

Recommended Reading For Adolescents

Blomquist, Geraldine M. Coping As a Foster Child. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1991. From School Library Journal

Grade 8-11-- An accurate, in-depth look at several teens in foster care, presented through case studies. Included are explanations of the variety of options available, their specific purposes, and reasons behind placement in each. Successes as well as failures are showcased as readers are given a closer look at therapeutic foster homes, adoption placements and rejections, independent living programs, and mutual care for unwed teen mothers and their infants. A one-page bibliography includes both fiction and nonfiction titles. The "Helping Resources" section gives relevant hotlines and agency addresses. This readable account offers the necessary facts for researchers while doubling as a self-help resource for teens facing similar situations. The adolescents speak eloquently and often with a wisdom beyond their years as they share their current plights and hopes for the future. In comparison, Kathlyn Gay's *Adoption and Foster Care* (Enslow, 1990) offers a factual overview/analysis that shifts into a heavier emphasis on adoption, while Margaret Hyde's *Foster Care and Adoption* (Watts, 1982; o.p.) puts more emphasis on foster care, but from a somewhat impersonal, although candid, perspective.

Cohen, Shari. Coping With Being Adopted. New York: The Rosen Publishing Group, 1988. From School Library Journal

Grade 8 Up Cohen uses a varied format of prototypical scenarios, generous quotations, and lists to offer positive, practical advice on topics such as feelings of favoritism between siblings, resolving conflict, and the pros and cons of searching for birth parents. Topics of general interest are included, and the chapter which explores the search for identity will be helpful to all teenagers, adopted or not. There is a good balance between the feelings and concerns of adopted teenagers and those of adoptive parents. While not minimizing any concerns, Cohen shows readers that they are not alone. Central to her message is the advice that putting the past into perspective will help readers to go forward in the future. A valuable resource.

Duprau, J. Adoption: The Facts, Feelings, and Issues of a Double Heritage. New York: Julian Messner, 1990.

From School Library Journal

Grade 7 Up-- This modest-sized, clearly written revision of a 1981 title is excellent in presenting the concerns of adopted people who--however diverse their individual stories--have in common a double heritage from which they derive their identities. At the heart of the adoption stories are complicated emotions and crucial themes; DuPrau is evenhanded and sensitive in presenting these issues and in acknowledging that contemporary adoptees come from many races and nations. A third of the book is devoted to the dilemmas that invariably occur when adopted people want to meet their birth parents or in cases of open adoption, in which the birth mother knows the adoptive family and keeps some contact with her child. Included is a brief list of sources for pregnancy and adoption counseling, locating maternity homes, and contacting adoptee search organizations. The brief bibliography includes no recently published titles, and the incomplete citation of research discussed in the book is regrettable. In spite of these flaws, this is a fine book for young-adult collections.

Gorbett, Danae. Adopted Teens Only: A Survival Guide to Adolescence, 2007.

Product Description

All adopted teens have questions—questions about their adoptive family, about their birth parents, and about how adoption has affected and will continue to affect their lives. But not every adopted teen knows how to approach these questions or how to handle the intense emotions and high stress often

associated with them.

This guide has answers. Based on true stories, extensive research, and Danae Gorbett's own in addition to her background in psychology and education, *Adopted Teens Only* delivers:

- Suggestions for bringing up sensitive topics with all types of adoptive parents
- Insight on what your adoptive parents might be going through
- True stories of birth mothers
- Practical information on whether and how to search for birth parents
- Seasoned advice on what to expect and how to prepare for reuniting with a birth parent.

Gorbett offers confirmation that what you feel, think, wonder, and worry about as an adopted teen is normal and important, and she helps you acknowledge and celebrate the unique gifts and many advantages of growing up adopted.

Comforting, empowering, and ultimately practical, *Adopted Teens Only* is the indispensable survival guide for adopted adolescents and anyone who loves them.

Gravelle, Karen and Fischer, Susan. Where Are My Birth Parents? A Guide for Teenage Adoptees. New York: Walker and Company, 1994.

Grade 9-12-- This valuable manual is for teenagers wishing to reunite with their birth parents, those who do not want to search, and those who are unsure of their feelings. It's of great practical and emotional benefit. The authors treat the adoption experience respectfully and tactfully; their writing is direct and free of jargon. Throughout the book, equal attention is given to biological and adoptive families, fathers, mothers, and siblings. The authors candidly acknowledge the anger, rage and frustration each person must feel. Foreign-born and mixed-race adoptees will need additional information beyond this solid, helpful beginning. Included are lists of search and support groups in the U. S. and abroad and counseling centers. A temperate and realistic book, this is an important addition to YA collections.

Kremetz, Jill. How It Feels to Be Adopted. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1988.

19 boys and girls, from age 8 - 16 and from every social background, confide their feelings about this crucial fact.

Nerlove, Evelyn. Who Is David? A Story of an Adopted Adolescent and His Friends. New York: Child Welfare League of America, 1985.

From School Library Journal

Grade 7-9 David Brooks feels angry, afraid and alienated about being adopted. These feelings, which he is unable to discuss with his parents, cause antisocial behavior. Joining a discussion group composed of other adopted teenagers is pivotal to his emotional development and gradual acceptance of himself. The story, which follows David from age 13 to age 18, reads more like a case study than a novel, and David is too wooden and lifeless to involve readers. The other adolescents in the group are equally one-dimensional prototypes of adoptees with emotional conflicts. The inclusion of much extraneous material about David's sexual awakening is awkward and does not further plot development. (Moreover, his father's instruction in the use of condoms is inappropriate for the book's intended readership.) The style, particularly the dialogue, is stiff and didactic. This story fails as a novel and as bibliotherapy.

Bailey, Julie Jarrell and Lynn Giddens. The Adoption Reunion Survival Guide: Preparing

Yourself for the Search, Reunion and Beyond , 2001.

Product Description

Using real-life examples, this compassionate guide helps adoptees and their birth mothers decide whether or not to try to locate each other, prepare for a reunion, survive the emotional turbulence of the initial meeting, and avoid common pitfalls. Since the legal issues surrounding the process can vary greatly from one state to another, the book includes an overview of pertinent laws, along with practical suggestions for navigating through them.

Brodzinsky, David' Achechter, Marshall; Henig, Robin. Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self, 1992.

From Kirkus Reviews

A rather thin volume that nevertheless will reassure adoptees that it is usual for questions about adoption and birth parents to persist throughout life. Using Erik Erikson's stages of life as a framework, Brodzinsky (Psychology/Rutgers) and Schechter (Psychiatry/Univ. of Pennsylvania), here writing with Henig (Your Premature Baby, 1983, etc.), call upon years of experience as researchers and counselors in the field of adoption to describe the continual adjustments that adoptees make as they grow from infancy to old age. Most moving is the litany of losses that move adoptees to grieve, often unknowingly. Even infants only a few months old show signs of mourning their first caretakers. Later, the authors say, adoptees may confront the loss not only of a birth family but of a personal and genetic history. The latter is particularly painful when it is time for young adults to begin their own families. Such life crises often kick off a search for birth parents. But the book's authority is undermined by what the authors frankly admit is the rapidly changing environment of adoption, where secrecy and shame are now rarely invoked and searches are often unnecessary. Open adoption-- in which the birth mother is known to and is often closely attached to the adoptive family--and increasingly available birth records eliminate the information gap that most often causes stress in adopted families (although open adoption may create its own set of stresses, the authors point out). Replete with anecdotal material, this offers few new insights but does lay out issues of development that only adoptees face over the course of life.

Eldridge, Sherrie. Twenty Things Adopted Kids Want Their Adoptive Parents to Know, 1999.

From Library Journal

As both an adoptee and president of Jewel Among Jewels Adoption Network, Eldridge brings an original approach to the topic of adoption. In an attempt to inform adoptive parents of the unique issues adoptees face, she discusses adoptee anger, mourning, and shame and adoption acknowledgment while using case studies to illustrate how parents can better relate to their adopted child. This book is solidly written but not without its flaws; most importantly, it lacks information concerning child development, e.g., whether parents should use the same approach to questions with a three-year-old as with a 14-year-old. Still, this book will go well in any collection dealing with adoption, complementing David M. Brodzinsky's *Being Adopted: The Lifelong Search for Self* (Anchor, 1993) and Joyce Maguire Pavao's *The Family of Adoption* (Beacon, 1998). AMee-Len Hom, Hunter Coll. Lib., New York
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Eldridge, Sherrie. Twenty Life Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make, 2003.

Product Description

No matter how loving your adoptive home, growing up adopted presents unique challenges—challenges the majority of adoptees don't talk about.

Were you adopted as an infant or child? If so, imagine what it would be like to attend a gathering of all adoptees. What would you ask them? Author Sherrie Eldridge says adoptees might ask each other:

· Do you ever feel alone? □ · Do you struggle with fears of rejection? □ · Do you have a special place in

your heart for your birth parents? □ · Do you know who to trust? □ · Do you have a good self-image? □ · Do you feel like you don't belong? □ · Do you ever think about a reunion with your birth family? Sherrie Eldridge has interviewed more than seventy adoptees, who transparently share their stories in *Twenty Life-Transforming Choices Adoptees Need to Make*, a book for adoptees and by adoptees. This book is a celebration of adoption based on the fact that adoption can teach some of life's deepest and richest lessons.

Upon hearing the stories of others, you will realize you're not alone but are instead in the company of an incredible bunch of people who will inspire you to make life choices that propel you to become all you were created to be. □ □ **About the Author** □ SHERRIE ELDRIDGE is a reunited adoptee, an internationally known speaker, and the author of four adoption workbooks as well as the highly acclaimed *Twenty Things Adopted Kids Wish Their Adoptive Parents Knew*. Sherrie and her husband, Bob, live in Fishers, Indiana, and have two married daughters and four grandchildren.

Gediman, Judith and Linda Brown. Birth Bond: Reunions Between Birth parents and Adoptees - What Happens After, 1991.

From Publishers Weekly

In 36 interviews with women who relinquished their children to adoption, the authors present anecdotal documentation of what happens when birth mothers and their children meet. The case histories are bittersweet. For some, reunion provides enrichment and release from guilt; for others the event is wrenching, especially when it occurs in the adoptee's adult life. In considering the many facets of adoption—including the views of birth fathers, adoptive parents, grandparents—the authors of this helpful study allow us to hear voices and attitudes that could change future adoption practices in this country. Gediman is a Connecticut-based marketing consultant; Brown is legislative director of American Adoption Congress.

John, Jaiya. Black Baby, White Hands: A View From the Crib, 2001.

Product Description

July 15, 1968. It is only three months following the assassination of Martin Luther King, Jr., and the nation is burning. Black and White America are locked in the tense grip of massive change. Into this inferno steps an unsuspecting young White couple. Neither significantly knew even a single African American person while growing up. Now, a child will change all of that forever. In this fateful moment, a Black baby becomes perhaps the first in the history of New Mexico to be adopted by a White family. Here is a brazenly honest glimpse into the mind and heart of that child, a true story for the ages that flows like a soulful river—separated from his mother at birth, placed into foster care, adopted, and finally reunited with his biological family in adulthood—an astounding journey of personal discovery. Jaiya John has opened the floodgates on his own childhood with this piercing memoir. *Black Baby White Hands*, a waterfall of jazz splashing over the rocks of love, pain and the honoring of family. Magically, this book finds a way to sing as it cries, and to exude compassion even as it dispels well-entrenched myths. This story is sure to find itself well worn, stained by tears, and brushed by laughter in the lap of parents, adolescents, educators, students and professionals. Here comes the rain and the sunshine, all at once.

Kinn, Gail. Be My Baby, 2000.

From School Library Journal

Adult/High School—This photo-essay features the selected reflections of adoptive parents, adopted children ages 9 to 19, adults adopted as infants, and two birth mothers. The majority of the pieces focus on feelings and memories of parents or adult children. A variety of situations are presented: private and agency adoptions, domestic and international adoptions, only-child and multiple-children families, and families with combinations of adopted and biological children. The subjects are candid

when discussing the conflicting and complex emotions surrounding such issues as nature versus nurture theories, ethnic identity, sibling relationships, feelings of loss, insecurities and fears, and coping with reactions of others to blended family. Despite the wide range of experiences and emotions presented, the overall message is positive and affirming. The cases included make for interesting and thought-provoking reading and could be used as discussion starters. Quality black-and-white photographs of the subjects illustrate this oversized title.

**Lifton, Betty Jean. Journey of the Adopted Self, 1994, and the Lost and Found series.
From Publishers Weekly**

Lifton has written before on this highly charged subject (*Lost and Found* and *Twice Born: Memoirs of an Adopted Daughter*), but this is a more profound investigation of the trauma she sees as occurring when a child is separated from his or her birth mother and is brought up by people not of his or her blood. Lifton is for "open" adoption--meaning, to her, not only that the adoptee should have a chance to find out about his or her birth mother, but preferably that both sets of parents should get to know each other. She discourses at length, with reference to myth, legend, folklore, science, psychiatry, as well as to many personal experiences, about the crippling effect of the loss of the birth mother on the adoptee's sense of self; she even cites evidence showing that adoptive sons are more likely than natural ones to murder their parents. Despite one chapter (out of 17) devoted to him, the father's role seems little considered, that of the mother expanded to awe-inspiring proportions. And no attention is paid to the many cases in which the birth mother would not have been the ideal parent, despite the almost mystical qualities with which the author endows her. An eloquent book, but only one side of an argument in which two reasonable sides exist.

Pavao, Joyce. The Family of Adoption , 1998.

From Publishers Weekly □ A commitment to placing the best interests of the child first informs every page of this excellent study of the complex psychological and social dynamics of adoptive families. Pavao, an adoption therapist and the executive director of the Center for Family Connections in Cambridge, Mass., was herself adopted as an infant. She believes strongly in the necessity of pre- and post-adoptive counseling for both birth and adoptive parents, although she acknowledges that there is a serious lack of trained professionals for this purpose. According to the author, such counseling is essential if adoptive parents are to understand and be able to work with their child through the developmental stages common to adoptees, such as feelings of loss, school problems and a desire to learn about their past. Pavao's analysis is comprehensive, and she considers all types of adoption, including transracial, special needs, international and foster care. Drawing on adoption stories culled from her practice, she shows how the adopted child, birth parents, adoptive parents, as well as other family members benefit from such contact and openness. She is convinced that those who are adopted have a right to learn as much as possible about their past and suggests, for example, that international adoptees be allowed to visit their country of origin to better understand their roots. Adoption, Pavao writes, "is not about finding children for families, but about finding families for children."

Pertman, Adam. Adoption Nation: How the Adoption Revolution is Transforming America , 2000.

From Publishers Weekly

Based on a series of articles that he wrote for the Boston Globe, Pertman combines journalistic research and personal anecdotes in this stimulating overview of the trends and cultural ramifications of adoption. His views come through loud and clear: families should be "out" about their adoptive status, children should be told that they were adopted as early as possible and all members of the adoption "triad" (birth mother, child and parents) should try to stay in close communication. Suggesting that

adoptive families have benefited enormously from the country's increasing acceptance of racial diversity, Pertman argues that the controversial 1994 Multiethnic Placement Act (which stipulates that transracial adoptions can not be legally prohibited) is a strong step forward in placing the interests of the individual child over those of an abstract, race-based notion of family. He also suggests that adoption itself has helped to instigate social change: in its role as an "institutionalized means of forming non-traditional families," adoption may help gay, multiracial and single-parent families gain greater social acceptance. Even so, Pertman contends, adoptive families are still subject to many hurtful stereotypes (e.g., the irresponsible birth mother; the selfish adoptive parents). Perhaps most harrowing is his discussion of the effect of "laissez faire" capitalist thinking on adoption policy and the largely unregulated nature of the "industry" that has sprung up around it (e.g., one woman tried to sell her baby on eBay; the highest bid was \$109,100). This disturbing and hopeful book will primarily attract adoptive families and policy makers, who will find that it has much to say about our changing definitions of family, race and community.

Rosenberg, Elinor. The Adoption Life Cycle: The Children and Families Through the Years , 1992.

From Publishers Weekly

Many of the growing number of books about adoption are essentially how-tos, guiding prospective adoptive parents through the emotional and legal thickets adoption requires. Rosenberg, a family therapist and professor of psychiatry at the University of Michigan, has written a more unusual work: a careful, scholarly examination of the psychological relationships involved in the strange three-way partnership of child, birth parents and adoptive parents. Each party, she points out, has its own set of priorities and anxieties, and she addresses these with imagination and empathy (she might have included more case studies, however, in order to enliven and humanize her work). Rosenberg also illuminates changing social attitudes toward adoption, from secretiveness to cheery optimism to the current state of anxiety about being completely fair to all parties--an impossibility given the highly conflicted nature of the process itself. She thoughtfully raises many seldom-asked questions with insight and candor.

Russell, Marlou. Adoption Wisdom: A Guide to the Issues and Feelings of Adoption , 2000.

Adoptees, birth parents, and adoptive parents voice their experiences of adoption with honest, direct commentary from the author. A well-balanced book. A must read for those involved in adoption and anyone considering adoption.

Saffian, Sarah. Ithaka: A Daughter's Memoir, 1998.

Amazon.com Review

When 23-year-old Sarah Saffian picked up the phone in January 1993 and heard a woman's voice on the other end say, "I think I'm your birth mother," she embarked on a journey both longed for and feared by almost all adopted children, the parents who raised them, and the ones who gave them up. Saffian's case was unusual: her birth parents eventually married and had three more children, her full-blood siblings. She honestly depicts her feelings of wariness and sometimes annoyance as they gently pressed her for a reunion. It was three years before Saffian felt ready to visit Hannah Morgan and Adam Leyder.

As befits a topic of such intimacy, Saffian sticks closely to specifics. She not only delineates her own shifting emotions with precision, she quotes extensively from her birth parents' letters to vividly reveal their personalities (Hannah understands her caution, Adam is needier and pushier). Saffian does not identify any of the players as villains or victims, despite the tricky emotional space they navigate, but finds human beings doing their best to give and receive love in circumstances for which there are no fixed guidelines.

Schooler, Jane. Searching for the Past: The Adopted Adult's Unique Perspective , 1995.

From Booklist

Schooler's guide is less a practical how-to for adoptees in search of their birth parents and/or family members than a guide through the psychological entanglements generated by such a search. Schooler utilizes quotes from individuals who have attempted a search to stress the range of outcomes a person can expect--from dead end to a joyful and lasting reunion with heretofore unknown family. The book covers joining a search support group, preparing everyone involved for the impact of the search, delineating special problems of teenage and midlife searchers, and handling the issue of birth parents who don't want to be found. A helpful guide that prepares people for failures while keeping a fairly optimistic perspective overall.

Soll, Joe. Adoption Healing: A Path to Recovery , 2000.

Product Description

In this unique book, the reader is provided with a description of the unfolding of the adoptee's personality from birth, detailing each developmental milestone along the way, followed by different methods of healing the adoptee's wounds, including inner child work, visualizations, healing affirmations, and anger management. Every chapter includes a Myths and Realities of adoption section, a summary of the chapter and exercises to do on one's own.