, a Black parolee leader of a teen-age gang realizes after a violent fight that violence does not solve problems.

Bonham, Frank. Hey, Big Spender. Dutton, 1972. (6, and up)

An older vagrant hires Cool, a Black teen-ager, to distribute one-half million dollars to the poor. Cool becomes upset by the nuts and hustlers who want money, and the poor people he has to reject.

Bouchard, Lois. The Boy Who Wouldn't Talk. Doubleday, 1969. (3-5)

Faced with the difficulties of adjusting to a new environment where everyone speaks a different language, Carlos refuses to talk.

Bradbury, Bianca. The Loner. Houghton, 1970. (5-7)

Jay's job as a dockboy at a marina builds his confidence and improves his relationship with his well-adjusted brother, Mal.

Brenner, Barbara. A Year in the Life of Rosie Bernard.
Harper, 1971. (4-6)

In 1932, motherless Rose finds herself living in Brooklyn with nine relatives. Her father further complicates matters by bringing a step-mother into Rosie's life.

Burch, Robert. Queenie Peavy. Viking, 1966. (5-7)

A defiant 13-year-old rescues her future from reform school in the 1930's. Queenie learns to curb her temper and keep out of trouble. When her father is paroled from jail and sent back, Queenie realizes that she must solve her own problems.

Byars, Betsy. The Summer of the Swans. Viking Press, 1970.
(7 and up)

One summer, Sara, a fourteen-year-old girl, finds herself when her retarded brother becomes lost in the woods while looking for swans.

Cameron, Eleanor. A Room made of Windows. Little, 1971 (5-7)

Pre-teen Julia finds her room a sanctuary which gives her a shield and security from loneliness. She is troubled by her mother's desire to remarry, the death of a much-beloved elderly friend, and problems of those around her.

Carson, Mary. Ginny: a True Story. Doubleday, 1971. (5 up?)

A mother recounts her young daughter's struggle to walk after a near-fatal accident.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. Grover. Lippincott, 1970. (4-6)

Grover knows his mother has cancer. When she can't bear the pain, she kills herself. His father is so overcome with grief that he cannot give to or receive comfort from Grover. Friends and sympathetic adults help Grover accept his father's pattern.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. The Mock Revolt. Lippincott, 1971.
(6 and up)

In 1939, thirteen-year-old Ussy Mock does not want to become like his banker father and other members of the establishment. His acquaintance with a poor migrant family keeps him from running to San Francisco.

Cleaver, Vera and Bill. Where the Lilies Bloom. Lippincott, 1969.
(4-9)

A poor Appalachian girl buries her father and keeps his death a secret to keep the family together.



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Clymer, Eleanor. My Brother, Stevie. Holt, 1967. (4-6)

When Annie and Stevie's father dies, their mother leaves them, and Annie tries to keep little Stevie from becoming a delinquent. Luckily, a loving teacher helps Stevie handle his hostility.

Cohen, Barbara. Thank you, Jackie Robinson. Lothrop, 1974. (3 and up)

An elderly Black cook's death causes grief for 12-year-old Sam.

Coolidge, Olivia. Come By Here. Houghton, 1970. (5-7)

Based on an actual story of a girl who struggles for security in unwanted homes after her parents are accidentally killed.

Demas, Vida. First Person, Singular. Putman, 1974. (9 up)

This diary-like letter recounts a teen-age girl's struggle to find herself despite an unstable family and her own feelings of inadequacy.

Dizenzo, Pat. Phoebe. McGraw-Hill, 1970 (9 and up)

Difficult decisions face a sixteen-year-old girl when she learns she is pregnant. Mature.

Donovan, John. I'll Get There. It Better be Worth the Trip. Harper & Row, 1969. (7 and up) Mature.

After his grandmother's death, Davy Ross goes to New York City, where he undergoes an emotional experience that leads him to self-awareness.

Duncan, Lois. They Never Came Home. Doubleday, 1969. (7-12)

Two young men disappear in the New Mexico highlands. Tensions occur in the homes of the boys when they fail to return.

Elliot, David W. Pieces of Night: a Novel of Childhood. Holt, 1973. (10 up)

A sequel to Listen to the Silence. (Holt, 1969), a story of a fourteen-year-old confined to a mental hospital who descends toward madness.

Ellis, Ella Thorp. Celebrate the Morning. Atheneum, 1972. (5-9)

After her mother is hospitalized, April learns to come to terms with her mother's mental illness and her fears, with the help of a neighbor.

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Eyerly, Jeannette. Escape from Nowhere. Lippincott, 1969.
(7-10)

Carla's unhappy home life leads her to the drug route with unhappy results.

Eyerly, Jeannette. A Girl Like Me. Lippincott, 1966. (7-10)

The story of two friends and their traumatic discoveries: one is pregnant and the other is illegitimate.

Eyerly, Jeannette. The Phaedra Complex. Lippincott, 1971.
(7-9)

Trouble develops when Laura falls in love with her handsome stepfather.

Fitzhugh, Louise. Nobody's Family is Going to Change. Farrar, 1974 (4-6)

Realistic language marks this novel about the fight Emma and her brother have to retain their individuality in the face of their father's opposition to their career ambitions.

Fox, Paula. The stonefaced boy. Mackay, 1968. (4-6)

Perceptive character study of a lonely, timid middle child. Gus, to avoid being teased, has learned to mask his feelings so well that he has lost his ability to show emotion.

Friedman, Frieda. Ellen and the Gang. Morrow, 1963. (5-6)

Compelling portrayal of an insecure city girl who finds that false new friends have been framing her in a series of newstand thieveries.

Friis-Baastad, Babbis. Don't Take Teddy. Scribner, 1967.
(5-7)

Mikkel's first person account of his attempts to protect an older, retarded brother conveys the stress of coping with too much responsibility.

Garden, Nancy. The Loners. Viking, 1972. (6 and up)

Paul and Jenny, two lonely teen-agers, meet and fall in love, only to have tragedy befall them when they take an LSD trip. Jenny is emotionally disturbed and is "Alice in Wonderland." Paul is the Mad Hatter who has to learn to accept the death of his beloved grandfather. After Gramp's death and Jenny's bad trip, Paul faces reality and grows to maturity.

Gates, Doris. Blue Willow. Viking, 1940. (4-6)

Janey Larken is a child of migrant workers whose greatest desire is a permanent place to live.

George, Jean.. My Side of the Mountain. Dutton, 1959. (4-6)

Sam leaves his New York City home and goes to the wilderness to live alone. Surviving the winter proves to be a challenge that leads to maturity.

Go Ask Alice. Prentice-Hall, 1971. (9 and up)

A highly fictionalized diary of a fifteen-year-old girl and her experiences with drugs and tragic struggle to keep clean.

Green, Constance C. A Girl Called Al. Viking, 1969. (5-7)

An overweight, lonely, insecure girl from a broken home finds a friend.

Greene, Constance. Leo, the Lioness. Viking, 1970. (6 and up)

Tibb was 13 with no figure and complexion with an older sister and friend who were boy crazy. Her sole comfort was her being a Leo, the strongest sign of the Zodiac. Greene has captured the sensitive adolescent trying to understand values, sex, parents, siblings, and herself.

Greene, Constance. The Unmaking of Rabbit. Viking, 1972. (5-7)

Paul lives with his grandmother while his flighty, divorced mother lives it up in NYC and can't be tied down by her son. Known as the rabbit because his ears stick out, the boy lives in misery. Finally, Paul realizes his future with his mother is a pipe dream, and finds happiness when he makes a friend.

Hall, Lynn. Sticks and Stones. Follett, 1972. Dell paperback, 1972. (7 and up)

Rumors of homosexuality causes eighteen-year-old Tom to doubt his masculinity and break his relationship with Ward. After a near fatal accident, Tom realizes his freedom to defend himself and his relationship with Ward.

Hamilton, Virginia M.C. Higgins, the Great. Macmillan, 1974 (7 up)

This haunting novel depicts a boy's struggle to know himself and save his home on Sarah's Mountain.



Hamilton, Virginia. The Planet of Junior Brown. Macmillan, 1976.
(7 and up)

Junior Brown, a 262-pound eighth grade student, and his friend, Buddy, hide in the school cellar room and are forced to confront reality.

Hamilton, Virginia. Zelly. Macmillan, 1967. (4-6)

An 11-year-old Black girl is guided from her daydreams to reality by Zelly, who is both beautiful and kind.

Hanes, Mary. Lovechild: a Self Portrait. Lippincott, 1972.
(9 and up)

Autobiographical account of an unwed mother who kept her child.

Heide, Florence. The Key. Atheneum, 1971. (5-7)

Three stories, each dealing with a child in a difficult situation, and his or her ability to cope with it.

Hinton, S.E. This Was Then, This Is Now. Viking, 1971 (7 and up)

Two teen-age boys find their lifelong friendship dissolving when one refuses to accept responsibility.

Holland, Isabelle. Heads You Win, Tails I Lose. Lippincott, 1973.
(5 and up)

Overweight Melissa loves the boy next door who despises her. When she takes a part in the school play, Melissa steals diet and sleeping pills from her mother and starts on a dangerous course. Meanwhile, her parent's miserable marriage breaks up, and when her father leaves, her mother starts to drink.

Holland, Isabelle. The Man Without a Face. Lippincott, 1972.
(9 and up)

A boy struggling for a sense of self finds stability and acceptance in the friendship of a horribly scarred recluse. The question of homosexuality is handled with taste.

Holman, Felice. Slake's Limbo. Scribner, 1974. (6 and up)

Life's hard knocks force 13-year-old Slake to take refuge underground in NYC's subway system.

Hunt, Irene. No Promises in the Wind. Follett, 1970 (5 and up)

Joe Grondowski lives in Chicago during the depression with his little brother and pal. He struggles with feelings of disgust for his father's powerlessness when jobs fail, ambivalent feelings toward his little brother, and the hopelessness of his dream to be a musician.

Hunter, Kristin: Soul Brothers and Sister Lou. Scribner, 1968. (7-12)

A lonely teen-age girl overcomes many obstacles while trying to form a rock band.

Johnson, Annabel and Edgar. Count Me Gone. Simon and Schuster, 1968. (6-9)

A character study of a teen-age misfit who tries to find himself.

Kellogg, Marjorie. Like the Lion's Tooth. Farrar, 1972. (5 and up)

Set in a school for problem-children, the story focuses on Ben, an abused child.

Kerr, M.E. Dinky Hocker Shoots Smack. Harper & Row, 1972. (7 and up)

Deals with Dinky's problems and her mother, who is so involved with rehabilitating drug addicts that she ignores Dinky, a lonely, overweight, teen-ager.

Kerr, M.E. If I Love You, Am I Trapped Forever? Harper, 1973. (6 and up)

Popular Alan Bennett is very cool and handsome, in his own words. He begins to grow when he loses his girl to balding Duncan Stein, discovers the coach and Stein's mother are having an affair, and has to accept his father's second marriage.

Kerr, M.E. The Son of Someone Famous. Harper & Row, 1974 (7 and up)

Adam, a son of a famous politician, unconsciously avoids confronting more critical problems by fabricating a father problem that does not exist.

Klein, Norma. Confessions of an only child. Pantheon, 1974. (3-5)

Nine-year-old Toe is unhappy when she discovers her mother is going to have a baby. Toe finally accepts the new baby, and is saddened by her mother's miscarriage.

Klein, Norma. Mom, the Wolf Man and Me. Pantheon, 1972. (5-7)

Eleven-year-old Brett struggles to keep his peace-marching mother single. Focuses on contemporary lifestyles, for the mother lives with a man.

Knobb, Theodora. The Deep Search. Lippincott, 1969. (9 up).

A mentally handicapped boy finds acceptance and love from his once rejecting family.

Konigsburg, E.L. (George). Atheneum, 1970. (5-7)

Benjamin Carr has an imaginary twin who lives inside him. Only with the help of psychoanalysis is Benjamin able to bury George.

Lee, Mildred. Fog. Seabury, 1972. (7 and up)

Fog covers a critical year in the life of Luke and his friends. He falls in love, only to lose his girl, a fire seriously injures his best friends, and Luke suffers guilt feelings when his father dies.

Lee, Mildred. The Rock and the Willow. Lothrop, 1963. (9 up)

A young girl endures the loss of a parent during the Depression days in the deep South.

Lee, Mildred. The Skating Rink. Seabury, 1969. (6-8)

Tuck, a lonely, shy boy, was teased at school, for he was either tongue-tied or he stammered. His life is changed when Peter Degley teaches him how to skate.

Levit, Rose. Ellen: a Short Life Long Remembered. Chronicle, 1974. (9 and up)

Ellen, at 15, discovers she has cancer and finds the inner strength to live each day fully as she can.

Little, Jean. Mine For Keeps. Little, 1962. (4-6)

Sal, a cerebral palsy victim, must adjust to her family after being in a special school.

Little, Jean. One to Grow On. Little, 1969. (4-6)

Janie was so in the habit of telling lies that she almost believed them. Only when she discovered her friend Lisa was telling lies was Janie able to control her habit.

MacHargue, Georgess. Stoneflight. Viking, 1975. (5-7)

Janie's summer is not working right: her parents are fighting constantly and New York is hot and muggy. When she meets Griff, the stone griffen who perches at the top of Janie's apartment building, she finds security. Finally, Janie realizes she must retreat from the uncaring stone and face the internal turmoil at home.

Mathis, Sharon. Listen For the Fig Tree. Viking, 1974. (6 and up)

Muffin, in spite of her blindness and an alcoholic mother, finds help from a kind neighbor to face the future.

Mathis, Sharon. Sidewalk Story. Viking, 1971. (3-5)

Easy-to-read story of a little Black girl to whom friendship means caring and helping a friend in trouble.

Mathis, Sharon Bell. Teacup Full of Roses. Viking Press, 1972. (7 and up)

A young boy faces the problems of his older brother's drug addiction, and helplessly watches it destroy the family.

Meriwether, Louise. Daddy Was a Number Runner. Prentice-Hall, 1970. (9 up).

Twelve-year-old Francie watches poverty destroy her family during the Depression in Harlem.

Mitchison, Naomi. Friends and Enemies. Day, 1968. (5-7)

Petrus must leave South Africa due to threatening political conditions and make a new life in poverty in Botswana.

Neufeld, John. Edgar Allan. New American Library, 1969, paperback. (5-8).

A White minister and his wife adopt a Black child, and later they are pressured to give the child up. This causes a conflict between the father and his oldest son.

Neufeld, John. For All the Wrong Reasons. New American Library, 1973. (9 up).

A boy-husband cracks up under the responsibility of his unwanted teen-age marriage. For those who loved Ann Head's Mister and Mrs. BoJo Jones, Putnam, 1967. Mature.

Neufeld, John. Lisa, Bright and Dark. Phillips, 1969. (7 and up)

When Lisa begins losing touch with reality, her friends try to help her. For those who enjoyed I Never Promised You a Rose Garden.

Neville, Emily. Berries Goodman. Harper, 1965. (5 and up)

The friendship of Berries and his Jewish friend Sidney survives the vicious pressures of the prejudiced adult world.

Norris, Gunilla., Lillian. Atheneum, 1968. (4-6)

Lillian, traumatically affected by the divorce of her parents, fears her mother will leave.

Orgel, Doris. The Mulberry Music. Harper, 1971 (4-6)

A young girl's parents try to protect her from the death of her beloved grandmother.

Peck, Richard. Don't Look and It Won't Hurt. Holt, 1972. (6 and up)

Carol Patterson, a young teen-ager, finds happiness in love, but when her older sister becomes pregnant and is sent to an unwed mother's home in Chicago, family problems intervene. Carol goes to Chicago to see her sister and is surprised how Ellen has changed while working as a mother's helper for a doctor and his wife. Carol helps Ellen decide to give up her baby.

Peck, Richard. Dreamland Lake. Holt, 1973. (4-7)

After two friends discover a dead body in a park, their friendship is destroyed.

Peck, Robert Newton. A Day No Pigs Would Die. Knopf, 1972. (7 up)

A very simple and touching story of growing up on a Vermont farm in the Shaker way. The whole story of the cycle of life and death.

Platt, Kin. The Boy Who Could Make Himself Disappear. Chilton, 1968. (4-8)

A rejected thirteen-year-old boy's speech impediment and his lack of love cause serious problems.

Rich, Louise. Star Island Boy. Watts, 1968. (4-6)

Larry Scott, a ward of the state, finally finds a home with his latest set of foster parents.

Rinkoff, Barbara. Member of the Gang. Crown, 1968. (5-7)

Woodie wanted to be in Leroy's gang, so Woodie skips school and becomes front man in a robbery. Finally, Woodie's father convinces him that there is no future in being tough.

Rinkoff, Barbara. The Watchers. Knopf, 1972 (5-7)

Chris Blake tells the story of his troubles: parents who fight all the time, censure at school, and no friends except his new kid, Sanford, a real loser.

Robinson, Veronica. David in Silence. Lippincott, 1966.
(5-7)

A realistic, revealing story about a deaf boy who encounters varying reactions when he first shares the usual activities of children who can hear.

Ruhen, Olaf. Corcoran's the Name. Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1967. (5 and up)

Corcoran leaves his older brother and seeks adventure as a cattle drover in Australia. He falls in love with Deborah, only to lose her to a dying woman's husband. The adventures are very exciting and give one a tour of Australia.

Samuels, Gertrude. Run, Shelley, Run! Crowell, 1974.
(6 and up)

A victim of juvenile injustice and family neglect gets help from a sympathetic judge and the intercession of a kind neighbor.

Savage, Natalie. The Empty Schoolhouse. Harper, 1965. (3-5)

A 10-year-old Black girl in a small Southern town endures loneliness and abuse as the first to integrate her school.

Sherburne, Zoa. Too Bad About the Haines Girl. Morrow, 1967-
(8-)

Melinda Haines is a nice girl from a loving family. Her boyfriend Jeff plans to continue his education after college. Finally, when she becomes pregnant, she has to tell her parents and Jeff's mother that they must have a wedding immediately.

Stirling, Nora. You Would If You Loved Me. M. Evans, 1969.
(6 and up)

The teen problems of sex, responsibility, devotion to a worthy cause, indecision, "following the crowd" are all demonstrated in this book.

Stolz, Mary. The Bully of Barkham Street. Harper, 1963.
(4-6)

Eleven-year-old Martin goes through a typical phase of growing up--feeling misunderstood.

Stolz, Mary. The Noonday Friends. Harper, 1965. (4-6)

Franny's unskilled father is out of work, and the family teamwork demanded leaves her only lunch periods free from chores. Franny loses her noonday friend over a quarrel.

Swarthout, Glendon. Bless the Beasts and the Children.
Doubleday, 1970. (6 and up)

Six runaway boys prove they are not failures or misfits.

Taves, Isabella. Not Bad For A Girl. Evans/Lippincott, 1972.
(4-6)

Based on an actual event, this is the story of a twelve-year-old baseball player who must give up playing centerfield due to caustic publicity and anger of people in a small town.

Terris, Susan. The Drowning Boy. Doubleday, 1972. (5-7)

A twelve-year-old boy finds the demands of his father and sister unbearable and meets further frustrations by not being able to cure an autistic child he has befriended.

Thiele, Colin. Blue Fin. Harper, -1974. (7 and up)

A shy, awkward boy struggles to earn his father's respect until he is involved in a tragic sea disaster.

Van Leeuwen, Jean. I Was a 98-pound Duckling. Dial Press, 1972. (5 and up)

Kathy is tall and thin, with problem hair and skin, according to beauty magazines. She develops self-confidence when she has a date with a boy at a summer resort.

Viereck, Philip. The Summer I Was Lost. Day, 1965. (6-9)

Getting lost in the woods is a real learning experience for Paul.

Ward, Mary Jane. The Other Caroline. Crown, 1970. (7 and up)

A schizophrenic woman struggles to be herself in spite of her false belief that she has had a brain transplant.

Weesner, Theodore. The Car Thief. Random House, 1972. (9 and up)

Alex Housman, a sixteen-year-old boy who has stolen his fourteenth car, desires to be part of a family, a group, or even a couple.

White, Robb. Deathwatch. Doubleday, 1972. (4-9)

After an argument, Ben, a guide for a bighorn sheep hunter in Death Valley, is stripped of his clothing and left without food and water to find his way back to civilization.

Windsor, Patricia. The Summer Before. Harper & Row, 1973.
(9 and up)

A young woman must deal with psychological turmoil resulting from losing the first person she ever loved.

Wojciechowska, Maig. Shadow of a Bull. Atheneum, 1965.
(4-6)

Twelve-year-old Manolo fears he cannot be like his late father, a famous bullfighter. Manolo decides to fight the bull and prove his courage.

Zindel, Paul. My Darling, My Hamburger. Harper & Row, 1969
(8 and up)

Two couples in their senior year find romance. One couple's romance ends in tragedy.

Zindel, Paul. The Pigman. Harper & Row, 1968. (7 and up)

John and Lorraine befriend a lonely old man and accidentally bring about his death.