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English 112B

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### The Strength of Relationships

The majority of novels and films tend to follow the structure of the heroes' journey and young adult novels are no exception. In the case of the heroes journey, there is a step where the main character meets with the mentor, and in young adult fiction this seems to play not only a crucial part for the main character (who is usually a teenager or similar) but makes for an essential part of who the character ends up becoming. This meeting with the mentor becomes, in many cases, the whole theme of the novel and points to a bigger life lesson such as the power of family and relationships.

The mentor in many cases isn't necessarily family or even related to the character, making him a perfect person to give unbiased help and advice. The mentor only wants to see the character grow and succeed and most of the time doesn't have an alternate agenda for himself to get ahead. This creates not only an unbiased and natural bond with the character, but the relationship seems genuine.

In contrast, there are many things that will drive families and relationships apart such as money and social status. It is ironic that in many novels the person or people who believe and accept the character are not their own family members. As stated before, the mentor often times isn't related to the character at all. This seems contradictory to what the concept of family is supposed to be, however this tends to be a reality not only in novels but in real life as well.

This idea of what defines family and how relationships are structured to help the character fascinates me. I kept seeing the same roles of mentors and friends helping out the

characters and in many instances the character was running away from an abusive family, or from a family that doesn't accept him/her. In young adult fiction, there seems to be an emphasis on relationships since teenagers are the ones who go through the most change during this time in their lives. They are trying to figure out who they can trust and who they can't and the bonds that these characters form give not only courage to all those who come from abusive families but hope to everyone that there are people out there who will support you and your ideas.

In the following list of novels I focused on the relationships that the main characters had and how it not only affected them, but how it motivated them, shaped their thinking, and ultimately how these relationships shaped the character as a whole.

## Annotated Bibliography

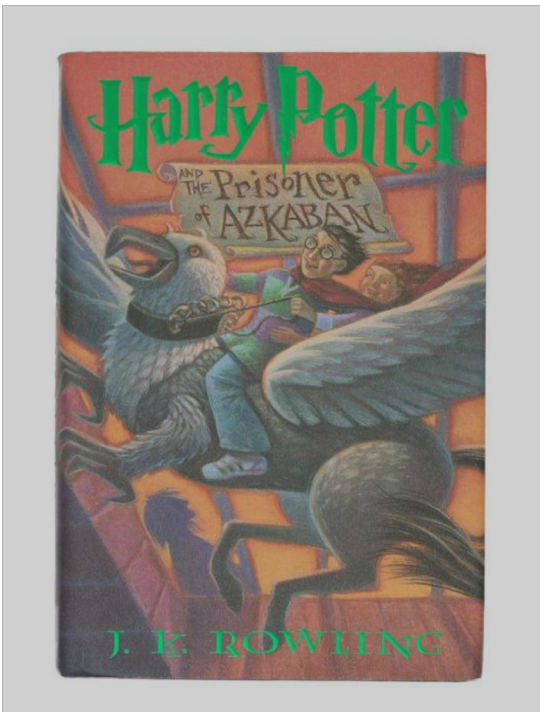
Andrews, Jesse. *ME AND EARL AND THE DYING GIRL*. New York: Amulet Books, 2012.  
Print



**Summary:** This novel is written from the perspective of Greg Gaines (main character). It is the story of how he meets this girl who has leukemia and how she shapes Greg's life and his view on death.

**Annotation:** The from the title you get exactly what this book is about. From a grammar perspective the list is wrong as it should be the dying girl, Earl, and I. However the novel is about Greg Gains and not the other two characters, thus why the title reflects this. Throughout the book Greg makes it explicit that he doesn't want any sort of relationship with anyone, even his best friend Earl, which he refers to as his business partner. However throughout the novel Greg realizes the importance of these relationships not through his parents but rather through this girl who is dying and only has a short amount of time to live. He realizes that there are people out there who will bring out the best in him and who will believe in his ideas even when he thinks they are dumb.

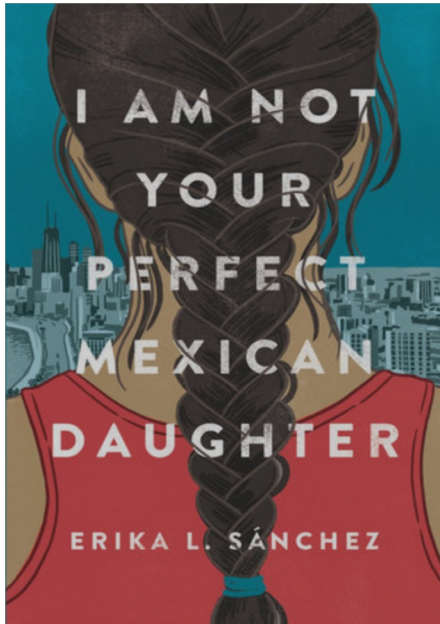
Rowling, J K. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. New York: Arthur A Levine Books, 1999. Print



**Summary:** Harry Potter returns to Hogwarts with the rumor that the feared Sirius Black has escaped Azkaban. There are rumors that he is going after Harry to possibly kill him. In the end of the novel it is revealed that Sirius Black was wrongfully imprisoned and that he is an ally to Harry Potter instead of an enemy, even though no one else seems to realize it and there is no way to prove it.

**Annotation:** The relationships that Harry has with his uncle and aunt isn't the greatest. In fact his uncle and aunt view him and all wizards as a disgrace and don't like Harry at all. However, his friends and even his mentor Dumbledore make up for the lack of parental figures in Harry's life. Not only this but his close circle of friends show Harry that they value him by helping him out in any way they can and also by sharing his beliefs when it can be to saving Sirius Black. Harry's friends chose to stand by his side even when others didn't and this not only motivated Harry to do good, but shaped his character as well.

Sanchez, Erika L. *I AM NOT YOUR PERFECT MEXICAN DAUGHTER*. New York: Random House LLC, 2017. Print



**Summary:** This is the story of Julia and her life in the aftermath of the death of her older sister Olga. The older sister seemed to embody everything that a perfect Mexican daughter was supposed to be and Julia was everything but that. She eventually gets depressed and get anxiety due to the pressure of trying to fill in the shoes of her older sister Olga. In the end she is able to overcome this with the help of family from Mexico and her family back in Chicago.

**Annotation:** The pressure of filling someone else shoes' and becoming something you are not is present in this novel. Not only that but she had the extra pressure of becoming this person who she thought her parents wanted her to be. This pressure is what ultimately drove her to try and commit suicide, and it is the unfortunate reality of many people today. There is this pressure to do well in many facets of life, such as school, work, and even pressure to have good realtionships with your parents friends etc. All of this pressure to become this perfect person often times does not end up well and only ends up hurting the person in the end. It is the relationships that don't care about these things that are

the most meanigful and the most important ones towards one own health and wellbeing.

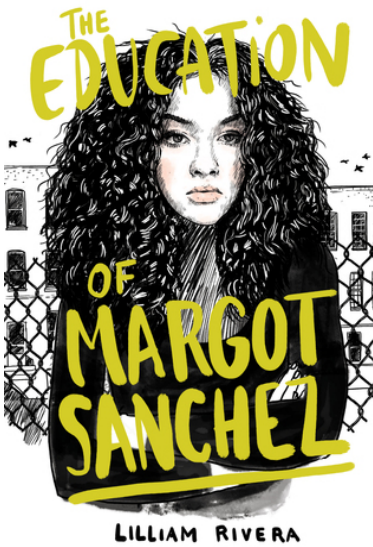
Keller, Nora-Ojka. *Fox Girl*. New York: Penguin Books, 2002. Print



**Summary:** This is the story of two girls, Hyun Jin and Sookie and their lives during the Korean War. They live in poverty and turn to a life of prostitution in order to get by. In the end Hyun Jin is able to escape and leave to Hawaii.

**Annotation:** In this novel both of the main characters (Hyun Jin and Sookie) have families but the familes don't seem to care for their wellbeing. This leads to both of them turning to a life of prositution. However their relationshipp with themselves grows stronger despite their terrible situations. Often times during the novel their freindship is the only thing that kept these girls going. Also despite her realtionship and disonwnment from her dad she was able to eventually care and show love for her child. Despite her propensity to be like her father she was able to overcome that and show her child a what it means to love and have a good relationship.

Rivera, Lilliam. *The Education of Margot Sanchez*. New York: Simon and Schuster publishing, 2017. Print



care about what others think about you.

**Summary:** This story is about Margot Sanchez who at the beginning of the novel moves into a new prep school. In order to try and fit in she decides to steal her dad's credit card and buy \$600 worth of clothes. Now she has to work during the summer to pay off her debt. Throughout the novel she faces the challenges of freindships as she often chooses popularity over her real friends and over being a good person.

**Annotation:** This story revolves around Margot and how she thinks her relationships will affect her. She believes that if she is associated with the right person/crowd she will be satisfied and happy. However, in the end she realizes that her friends and her family are those who not only want what is best for her but will tell her and will forgive her despite what she does. Her relationships end up changing her but for different reasons than she belives. Not only do they change her but she realizes the value of having people who actually care about you rather than people who only

De La Pena, Matt. *Mexican White Boy*. New York: Penguin Random house, 2008. Print



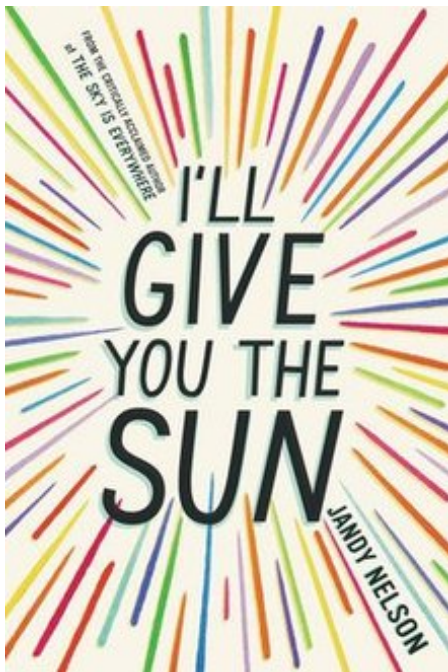
**Summary:** Danny is the protagonist of this novel and goes to a prep school of mostly white kids. He never feels like he fits in despite only having a slightly darker skin tone. He goes to stay with his cousin Sofia in Mexico city for a summer to try and find out why his dad left him and his mom. Danny is also a great baseball player and is talented enough to get signed by a college recruit but he has trouble focusing when he is on the mound. In the end he doesn't get signed but is ablet o focus and find his "pitch".

**Annotation:** There is a moment in the book where Danny has to trust what his friend Uno says about holding on to the pillar really tight. This scene shows the type of relationship that Danny has and the trust that he has for his friend. This trust is what eventually leads to Danny being able to focus on the mound where it seems is the only place that he feels like he

belongs. He doesn't know how to speak spanish so he feels he doesn't belong in Mexico, and his skin is dark enough to not fit in the prep school. Through his relationship with his friend Uno, he is able to see where exactly he fits in.



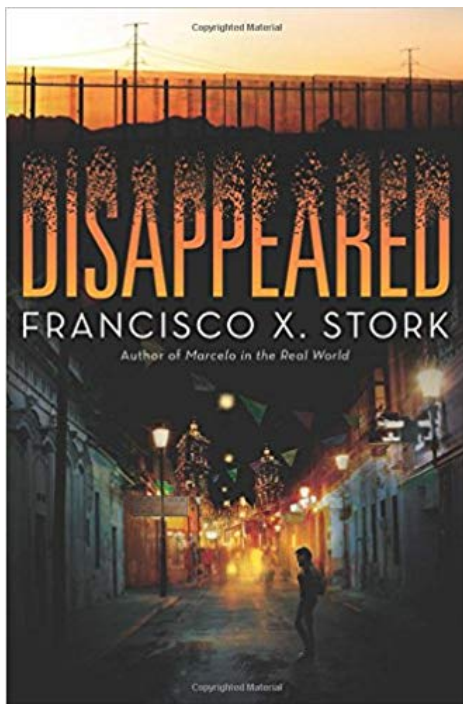
Nelson, Jandy. *I'll Give You the Sun*. New York: Penguin Group LLC, 2014. Print



**Summary:** This is the story of two fraternal twins, Noah(boy) and Jude(girl), and how they each were shaped by the death of their mother. Their sibling rivalry also leads to Noah almost committing suicide when he is drunk. While they both feel responsible for their mothers death, in the end they are able to talk it out and cope with their mothers death together.

**Annotation:** This story shows the destructive path that bad relationships can have. Even though they are family and are suppose to build each other up these twins let their rivalry get the best of them. On top of that they let something tragic (their mother's death) drive them apart instead of bringing them back together. They could have found comfort in each other knowing that the other would understand but their pride was too big. In the end they realised that together they are able to cope with not only their mothers death but with anything life throws at them. It was their relationship that saved their lives.

Stork, Francisco X. *Disappeared*. New York: Arthur A. Levin books, 2017. Print



**Summary:** This novel takes place over the course of one week and is from two different perspectives. The novel shifts from two siblings Sara and Emiliano. Sara is investigating the disappearance of her friend in Juarez by the cartel, while Emiliano is tempted with working for the same people that kidnapped Sara's friend. The novel takes place in Juarez, Mexico.

**Annotation:** This story is about the bond between family and whether that is stronger than the bond between a boy and his girlfreind. This story speaks towards the value of family and what place that should hold in a person's life. Should family always come first or should you be looking out for your wellfare too? This book addresses the balance one should have when it comes to family and also looking out for yourself. Emiliano seems to be stuck between his girlfriend and his sister while Sara is stuck between remembering and honoring thos women who are lost and her life. In both cases these siblings have a choice to

make between thinking about themselves and others. In the end there has to be a balance like with everything else in life.

Niven, Jennifer. *All the Bright Places*. New York: Penguin Random House LLC, 2015. Print.

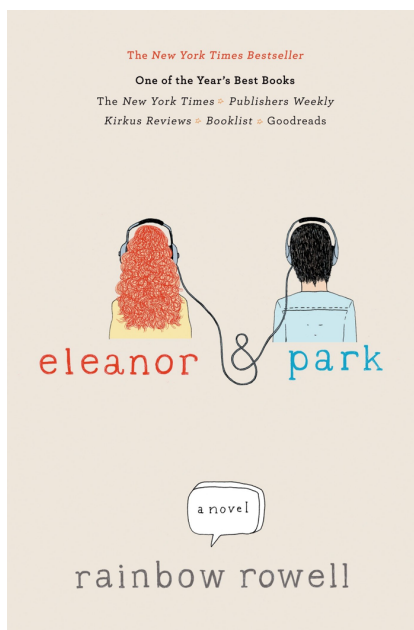


**Summary:** This novel is about two people, Finch and Violet. They meet when they are about to throw themselves off a window. Luckily they are able to convince the other not to do it. Violet is popular while Finch is not, and the difference in social class makes them an unlikely couple. As the novel progresses they end up in a relationship until Violet's parents catch them and say they can't meet up anymore. This gets Finch depressed and Finch ends up committing suicide. Violet is then left trying to deal with the repercussions and trying to convince herself that it wasn't her fault.

**Annotation:** This novel deals with topics such as suicide and does so with characters that experience situations beyond the typical. This gives this novel great exeter qualities and makes for a strong novel. Using rich characterization this novel is also able to show the effect that one person and one relationship can have on a person. It also shows that some things are unavoidable and that we shouldn't try to fix everything.

This novel does a great job of making the characters relatable while giving them situations interesting enough to keep the reader engaged.

Rowell, Rainbow. *Eleanor & Park*. New York: Saint Martin's Press, 2013. Print



**Summary:** The novel is about two teenagers who come from different backgrounds. Eleanor comes from an abusive home where her step father is an abusive drunk who emotionally and physically abuses Eleanor, her mother and her siblings. Park comes from a good home although he too has insecurities about himself and about the pressure from his parents to do well. These two teenagers meet and form a relationship and Park is eventually able to not only convince Eleanor to leave her family but drives her to her Uncle's house so she is able to be around a more stable family environment.

**Annotation:** This novel points out not only the difficulty of leaving your family if the relationship is abusive but also the possibility of doing it. In the novel Park's relationship with Eleanor is what allows her to finally leave her family in search of a better environment, one where her uncle and aunt support her and her school. This novel shows once again how one person can make a difference, and in this case Park not only makes a difference for Eleanor but for her whole family. Park was able to

make a difference in Eleanor's life and shaped the outcome of her life forever. Rainbow Rowell makes the characters grow emotionally and intellectually (as they are going through school) giving this novel strong characteristics.

## References

“All The Bright Places Summary”. *Shmoop.com*, accessed May 04, 2019. Web. Retrieved from:

<https://www.shmoop.com/all-the-bright-places/summary.html>

Nilsen, Alleen Pace et al. *Literature for Today's Young Adults 9<sup>th</sup> Edition*. New York: Pearson, 2013. Print