

Select Bibliography of Children's Books about the Disability Experience

This list contains some outstanding books that portray emotional, mental, or physical disability experiences, most published between 2000 and 2008. The grade level designations are intended as guidelines, similar to those used in *School Library Journal*.

For younger readers:

Asare, Meshack. *Sosu's Call*. Kane, 2002.

Sosu and his dog, Fusa, warn the inhabitants of an African village of a threatening violent storm even though Sosu cannot use his legs to walk. The villagers show their appreciation with a special gift. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Barasch, Lynne. *Knockin' on Wood: Starring Peg Leg Bates*. Lee and Low Books, 2004.

Biography of world famous African American tap dancer who had only one leg. Tells about Clayton Bates's unstoppable love of dancing, his accident in 1919 at age twelve, and the wooden leg his uncle whittled for him—the peg leg that became his nickname. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Bertrand, Diane Gonzales. *My Pal, Victor/Mi Amigo, Victor*. Raven Tree Press, 2004.

Dominic relates all the wonderful things he does with his best friend Victor; telling scary stories at sleepovers, swimming at the pool, riding rollercoasters. The surprise ending is learning that Victor uses a wheel chair. Bilingual text in English and Spanish. For kindergarten to grade 3. Schneider Family Book Award, 2005.

Chaconas, Dori. *Dancing with Katya*. Peachtree, 2006.

Wisconsin farm, 1920s. Sisters Anna and Katya love pretending to be ballerinas dancing in the meadows until Katya falls ill with polio. She returns from a long hospital stay in bulky leg braces but Anna finds a new way for Katya to dance. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Davis, Patricia Anne. *Brian's Bird*. Whitman, 2000.

Brian, who is blind, enjoys taking care of the parakeet he receives on his eighth birthday. When his older brother accidentally lets the bird escape but then helps Brian get it back, the boys feel closer. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Dwight, Laura. *Brothers and Sisters*. Star Bright Books, 2005.

A photo essay about school age siblings one of whom has a disability—hearing or visually impairment, Down Syndrome, or wearing a prosthesis. Emphasizes playing together and everyday family life. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Finke, Beth. *Hanni and Beth: Safe and Sound*. Blue Marlin, 2007.

Seeing Eye dog Hanni describes her routine duties to guide and protect her partner Beth, a woman who is blind. Both Hanni and Beth provide personal notes about their background. For kindergarten to grade 3. ASPCA award.

Fraustino, Lisa Rowe. *The Hickory Chair*. Arthur Levine Books, 2001.

A blind boy tells of his loving relationship with his grandmother. After she dies, every family member—except him—finds notes on special things she has left for them. He chooses her favorite chair as a remembrance, and years later, his grandchild finds a note inside it—for him from her. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Gilmore, Rachna. *Screaming Kind of Day*. Fitzhenry & Whiteside, 1999.

Scully only listens to her teasing brother and scolding mother when she wants to; then she turns on her hearing aids. One rainy day when she wants to play outside, her mother sends her to her room instead. Sneaking out the back door causes Scully more problems before she and her mother reconcile. For kindergarten to grade 3. Canadian Governor's Award.

Glenn, Sharlee. *Keeping Up with Roo*. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

Five-year-old Gracie has always had a special bond with her Aunt Roo, who is mentally disabled. That relationship changes far awhile when Gracie begins school. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Herrera, Juan Felipe. *Featherless/Desplumado: Story/Cuento*. Children's Book Press, 2004.

Spina bifida keeps Tomasito in a wheelchair, where he often feels like his featherless pet bird, Desplumado, who cannot fly. But with a friend's encouragement, Tomasito finds freedom on the soccer field. Bilingual text in English and Spanish. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Karim, Roberta. *Mandy Sue Day*. Clarion, 1994.

Today is Mandy Sue's turn to be excused from farm chores, so she spends the day riding and talking to her horse Ben. And Mandy Sue manages everything by herself, even though she is blind. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Knowlton, Laurie Lazzaro. *A Young Man's Dance*. Boyds Mills Press, 2006.

Grandma Ronnie's grandson misses baking cookies and dancing with her now that she lives in a nursing home, uses a wheelchair, and doesn't recognize people. After several visits, he finds a special way to reconnect with her. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Lang, Glenna. *Looking Out for Sarah*. Charles bridge, 2001.

Describes a day in the life of Perry, a seeing-eye dog, as he guides his owner Sarah to the grocery store, post office, and on a school visit. He dreams about the month that he and Sarah walked from Boston to New York. For kindergarten to grade 3. Schneider Family Book Award, 2004.

Millman, Isaac. *Moses Goes to a Concert*. Farrar Straus, 1998.

Moses and his classmates, all of whom are deaf, go to a concert with their teacher and enjoy experiencing music. They discover that the percussionist in the orchestra is also deaf. Includes information on sign language. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Munsch, Robert N. *Zoom!* Scholastic , 2003.

When Laretta's mother takes her shopping for a new wheelchair, Laretta wants one that goes really fast. The store lets her have a 92-speed dirt bike model for home testing, and then Larette's adventures begin. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Petrillo, Genevieve. *Keep Your EAR on the Ball.* Tilbury House, 2007.

Davey, a new student who is blind, refuses all help from his sighted classmates, even while playing kickball at recess. The students figure out a way to help Davey ehlp himself by using his hearing to full advantage—and keeping his independence. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Riggio, Jamee. *Making of My Special Hand: Madison's Story.* Peachtree. 2000.

Madison, a little girl born with one hand, tells about having a helper hand made specially for her. She explains all the stages involved in fitting her for a battery-operated prosthesis that allows her to open and close her new hand. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Seeger, Pete and Paul DuBois Jacobs. *The Deaf Musicians.* Putnam's, 2006.

Jazz pianist Lee is asked to leave his band when he loses his hearing. At sign language class, Lee meets Max who plays the sax. Riding the subway together, they form a new band with a big audience. For kindergarten to grade 3 and older readers. Schneider Family Book Award, 2007.

Strom, Maria Diaz. *Rainbow Joe and Me.* Lee and Low Books, 1999.

Eloise loves to paint pictures in bright colors that she describes for her elderly blind neighbor Rainbow Joe. Joe tells her he too can make colors sing and one Sunday he surprises her with his music. For kindergarten to grade 3.

Stryer, Andrea Stenn. *Kami and the Yaks.* Bay Otter Press, 2007.

With a storm approaching, Kami—a Sherpa boy who is deaf—finds the littlest of his family's four yaks stuck in a crevice. Kami bravely rushes home and acts out the yak's plight in home sign then leads his father and brother to the rescue. For kindergarten to grade 3. Schneider Family Book Award, 2008.

Uhlberg, Myron. *Dad, Jackie, and Me.* Peachtree, 2005.

Brooklyn, New York; 1947. A boy learns about discrimination and tolerance as he and his father who is deaf share their enthusiasm over baseball and the Dodgers' first African American player, Jackie Robinson. For grades 2 to 4. Schneider Family Book Award, 2006.

Uhlberg, Myron. *The Printer.* Peachtree, 2003.

A young boy describes his deaf father's heroism when a fast spreading fire broke out at the newspaper factory. Working in the noisy pressroom, his father used sign language to alert other deaf workers of the danger so they could save their hearing colleagues. For grades 2 to 4.

Yin. *Dear Santa, Please Come to the 19th Floor.* Philomel, 2002.

Willy wants to make this Christmas special for his best friend now that Carlos is in a wheelchair. So he e-mails Santa asking him to bring a gift to Carlos in his apartment on the nineteenth floor. For kindergarten to grades 3.

For middle school readers:

Alexander, Sally Hobart. *Do You Remember the Color Blue?* Viking, 2000.

A writer who went blind at age twenty-six answers questions that children have frequently asked during her visits to schools. She discusses reading, working with her guide dog, meeting her husband, and parenting her two children, as well as her reactions to being blind. For grades 4 to 7.

Auch, M. J. *One-Handed Catch*. Henry Holt and Company, 2006.

1946. After losing his left hand in an accident in his father's butcher shop, sixth-grader Norm uses his determination and good humor to continue his favorite activities—art work and playing baseball. For grades 4 to 7.

Bang, Molly. *Tiger's Fall*. Holt, 2001.

When Lupe falls out of a tree in her Mexican village, she is paralyzed from the waist down. Angry and feeling sorry for herself, Lupe goes to a center for disabled people, who help her realize that her life can still have a purpose. For grades 3 to 6.

Choldenko, Gennifer. *Al Capone Does My Shirts*. Putnam's Sons, 2004.

Twelve-year-old Moose Flanagan moves to Alcatraz Island in 1935 when his father takes a job at the maximum-security prison there. Moose struggles to make friends while taking care of Natalie, his older autistic sister, and their mother unrealistically tries to have Natalie accepted at a special school. For grades 5 to 8. Newbery Honor book, 2005.

Creech, Sharon. *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*. HarperCollins, 2003.

Rosie feels that her friendship with Bailey, who is vision impaired, is threatened when a new girl moves into the neighborhood. After Rosie and Bailey have a falling out, Granny Torrelli reunites them through cooking in her kitchen. For grades 5 to 8.

Dash, Joan. *World at Her Fingertips: The Story of Helen Keller*. Scholastic, 2001.

Biography of the outstanding woman who overcame her disabilities to be an inspirational public figure. Discusses the cause of Helen Keller's blindness and deafness, her determination to lead a useful life, and the importance of her teacher, Annie Sullivan, in achieving that goal. For grades 5 to 8.

Fusco, Kimberly Newton. *Tending to Grace*. Knopf, 2004.

Cornelia is shy and withdrawn because of her stutter. She feels even lonelier when her mother drops her off to live with an eccentric great-aunt in a rundown farmhouse. But

slowly and warily Cornelia and her aunt learn to share their strengths with each other. For grades 6 to 9. Schneider Family Book Award, 2006.

Gantos, Jack. *What Would Joey Do?* Farrar Straus, 2002.

Hyperactive Joey tries to hold things together as his father shows up on a motorcycle to taunt his mother, he is home-schooled with a hostile blind girl, and his feisty grandmother copes with emphysema. For grades 5 to 8.

Gifaldi, David. *Ben, King of the River.* Whitman, 2001.

Chad describes his family's first camping trip with his five-year-old brother Ben, who has a developmental disability and many allergies. Chad tells about the hard time he has dealing with Ben's needs and how much he cares about his sibling. For grades 3 to 6.

Graff, Lisa. *The Thing about Georgie.* Harper Trophy, 2008.

Fourth-grader Georgie who is a dwarf, contends with concerns about becoming a big brother to someone who may outgrow him, losing his best friend Andy, the irony of portraying Abraham Lincoln in his class play, and working on a project with Jeanie the Meanie. For grades 4 to 7.

Greenberg, Jan. *Chuck Close: Up Close.* DK INK, 1998.

This biography of the portrait artist tells about his undiagnosed childhood problems with dyslexia and learning disabilities, when art was the only subject he enjoyed. Already a famous painter in the 1960s, he was paralyzed from the neck down in 1988. The doctors said his career was over, but Close found a way to keep painting. For grades 4 to 7.

Kurtz, Jane. *The Storyteller's Beads.* Harcourt Brace, 1998.

When Ethiopian villagers are forced to flee toward Sudan, two young girls from different backgrounds learn to rely on each other. Sahay is from a Christian family, while Rahel is Jewish and blind. Sahay's offer to lead Rahel through the desert is the beginning of their friendship. For grades 5 to 8.

Liao, Jimmy. *The Sound of Colors: A Journey of the Imagination.* Little, Brown and Company, 2006.

A year after feeling her sight slipping away, a girl with her white cane walks to the subway because there are some things she needs to find. She imagines the possibilities of going anywhere she wants, bucking the crowd, and finding a friend, to regain the light that glows in the heart. A picture book for all ages.

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules.* Scholastic Press, 2006.

Sometimes twelve-year-old Catherine resents her brother David, who is autistic, breaks all the rules, and gets all her parents' attention. Then she meets Jason, a teenage nonverbal paraplegic, at David's therapy center. As the two become friends, Catherine realizes that accepting differences matters more than any rules. For grades 5 to 8. Schneider Family Book Award, 2007.

Madden, Kerry. *Gentle's Holler: A Novel*. Viking, 2005.

Great Smoky Mountains, North Carolina; 1960s. Livy Two worries that love and music cannot feed a family of ten, especially since her father has no steady job, her little sister Gentle is probably blind, and her mother keeps having babies. Then her bossy grandmother pays a visit. For grades 5 to 8.

Mass, Wendy. *A Mango-Shaped Space*. Little, Brown, 2003.

Eight-grader Mia has been keeping a secret—even from her best friend, Jenna—ever since third grade, when she realized that not everyone sees a color for each name, number, and sound. Problems at school and her cat's death lead Mia to discoveries about herself and synesthesia. Schneider Family Book Award, 2004. For grade 5 to 8.

McElfresh, Lynn E. *Can You Feel the Thunder?* Simon Schuster, 1999.

If seventh-grader Mic Parsons doesn't pass mathematics, his parents won't let him try out for the baseball team. Mic has mixed feelings about his fifteen-year-old deaf and blind sister Stephenie, but appreciates her in a new way after she helps Mic learn fractions. For grades 5 to 8.

McNamee, Graham. *Nothing Wrong with a Three-Legged Dog*. Yearling, 2001.

Being shy and the only white kid in his fourth grade class, Keath is an easy target for bullies. His friendship with classmate Lynda and her three-legged dog, Leftovers, helps Keath cope with visiting his beloved, stroke-victim grandmother and standing up to his major tormentor in school. For grades 3 to 6.

Ray, Delia. *Singing Hands*. Clarion, 2006.

Alabama, 1948. Twelve-year-old Gussie, a minister's daughter, learns the definition of integrity while helping with a celebration at the school for the deaf—her punishment for impulsive misdeeds against her deaf parents and their boarders. For grades 5 to 8.

Rodowsky, Colby. *The Next-Door Dogs*. Farrar Strauss Giroux, 2005.

Even though nine-year-old Sara is afraid of dogs, she becomes friends with a new neighbor who has a Dalmatian and a Labrador retriever. When Ms. Harrington falls down in her back yard, Sara is alerted by the dogs' barking and finds the courage to overcome her fear. For grades 2 to 4.

Ryan, Pam Munoz. *Becoming Naomi Leon*. Scholastic, 2004.

Naomi and Owen have lived happily with their great-grandmother in her trailer for seven years. Gram has arranged Owen's surgeries for his physical disabilities and helped Naomi begin to speak again. When their mother reappears to claim only Naomi, Gram runs away with the children to Mexico to find their father and their heritage. For grades 4 to 7. Schneider Family Book Award, 2005.

Stauffacher, Sue. *Harry Sue*. Knopf, 2005.

Eleven-year-old Harry Sue would like to start a life of crime and be sent to jail in order to find her mother. Instead she protects children from her neglectful grandmother

who runs a home day-care center and motivates her best friend Homer, a quadriplegic who lives in a tree house. For grades 4 to 7.

Zimmer, Tracie Vaughn. *Reaching for Sun*. Holtzbrinck, 2007.

Josie, born with cerebral palsy, lives with her mother and grandmother, who both love gardening. When a lonely boy, Jordan, moves in nearby, he and Josie relate through their interest in nature, and Josie makes her first friend. A novel in verse. For grades 4-7. Schneider Family Book Award, 2008.

For young adult readers:

Abeel, Samantha. *My Thirteenth Winter: A Memoir*. Orchard, 2003.

Autobiography of a young woman both gifted and learning disabled. Discusses her experiences before and after the diagnosis of dyscalculia which compromises sequential processing required for spelling, telling time, remembering locker combinations, and understanding math and grammar. For young adult readers. Schneider Family Book Award, 2005.

Aronson, Sarah. *Head Case*. Roaring Brook Press, 2007.

Seventeen-year-old Frank Marder leaves the hospital in a wheelchair, paralyzed from the neck down. He reflects on the mistake—driving while drunk—that made him a quadriplegic and killed two people. Frank faces society's judgments and seeks forgiveness. Strong language and some descriptions of sex. For senior high.

Bingham, Kelly L. *Shark Girl*. Candlewick Press, 2007.

After a shark attack causes the amputation of her right arm, fifteen-year-old Jane, a talented artist, struggles to come to terms with her loss and the changes in her plans for the future. Told in conversations, letters, and prose poems. For junior and senior high.

Clements, Andrew. *Things Not Seen*. Philomel Books, 2002.

When fifteen-year-old Bobby wakes up and finds himself invisible, his self-perception changes radically. Alicia, his new blind friend, empathizes with him because she often feels invisible yet she is the one who helps the most to restore Bobby's physical state. For young adult readers. Schneider Family Book Award, 2004.

Hautman, Pete. *Invisible*. Simon & Schuster, 2005.

Seventeen-year-old Dougie is a loner obsessed with building a bridge out of match sticks for his model railroad. His only friend and confidant is Andy, a popular football player, who lives next door. Gradually Dougie reveals their secret bond—the fires they set together. Some violence. For senior high readers.

Johnson, Harriet McBryde. *Accidents of Nature*. Holt, 2006.

North Carolina, 1970. Seventeen-year-old Jean, who has cerebral palsy, attends Camp Courage, where for the first time she meets other teens with disabilities. Her

radical, new friend Sara directs an anti-telethon skit and changes Jean's perceptions of the normal world. Some descriptions of sex. For senior high readers.

Koertge, Ronald. *Stoner & Spaz*. Candlewick Press, 2002.

Sixteen-year-old Ben, who has cerebral palsy, leads an insular life with his overprotective grandmother. But everything changes when he is befriended by drug-addicted classmate Colleen, and a neighbor introduces him to filmmaking and encourages him to make a movie about his high school. Strong language. For senior high readers.

Mellor, C. Michael. *Louis Braille: A Touch of Genius*. National Braille Press, 2006.

Biography of Louis Braille (1809-1852), a blind Frenchman who by age sixteen designed a code of raised dots enabling blind people to read and write easily. Discusses his schooling, his love of music, and the advantages of his tactile reading system. For junior and senior high.

Moore, Peter. *Blind Sighted*. Viking, 2001.

Eleventh-grader Kirk Tobak is moody and bored with school, his alcoholic mother, and druggie friends. His job reading for an independent young blind woman, with whom he discusses his problems, gives Kirk new insights. Some descriptions of sex and some strong language. For senior high readers.

Nuzum, K. A. *A Small White Scar*. Joanna Cotler Books, 2006.

Colorado, 1940. Fifteen-year-old Will Bennon has his heart set on entering his first rodeo. He's fed up with his father's rules and with acting as caretaker for his twin brother, Denny, who has Down Syndrome. But when Will sets out on his horse to leave, Denny follows him. For grades 6 to 9.

Rapp, Adam. *Under the Wolf, Under the Dog*. Candlewick Press, 2004.

Teenager Steve Nugent's journal describes his experiences in an institution for emotionally disturbed youth. While discussing his interactions with fellow patients, Steve recalls his mother's and brother's deaths, his father's depression, and his own self-destructive behavior. Strong language, some explicit descriptions of sex, and some violence. For senior high readers. Schneider Family Book Award, 2006.

Rorby, Ginny. *Hurt Go Happy*. Thirteen-year-old Joey Willis, deaf since age seven, has an overprotective mother who refuses to let her daughter learn sign language. When Joey meets neighbor Dr. Mansell and his sign-user chimpanzee Sukari, her world blooms with possibilities. But a crisis involving Sukari brings Joey some heavy responsibilities. For junior and senior high. Schneider Family Book Award, 2008.

Sachar, Louis. *Small Steps*. Delacorte Press, 2006.

Austin, Texas. Portrays the unexpected friendship between an African American teen with a juvenile record and a ten-year-old white girl with cerebral palsy. Their adventures and mishaps involving a popular teen singer cause some setbacks but they encourage each other to take small steps towards a better future. For junior and senior high.

Trueman, Terry. *Inside Out*. HarperCollins, 2003.

Sixteen-year-old Zach suffers from schizophrenia and, unless he takes his medication, hears voices that urge him to kill himself. When held hostage during a holdup, Zach resolves the crisis, learns about himself, and helps others understand his disorder. Strong language and some violence. For senior high readers.

Trueman, Terry. *Stuck in Neutral*. HarperCollins, 2000.

Fourteen-year-old Shawn has a phenomenal memory for everything he's ever heard, but nobody knows it because his cerebral palsy has made him unable to communicate. Now Shawn suspects that his father, in a misguided plan to end the boy's pain, is planning to kill him. Some strong language. For junior and senior high readers. Printz Honor book.

Weeks, Sarah. *So B. It*. Laura Geringer Books, 2004.

After spending her life with her mentally retarded mother and agoraphobic neighbor, twelve-year-old Heidi sets out from Reno, Nevada, to New York state to find out who she is. With the help of some old photographs she uncovers family secrets. For grades 6 to 9.

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