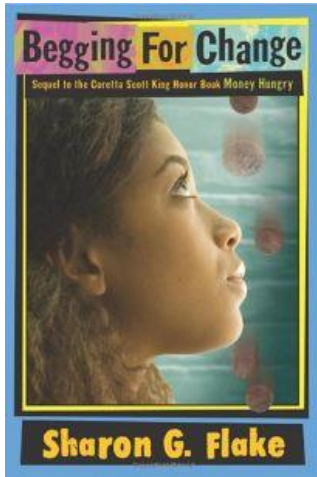


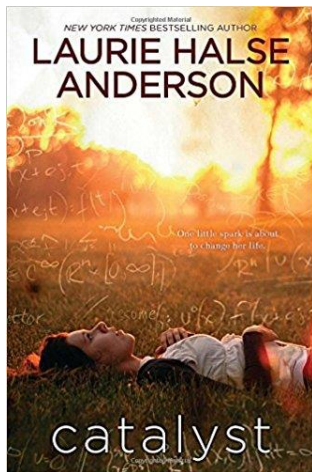
Alternative Choices for the Mature Reader

Begging for Change by Sharon Flake



Raspberry's determination to build a nest egg for herself and her mother leads to trouble. On two occasions, Raspberry steals cash from friends. Although she receives no actual punishment for her acts, she does have to bear the guilt and regret of knowing she has committed some serious breaches in trust. Readers who judge Raspberry harshly at first may have a change of heart as complex motives for the protagonist's impulsive behavior come to light. At times it may appear that Raspberry is trapped by her grim environment, yet the author pointedly implies that the teenager does have choices. Raspberry can give in to despair, like her errant, drug-addict father, or she can break the cycle of poverty, like her mother's boyfriend, Dr. Mitchell, who managed to escape the projects without compromising his integrity. Touching upon issues of prejudice, street violence, homelessness and identity crises, this poignant novel sustains a delicate balance between gritty reality and dream fulfillment.

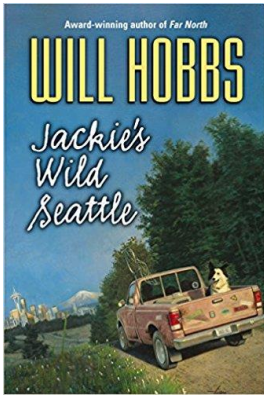
Catalyst by Laurie Halse Anderson



Meet Kate Malone—straight-A science and math geek, minister's daughter, ace long-distance runner, new girlfriend (to Mitchell "Early Decision Harvard" Pangborn III), unwilling family caretaker, and emotional avoidance champion. Kate manages her life by organizing it as logically as the periodic table. She can handle it all—or so she thinks. Then, things change as suddenly as a string of chemical reactions; first, the Malones' neighbors get burned out of their own home and move in. Kate has to share her room with her nemesis, Teri Litch, and Teri's little brother. The days are ticking down and she's still waiting to hear from the only college she applied to: MIT. Kate feels that her life is spinning out of her control—and then, something happens that truly blows it all apart.

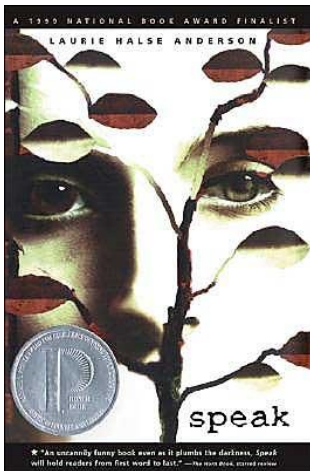
Alternative Choices for the Mature Reader

Jackie's Wild Seattle by Will Hobbs



How do you rescue a coyote trapped in the elevator of a downtown office building? How do you save an injured seal at the bottom of a cliff with the tide coming in? Fourteen-year-old Shannon and her younger brother, Cody, are about to find out as they spend a summer of breathless, sometimes reckless, often hilarious adventure visiting their uncle Neal at a wildlife center called *Jackie's Wild Seattle*. When Uncle Neal is injured, it's up to Shannon, Cody, and Sage, the rescue dog, to keep the circle of healing unbroken. Warning: this novel contains stories about animals.

Speak by Laurie Halse Anderson

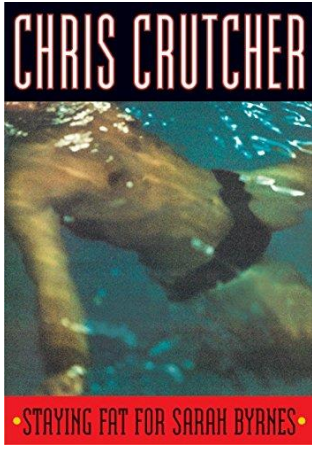


In a stunning first novel, Anderson uses keen observations and vivid imagery to pull readers into the head of an isolated teenager. Divided into the four marking periods of an academic year, the novel, narrated by Melinda Sordino, begins on her first day as a high school freshman. No one will sit with Melinda on the bus. At school, students call her names and harass her; her best friends from junior high scatter to different cliques and abandon her. Yet Anderson infuses the narrative with a wit that sustains the heroine through her pain and holds readers' empathy. A girl at a school pep rally offers an explanation of the heroine's pariah status when she confronts Melinda about calling the police at a summer party, resulting in several arrests. But readers do not learn why Melinda made the call until much later: a popular senior raped her that night and, because of her trauma, she barely speaks at all. Only

through her work in art class, and with the support of a compassionate teacher there, does she begin to reach out to others and eventually find her voice. Through the first-person narration, the author makes Melinda's pain palpable: "I stand in the center aisle of the auditorium, a wounded zebra in a National Geographic special."

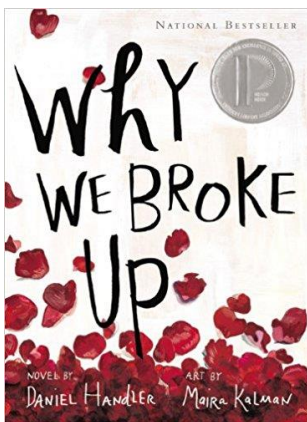
Alternative Choices for the Mature Reader

Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes by Chris Crutcher



A social outcast in junior high due to his excessive weight, narrator Eric Calhoun found a kindred spirit in Sarah Byrnes, whose face and hands were hideously disfigured in a childhood accident. Now a senior and considerably slimmed down through competitive swimming (though still aptly called "Moby"), Eric remains fiercely devoted to his friend, whose caustic tongue is her only protection from life's inequities. When Sarah abruptly stops talking and is committed to a mental ward, Eric is compelled to take action to help her, but quickly finds that he is in over his head. He risks their friendship by breaking his vow of secrecy and enlisting others' aid--help that comes from such unlikely quarters as a former bully, Eric's swim coach and, most surprisingly, his mother's seemingly wimpy boyfriend. A subplot centering on a self-righteous teammate drives home the point that nothing is as it appears on the surface, and leads to Eric being caught between his menacing vice-principal and the even more malevolent Mr. Byrnes--with spine-tingling results.

Why We Broke Up by Daniel Handler

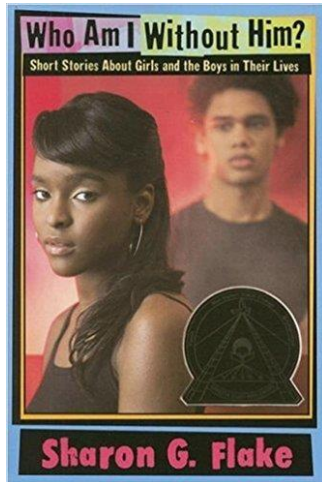


Min Green and Ed Slaterton are breaking up, so Min is writing Ed a letter and giving him a box. Inside the box is why they broke up. Two bottle caps, a movie ticket, a folded note, a box of matches, a protractor, books, a toy truck, a pair of ugly earrings, a comb from a motel room, and every other item collected over the course of a giddy, intimate, heartbreaking relationship. Item after item is illustrated and accounted for, and then the box, like a girlfriend, will be dumped.

Alternative Choices for the Mature Reader

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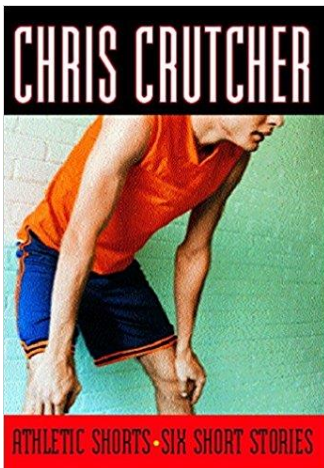
Who Am I Without Him? by Sharon Flake



Written in the vernacular of urban African-American teens, which Flake captures flawlessly, these 10 stories have universal themes and situations. Some are funny and uplifting; others, disturbing and sad. In "So I Ain't No Good Girl," a teen wants to be with a good-looking popular boy, so much so that she tolerates his disrespect and abuse. In "Wanted: A Thug," Melody writes to a columnist for advice on how to steal a friend's boyfriend, unaware that the friend is the columnist's younger sister. Two of the stories are told from a boy's point of view. The concluding story, "A Letter to My Daughter," in which an absent father gives his daughter his advice about boys and men is sad, poignant, and loving. Flake has a way of teaching a lesson without seeming to do so. Addressing issues and situations that many girls face in today's often complex society, this book is provocative and

thought-provoking.

Athletic Shorts by Chris Crutcher



If the stereotype of the "bonehead jock" is ever to be defeated, it will be at Crutcher's hands. In these six short stories, he and his athlete protagonists take on such weighty issues as racism, homophobia, sexism and the teenager's essential task of coming to terms with his parents. At the same time the author makes the world of sports compelling enough to engage even the most sedentary readers. Three of the stories revolve around characters featured in Crutcher's *The Crazy Horse Electric Game*, including the memorable eccentric known as Telephone Man. Also starring in his own story is Lionel Serbousek, the orphaned artist and swimmer of Stotan! In the book's final tale, Louie Banks (from *Running Loose*) is befriended by a young man with AIDS and must cope once again with the untimely death of a loved one.