

Top 10 books with turning points for teens

I'm thrilled to be sharing some of my favourite books involving a turning point for a teen – and at the same time, celebrating what I believe to be some of the best YA books around right now.

1. [The Last Leaves Falling](#) by Sarah Benwell

One of my favourite 2015 debuts, Sarah Benwell's beautiful and heartbreaking book features Japanese teenager Sora who is diagnosed with ALS (known in the UK as motor neurone disease). Sora's story is about rising above the limitations imposed by his illness and finding strength in both the ancient wisdom of the Samurai and the current support of his two best friends. When Sora realises exactly what he has to do, and takes control of his life, he makes a decision that none of us would *ever* want to face.

2. [Apple and Rain](#) by Sarah Crossan

Sometimes a turning point is a moment when a character knows what they have to do. Sometimes it is about outside events forcing decisions on them. In Sarah Crossan's beautiful *Apple and Rain*, it is about main character Apple finding that the fantasy life she has imagined she will have when her long lost mum comes back for her is not matched by the reality. When her mum finally does come back, she has brought something (or someone) with her that makes Apple question everything she's ever believed, and forces her to reassess her new life completely.

3. [Two Boys Kissing](#) by David Levithan

This book is possibly my favourite LGBTQ book on the YA bookshelves right now. It is not so much about a turning point, but about *all* the turning points. The boy who hasn't come out to his parents but decides to do a record-breaking 32-hour kiss with his ex-boyfriend. The boy who can't connect with real people any more and makes a devastating decision after his parents discover his guilty secret. The parents who know they have to accept their child or lose him forever. The trans boy who is brave enough to bare his soul to his new love. The turning round and facing the bullies. This

book has it all, and every single word of it is beautiful and heart-breaking and perfect.

4. [Boys Don't Cry](#) by Malorie Blackman

You don't get much more of a turning point than opening your front door and being handed a baby you never knew existed. *Your* baby. That's what happens to Dante in Malorie Blackman's wonderful book. But this story isn't only about Dante's struggle to come to terms with fatherhood. It's also about the horrific homophobia faced by his brother Adam, whose story is intertwined with Dante's. Emotional, intense and – as you would expect from a writer of this calibre – beautifully crafted, this is a book which I would give to everyone to read if I could. Boys might not cry, but this reader certainly did!

5. [The Art of Being Normal](#) by Lisa Williamson

Another of my favourite debuts, Lisa Williamson's ground-breaking book features David Piper – the boy whose parents think is gay and who the bullies call a freak. Only his best friends know the truth – that he wants to be a girl. Running alongside David's narrative is Leo's – whose only wish is to be invisible. What the two teenagers have in common, and the turning point that brings their lives together and unites them in their bravery, is a moment that had me cheering from my seat. A fantastic book in the LGBTQ stable.

6. [7 Days](#) by Eve Ainsworth

Eve Ainsworth's gritty contemporary debut novel explores bullying from two sides of the story. To Jess, the beautiful and popular Kez is everything she wants to be. To Kez, Jess is everything she loathes – a victim. During the course of one week, events escalate rapidly – leading to a violent and shocking confrontation between the two girls which leaves Kez with a sudden and deadly realisation of what she has become. Kez's turning point begins the unravelling of her protective armour, while Jess's turning point leads to a growth in her own inner strength and a realisation that she is no longer a victim. *Seven Days* takes a bold line, showing – in a life-changing way – that bullying doesn't necessarily have just one victim.

7. [All of the Above](#) by James Dawson

James Dawson's new YA book isn't out till later this year, but I was lucky enough to be given an early read of it. Cool, modern and witty, the book charts the life and loves of Toria, Nico and Polly – and explores the blurry edges of the lines between love and friendship. I'm proud to be sharing the UK YA LGBTQ corner with James, and this book is a great addition to it. Toria's dawning realisation that things aren't exactly how she'd thought makes her take a turn in her life that she had *never* expected or planned to take.

8. [This is Not A Love Story](#) by Keren David

Keren David's *This is Not a Love Story* is a story about love, rather than a conventional romance. It's a book which asks questions about young love, what it is, how we find it, and, most of all, how we kid ourselves about what we want. New to Amsterdam, Kitty and Theo explore their own hearts as they discover their new city. Theo's turning point comes when someone shows him unexpected understanding and kindness, while for Kitty, the crucial twist in fate is far more painful.

9. [The Knife that Killed Me](#) by Anthony McGowan

The Knife that Killed Me is a very dark, tense thriller, set in a tough inner city comprehensive. It's about the terrible consequences that follow on from the decision of narrator, 15-year old Paul Varderman, to carry a knife. The story has a feeling of tragic inevitability. As you're reading it, you're convinced you know who's going to die, and who's going to be doing the killing. But then McGowan suddenly pulls the rug from under you, and reveals that everything you thought you knew was wrong, and that a "death" can mean more than just a body lying in a desolate field.

10. [Close Your Pretty Eyes](#) by Sally Nicholls

I am a long-standing fan of Sally Nicholls' books, and this is probably my favourite. Creepy and dark, the story charts the life of foster child Olivia, who begins the book in her 19th foster placement. The turning point for her is about realising that the destructive defensiveness which she has always used to protect herself might not be as powerful as a decision to open herself to the risks of being part of a family and allowing herself to be loved and cared for. Sometimes the bravest thing is admitting that we need others.

