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One thing I have always loved about reading is that when it comes to books, there are endless choices. No matter what mood you're in, there's a book to match it. Even better, as I have grown as a reader, my ability to understand and enjoy more complicated subjects has increased. It's also fun to go backwards and read books for younger readers. When I'm in the mood for something that I know will have a cozy, uncomplicated ending, I head over to the children's and young adult area.

My most recent reads were a 15-hour audio book about the Great Depression, a murder mystery about dysfunctional marriages, and a novella about a very lonely and unhappy woman. Sometimes after all that doom and gloom, you just want something that's lighter and easier on your mind.

The thought of children's books might make you think of "Captain Underpants" or "Charlotte's Web," but today's juvenile and young adult books can be complicated and contemporary. Many classic themes remain the same; friendship, adventure, and coming-of-age are timeless. However, contemporary fiction for young people addresses some of society's most pressing topics.

Here are a few novels for children that are great for readers of all ages:

"George" and "Rick" by Alex Gino. Feeling like you fit in is a challenge for everyone, no matter how old you are. George was born a boy but knows in her heart that she is a girl. This sweet and poignant story recalls George's journey to admitting her true identity. The attitude of her friends and teachers will especially warm your heart. "Rick," which includes some of the same characters, including George, is about a character who is less sure of his own identity. Like a lot of us, Rick struggles to hear his own inner voice and block out what our peers are telling us we should be. Besides being excellent stories about strong characters, both of these books set good examples for how adults can care for and listen to the young people in our lives.

"Genesis Begins Again" by Alicia D. Williams. The cover of this book has three distinctive awards on it including the Newbery Honor so I had a feeling I was going to enjoy it. Thirteen-year-old Genesis' internal voice has come up with 96 reasons she dislikes herself. It doesn't help when the voices outside of her head repeat some of the same negative messages. Having the confidence to let the positive outweigh the negative takes a lot of strength but Genesis is determined to find it.

Here are a few books for teens from the KTL shelves that I recommend:

"Last Night at the Telegraph Club" by Malinda Lo. My teenage daughter chose this one for me and she has good taste! Seventeen-year-old Lily is questioning her sexual identity as she grows up in Chinatown in the mid-1950s. Between a fear of communism and homophobia, Lily risks everything to become her true self. With elements of historical fiction, this book explores a time and place in America I hadn't read much about before.

"Hearts, Strings and Other Unbreakable Things" by Jacqueline Firkins. For her senior year of high school, orphaned Edie Price lives with her aunt, uncle, and two cousins in a wealthy Boston suburb. She finds herself torn between two boys: Sebastian, the typical "boy next door," and Henry, a bad-boy with a questionable reputation. Balancing her grief for her mother with her new circumstances and two chances at love, this book manages to achieve the fairy tale ending readers are rooting for.

“Hattie Big Sky” by Kirby Larson. I’ve read a lot of pioneer stories over the years and this novel was notably different from the others. Written from the first-person perspective of 16-year-old Hattie Brooks, the book takes on different aspects of the typical frontier story. For one thing, the book takes place in 1917 when the American West was still growing but the country faced the prospect of war in Europe. Hattie’s quest to find a home, make connections, and become financially independent is a great story. Even better, there’s a sequel called “Hattie Ever After.”

The next time you’re at the library, we encourage you to wander all the shelves. There’s lots of interesting titles in every area of the building. Be sure to let us know what you enjoyed reading; we always looking for a good recommendation!