

# Top 10 books about adopted and fostered children

## 1. **The High House** by Honor Arundel

Emma and her older brother Richard are orphaned by a car crash, and Emma comes to Edinburgh to live with her Aunt Patsy, an artist who keeps irregular hours, celebrates the occasional cheque with wine and parties with her students. It's a far cry from prim Emma's old life in the suburbs, and her slow adaptation to a new way of life is portrayed with heart and skill.

## 2. **Jacqueline Wilson's [Tracy Beaker series](#)**

One of the most popular children's series of the last 20 years, it spawned a television series, a film and a video game. Uncompromisingly unsentimental, Tracy is an angry girl who ricochets between a children's home known as the "dumping ground" and foster parents, longing for her inadequate mother, and severely testing potential substitutes.

## 3. **Wintle's Wonders (later renamed [Dancing Shoes](#))** by Noel Streatfeild

I could easily have chosen Streatfeild's classic [Ballet Shoes](#), but I prefer the lesser known Wintle's Wonders. Twice-orphaned Hilary is blessed with a sunny nature and a talent for dancing, and a devoted adopted sister, Rachel, who is determined that Hilary should have the chance to train to be a ballerina, despite their adoption by Aunt Cora who runs a very different sort of dancing school. The focus of the book is mostly Rachel's misguided and misunderstood attempts to protect Hilary from a future of high kicks and cartwheels and it is only at the end of the book that we see Hilary's response to her twice-orphaned state. She plans to marry young and have "lots and lots of children". "It seems a waste of talent," says Rachel, but Hilary is determined. "What's nicer than babies?" says the girl who lost two mothers by the age of 10.

## 4. **[Wuthering Heights](#)** by Emily Bronte

When Mr Earnshaw returns from a trip to Liverpool with a "dirty, ragged black-haired child" that he has found starving on the street, his family react

with horror at the intrusion of this “gipsy brat”. Heathcliff might have had a chance if Mr Earnshaw had survived longer, but he is vulnerable to abuse when his foster father dies, and this unleashes a passionate story of love and hatred that tears a family apart.

#### **5. Anne of Green Gables by LM Montgomery**

“You would cry, too, if you were an orphan and had come to a place you thought was going to be home and found that they didn’t want you because you weren’t a boy. Oh, this is the most tragical thing that ever happened to me!” So says red-headed orphan, Anne when she discovers that the elderly Cuthbert siblings were expecting a boy to help with the farm work, and got her instead. Luckily her spirit and personality win over their hearts, and she finds a home in Avonlea.

#### **6. Close Your Pretty Eyes by Sally Nicholls**

Olivia has been in care since she was five, and is just entering her sixteenth placement. She tests every new foster parent to their limit, in a self-destructive cycle that she can’t escape. Will things be different when she goes to live with single father Jim and his children? There are hopeful signs, until Olivia becomes convinced that the house is haunted by the ghost of notorious baby farmer Amelia Dyer.

#### **7. Blood Family by Anne Fine**

Edward’s first years are horrific – neglect, violence and imprisonment. His rescue and adoption seem to be a complete success, but as he reaches adolescence his past surfaces, and seems about to destroy him.

#### **8. A Series of Unfortunate Events by Lemony Snicket**

Were there ever orphans more unfortunate than the Baudelaires? In *The Bad Beginning*, they are swiftly orphaned and given over to the guardianship of their evil uncle, Count Olaf, who makes them do all the household chores and is only interested in getting his hands on their fortune. In the 14-book series, things go from bad to worse, but luckily the Baudelaire siblings are resourceful and loyal.

#### **9. From Where I Stand by Tabitha Suzuma**

Raven is a troubled teenage boy, placed in care after his mother's death. Slowly he trusts a new friend enough to draw her into his hunt for his mother's killer – but can Raven's word be trusted?

**10. Saffy's Angel by Hilary McKay**

Saffy doesn't even realise that she was adopted by her aunt and uncle, until one fateful day when she looks at the paint chart where all the children's names come from and realises that hers is not there. So begins a quest to discover her past, which takes her to Italy and uncovers some big secrets. First in the wonderful Casson family series.