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Character Matters for Grades 7-8

Caring

Coman, Carolyn Many Stones.
After her sister Laura is murdered in South Africa, Berry and her estranged father travel there to participate in the dedication of a memorial in her name.

Konigsburg, E.L. Silent to the Bone.
When he is wrongly accused of gravely injuring his baby half-sister, thirteen-year-old Branwell loses his power of speech and his friend Connor reaches out to him to uncover the truth about what really happened.

Naylor, Phyllis R. Blizzard?s Wake.
In March of 1941, when a severe blizzard suddenly hits Bismarck, North Dakota, a girl trying to save her stranded father and brother inadvertently helps the man who killed her mother four years before.

Orlev, Uri The Man from the Other Side.
Living on the outskirts of the Warsaw Ghetto during World War II, fourteen-year-old Marek and his grandparents shelter a Jewish man in the days before the Jewish uprising.

Simmons, Michael Pool Boy.
When his father is arrested for insider trading and his family loses all their money, Brett takes a job as an assistant to a 70-something pool cleaner in his former wealthy California neighborhood and learns some valuable life lessons.

Zindel, Paul A Begonia for Miss Applebaum.
Discovering that their beloved former teacher Miss Applebaum is terminally ill, fifteen-year-old Henry and his friend Zelda accompany her on her excursions to the colorful parts of New York City and join her in confronting death with quiet courage.

Citizenship

Bauer, Joan Hope Was Here.

When sixteen-year-old Hope and the aunt who has raised her move from Brooklyn to Mulhoney, Wisconsin, to work as waitress and cook in the Welcome Stairways diner, they become involved with the diner owner's political campaign to oust the town's corrupt mayor.

DeFelice, Cynthia Lostman?s River.
In the early 1900s, thirteen-year-old Tyler encounters vicious hunters whose actions threaten to destroy the Everglades ecosystem and, as a result, joins the battle to protect that fragile environment.

Gutman, Dan The Kid Who Ran for President.
With his friend as campaign manager and his former babysitter as running mate, twelve-year-old Judson Moon sets out to become President of the United States.

Hobbs, Will The Maze.
Rick, a fourteen-year-old foster child, escapes from a juvenile detention facility near Las Vegas and travels to Canyonlands National Park in Utah where he meets a bird biologist working on a project to reintroduce condors to the wild.

Kehret, Peg Cages.
After losing an acting role and fighting with her alcoholic stepfather, Kit is arrested for shoplifting and ordered to work, as part of her sentence, at an animal shelter.

Myers, Walter Dean Handbook for Boys.
Sixteen-year-old Jimmy, on probation for assault, talks about life with three old men in a Harlem barbershop and hears about the tools he can use to get what he wants.

Naylor, Phyllis R. Patiently Alice.
The summer after ninth grade, Alice and her friends spend three weeks working as assistant counselors at a camp for disadvantaged children and cope with all kinds of changes.

Pfeffer, Susan Beth Thea at Sixteen.
As she seeks her niche in life, Thea becomes involved in volunteer work at the local hospital.

Smith, Roland The Last Lobo.
When Jake, a teenager, takes his grandfather on a visit to their Hopi tribal homeland in Arizona, he finds himself fighting to save an endangered Mexican wolf.

Wolff, Virginia Make Lemonade.
In order to earn money for college, fourteen-year-old LaVaughn babysits for a teenage mother.

Fairness

Cormier, Robert The Rag and Bone Shop.
Trent, an ace interrogator from Vermont, works to procure a confession from an introverted twelve-year-old accused of murdering his seven-year-old friend in Monument, Massachusetts.

Crutcher, Chris Running Loose.
Louie, a high school senior in a small Idaho town, learns about sportsmanship, love, and death as he matures into manhood.

Lee, Harper To Kill a Mockingbird.
A tough and tender novel of race, class, justice, and the pain of growing up told through the eyes of an eight-year-old girl.

Murphy, Claire Free Radical.
In Fairbanks, Alaska, in the middle of the summer Little League baseball season, fifteen-year-old Luke is stunned when his mother confesses that she is wanted by the FBI for her role in the death of a student during an anti-Vietnam War protest thirty years ago.

Oates, Joyce Big Mouth and Ugly Girl.
When sixteen-year-old Matt is falsely accused of threatening to blow up his high school and his friends turn against him, an unlikely classmate comes to his aid.

Honesty

Bennett, James W. Blue Star Rapture.
While attending a high-profile basketball camp, T.J. begins to re-think both his motivations and his actions in guiding his learning-disabled but athletically-gifted friend through the college recruitment process.

Cappo, Nan Cheating Lessons.
When her team is announced as one of the finalists in the state Classics Bowl contest, Bernadette suspects that cheating may have been involved.

Eyerly, Jeannette Angel Baker, Thief.
Fifteen-year-old Angel, released on probation to a foster family after being convicted of shoplifting, is anxious to make a fresh start and to be accepted by her new family and friends.

Goldman, E.M. Money to Burn.
Two teenage boys encounter opportunity and danger when they stumble upon $400,000 in drug money and decide to keep it.

Koss, Amy The Cheat.
When Sarah gets her hands on the answers to the eighth-grade geography midterm and decides to share them with some other students, the consequences are far-ranging.

Salisbury, Graham Shark Bait.
Twelve-year-old Mokes is torn between obeying his father, the police chief in the small town of Kailua, Hawaii, and being with his friends who plan to go see a fight between an island boy and a sailor.

Tomey, Ingrid Nobody Else Has to Know.

Fifteen-year-old Webber must either live with guilt or tell the truth about who was driving his grandfather's car when it struck and seriously injured a little girl.

Kindness

Bennett, Cherie Life in the Fat Lane.
Sixteen-year-old Lara, winner of beauty pageants and Homecoming Queen, is distressed and bewildered when people start acting differently when she gains weight.

Howe, James The Misfits.
Four students who do not fit in at their small-town middle school decide to create a third party for the student council elections to represent all students who have ever been called names.

Koss, Amy The Girls.
Each of the girls in a middle-school clique reveals the strong, manipulative hold one of the group exerts on the others, causing hurt and self-doubt among the girls.

Lawrence, Iain Ghost Boy.
Unhappy in a home seemingly devoid of love, a fourteen-year-old albino boy, who thinks of himself as Harold the Ghost, runs away to join the circus, where he works with the elephants and searches for a sense of who he is.

Sheldon, Dyan Tall, Thin, and Blonde.
During her first year in high school, Jenny finds out what true friends are when her best friend deserts her for the sake of belonging to a clique of pretty and popular girls.

Vail, Rachel Wonder.
Everything changes for twelve-year-old Jessica when she enters junior high school and finds herself a social outcast, ignored by all her former friends.

Waite, Judy Shopaholic.
Tired of household responsibilities and her mother's depression, Taylor allows a new friend to persuade her to buy things she can't afford but soon discovers that Kat has even more secrets than she has.

Loyalty

Borntrager, Mary Rebecca.
Becky is torn between her love for a Mennonite boy and loyalty to her parents and the traditions of her Amish church.

Crutcher, Chris Staying Fat for Sarah Byrnes.
The daily class discussions about the nature of man, the existence of God, abortion, organized religion, suicide and other contemporary issues serve as a backdrop for a high-school senior's attempt to answer a friend's dramatic cry for help.

Lavender, William Just Jane: A Daughter of England Caught in the Struggle of the American Revolution.
Fourteen-year-old Jane Prentice, orphaned daughter of an English earl, arrives in Charleston, South Carolina, in 1776 to find her family and her loyalties divided over the question of American independence.

Soto, Gary Taking Sides.
Fourteen-year-old Lincoln Mendoza, an aspiring basketball player, must come to terms with his divided loyalties when he moves from the Hispanic inner city to a white suburban neighborhood.

Staples, Suzanne Dangerous Skies.
Hypocrisy and prejudice twist events in such a way as to implicate two children, one from a prominent white family and the other an Afro-American, in a murder.

Walters, Eric War of the Eagles.
Jed?s best friend, Tadashi, is sent to an internment camp after the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Respect

Avi Nothing But the Truth.
A ninth-grader's suspension for singing "The Star-Spangled Banner" during homeroom becomes a national news story.

Bargar, Gary Life. Is. Not. Fair.
Louis and his aunt are startled and upset when a black family moves next door to their Kansas City home in 1958, but Louis soon recognizes that his new neighbor is a more reliable friend than the group of junior high "cools" with whom he had hoped to be friends.

Jones, Ron The Acorn People.
When a college student gets a job working with severely physically handicapped youngsters, he discovers that they can teach him far more about life than he ever learned in a classroom.

Klass, Sheila Kool Ada.
When Ada, a tough, street-fighting transplant from coal mining country to the Chicago slums, gets the no-nonsense Ms. Walker as a teacher, she learns that there are other ways to stand up for yourself.

Myers, Walter Dean Won?t Know Till I Get There.
Fourteen-year-old Stephen, his new foster brother, and his friends are sentenced to help out at an old age home for the summer after Stephen is caught writing graffiti on a train.

Spinelli, Jerry Stargirl.
In this story about the perils of popularity, the courage of nonconformity, and the thrill of first love, an eccentric student named Stargirl changes Mica High School forever.

Yep, Laurence The Star Fisher.
Fifteen-year-old Joan Lee and her family find the adjustment hard when they move from Ohio to West Virginia in the 1920s.

Responsibility

Cooney, Caroline Driver?s Ed.
Three teenagers' lives are changed forever when they thoughtlessly steal a stop sign from a dangerous intersection and a young mother is killed in an automobile accident there.

Fine, Anne Flour Babies.
When his class of underachievers is assigned to spend three torturous weeks taking care of their own "babies" in the form of bags of flour, Simon makes amazing discoveries about himself while coming to terms with his long-absent father.

Fine, Anne The Tulip Touch.
Natalie, who lives in the large hotel managed by her father, has a dangerous friendship with Tulip, the wildly uncontrollable girl on a neighboring farm.

Fleischman, Paul Whirligig.
While traveling to each corner of the country to build a whirligig in memory of the girl whose death he causes, sixteen-year-old Brian finds forgiveness and atonement.

Flinn, Alexandra Breathing Underwater.
Sent to counseling for hitting his girlfriend, Caitlin, and ordered to keep a journal, sixteen-year-old Nick recounts his relationship with Caitlin, examines his controlling behavior and anger, and describes living with his abusive father.

Koja, Kathe Buddha Boy.
Justin spends time with Jinsen, the unusual and artistic new student whom the school bullies torment and call Buddha Boy, and ends up making choices that impact Jinsen, himself, and the entire school.

McDonald, Joyce Swallowing Stones.
Dual perspectives reveal the aftermath of seventeen-year-old Michael MacKenzie's birthday celebration during which he discharges an antique Winchester rifle and unknowingly kills the father of high school classmate Jenna Ward.

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