

## Therapeutic Books for Teens

Recommendations by Misty Wilson, @read.fine.print

### The One and Only Ivan

- **Summary:** A gorilla lives in a small enclosure with only a stray dog and a nearby elephant to keep him company. The elephant dies soon after a baby elephant arrives, and Ivan promises her she won't live there forever. He has to do amazing things to keep this promise.
- **Themes:** anger, true family (not necessarily your blood relatives), boldness
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - Who was Ivan's family?
  - How did he protect Ruby? Do you think he was sad that he couldn't see Ruby anymore?
  - Who is your family? Is there someone in your family who lives far away?
  - Who is Ivan's family at the end of the book? How do you think he felt when he joined the others? How do you think they felt?
  - Have you ever had to join a new group of friends or family?
  - When Ivan got mad, what do you think he could do? Why did he hardly ever get mad?
  - If he got mad more often, how do you think Stella and Ruby and Bob would've felt?

### American Panda

- **Summary:** A Taiwanese American girl goes to college and questions everything her parents taught her. She meets a boy she likes but he's Japanese, she wants to study dance instead of medicine, she wants to get to know her estranged brother. Mature content: profanity, dirty jokes
- **Themes:** Taiwanese culture, doing what's right vs. family loyalty, obedience
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - How do your family's traditions differ from Mei's family's?
  - How would you have behaved differently from Mei in college?
  - What Taiwanese customs surprised you?
  - When you are a parent what do you think will be hard about watching your kid grow up?

### The War That Saved My Life

- **Summary:** Nine-year-old Ada escapes her mother's abuse when children are shipped out of London because of the war. She flourishes in the home of a lady named Susan, and Ada begins to understand more about what life is really about. Mature content: abuse, neglect
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - What sort of hardships did Ada endure?
  - Do you think she took good care of her brother? Do you take care of your siblings?
  - Could you have been strong enough to try to walk on your foot?
  - How was Susan different from Ada's mom? What kind of mom do you want to be when you grow up?

- Why did Ada keep thinking Susan was going to hurt her? Why do you think it was so hard for Ada to trust Susan?
- Is it hard for you to trust people? Who do you trust?

### **Bud, Not Buddy**

- **Summary:** Bud is a foster kid at the beginning of the story, and he is treated terribly so he runs away. On the road during the Great Depression, Bud meets hunger, other homeless people, and charity. In the end he finds his actual family.
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - Have you ever felt alone like Bud?
  - Bud didn't tell people about bad things that had been done to him. Do you keep secrets like that? How do you decide what to tell people and what to keep a secret?
  - Who did Bud eventually trust in the story? Who do you trust?
  - If Bud never found his family in the end, what should he have done to be safe?
  - This story was set during the Great Depression. What is that exactly?

### **Fever 1793**

- **Summary:** A young girl matures over the summer of 1793, when yellow fever devastates her town and her family. She learns how to work hard and how to be independent when her family is ripped apart by the illness.
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - What things are important to Mattie at the beginning of the story?
  - What is important to her by the end of the story? Do you think she treasures different things?
  - Do you think you could be as strong as Mattie?

### **The Summer of Broken Things**

- **Summary:** Two completely opposite girls go on a trip to Italy together. They have to learn how to get along when they find out they are actually half-sisters.
- **Themes:** getting along with people who are different, not being selfish, not judging people based on their looks
- **Critical Thinking Questions:**
  - Why did Avery and Kayla have such a hard time getting along? Do you know someone who is very different from you? How do you get along with them?
  - Who tended to be more selfish in this story? Who was more self-LESS? Which one are you? How can you be more selfless?
  - Why didn't Avery like Kayla? What did Avery judge Kayla on? Do you ever like or dislike people based on their looks or the way they dress? Is this right or wrong?