

Books for Understanding Autism

Middle Grade Fiction

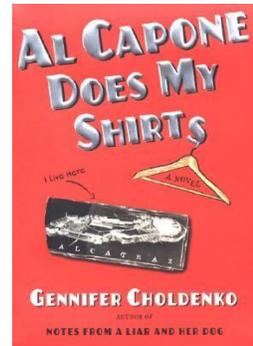
***Rules* by Cynthia Lord**

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life. Which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. She's spent years trying to teach David the rules—from "a peach is not a funny-looking apple" to "keep your pants on in public!"—in order to head off his embarrassing behaviours. But the summer Catherine meets Jason, a surprising new sort-of friend, and Kristi, the next-door friend she's always wished for, it's her own shocking behavior that turns everything upside down and forces her to ask: What is normal?



***Al Capone Does My Shirts* by Gennifer Choldenko**

Moose Flannagan moves with his family to Alcatraz so his dad can work as a prison guard and his sister, Natalie, can attend a special school. But Natalie has autism, and when she's denied admittance to the school, the stark setting of Alcatraz begins to unravel the tenuous coping mechanisms Moose's family has used for dealing with her disorder. When Moose meets Piper, the cute daughter of the Warden, he knows right off she's trouble. But she's also strangely irresistible. All Moose wants to do is protect Natalie, live up to his parents' expectations, and stay out of trouble. But on Alcatraz, trouble is never very far away.



***Anything But Typical* by Nora Raleigh Baskin**

Jason Blake is an autistic 12-year-old living in a neurotypical world. Most days it's just a matter of time before something goes wrong. But Jason finds a glimmer of understanding when he comes across PhoenixBird, who posts stories to the same online site as he does. Jason can be himself when he writes and he thinks that PhoenixBird—her name is Rebecca—could be his first real friend. But as desperate as Jason is to meet her, he's terrified that if they do meet, Rebecca will only see his autism and not who Jason really is. By acclaimed writer Nora Raleigh Baskin, this is the breathtaking depiction of an autistic boy's struggles—and a story for anyone who has ever worried about fitting in.

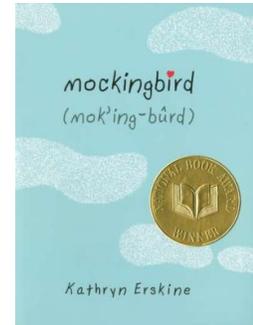
***The London Eye Mystery* by Siobhan Dowd**

Ted and Kat watched their cousin Salim board the London Eye. But after half an hour it landed and everyone trooped off—except Salim. Where could he have gone? How on earth could he have disappeared into thin air? Ted and his older sister, Kat, become sleuthing partners, since the police are having no luck. Despite their prickly relationship, they overcome their differences to follow a trail of clues across London in a desperate bid to find their cousin. And ultimately it comes down to Ted, whose brain works in its own very unique way, to find the key to the mystery. This is an unput-downable spine-tingling thriller—a race against time.



***Mockingbird* by Kathryn Erskine**

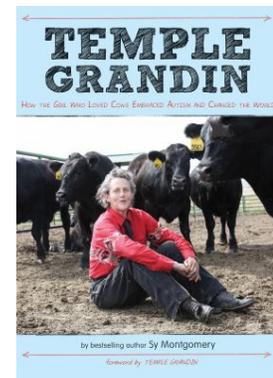
In Caitlin's world, everything is black or white. Things are good or bad. Anything in between is confusing. That's the stuff Caitlin's older brother, Devon, has always explained. But now Devon's dead and Dad is no help at all. Caitlin wants to get over it, but as an eleven-year-old girl with Asperger's, she doesn't know how. When she reads the definition of closure, she realizes that is what she needs. In her search for it, Caitlin discovers that not everything is black and white--the world is full of colors--messy and beautiful.



Middle Grade Nonfiction

***Temple Grandin: how the girl who loved cows embraced autism and changed the world* by Sy Montgomery**

When Temple Grandin was born, her parents knew that she was different. Years later she was diagnosed with autism. When Temple's doctor wanted her institutionalized, her mother believed in her and so Temple went to school, instead. Today, Dr. Temple Grandin is a brilliant scientist and professor of Animal Science at Colorado State University. Her world-changing career has revolutionized the livestock industry. A passionate advocate for autism, Temple uses her experience to prove that autistic people can have "normal" lives. This compelling biography takes us inside Temple Grandin's extraordinary mind and opens the door to understanding autism.



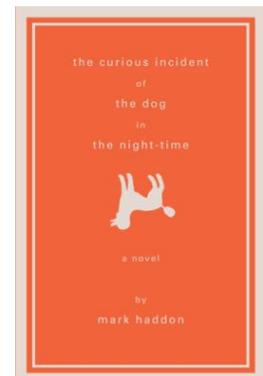
***Freaks, Geeks & Asperger Syndrome: A User Guide to Adolescence* by Luke Jackson**

Have you ever been called a freak or a geek? Have you ever felt like one? Luke Jackson is 13 years old and has Asperger Syndrome. Over the years Luke has learned to laugh at such names but there are other aspects of life, which are more difficult. Adolescence and the teenage years are a minefield of emotions, transitions and decisions and when a child has Asperger Syndrome, the result is often explosive. Drawing from his own experiences and gaining information from his teenage brother and sisters, he wrote this enlightening, honest and witty book in an attempt to address difficult topics such as bullying, friendships, when and how to tell others about AS, school problems, dating, relationships and morality.

Teen Fiction

***The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night Time* by Mark Haddon**

Christopher John Francis Boone knows all the countries of the world and their capitals and every prime number up to 7,057. He relates well to animals but has no understanding of human emotions. He cannot stand to be touched. Although gifted with a superbly logical brain, Christopher is autistic. Everyday interactions and admonishments have little meaning for him. Routine, order and predictability shelter him from the messy, wider world. Then, at fifteen, Christopher's carefully constructed world falls apart when he finds his neighbor's dog, Wellington, impaled on a garden fork, and he is initially blamed for the killing. Christopher decides that he will track down



the real killer and turns to his favorite fictional character, the impeccably logical Sherlock Holmes, for inspiration. But the investigation leads him down some unexpected paths and ultimately brings him face to face with the dissolution of his parents' marriage. As he tries to deal with the crisis within his own family, we are drawn into the workings of Christopher's mind. And herein lies the key to the brilliance of Mark Haddon's choice of narrator: The most wrenching of emotional moments are chronicled by a boy who cannot fathom emotion. The effect is dazzling, making for a novel that is deeply funny, poignant, and fascinating in its portrayal of a person whose curse and blessing is a mind that perceives the world literally.

Adult Fiction

***House Rules* by Jodi Picoult**

When your son can't look you in the eye . . . does that mean he's guilty?

Jacob Hunt is a teen with Asperger's syndrome. He's hopeless at reading social cues or expressing himself well to others, though he is brilliant in many ways. But he has a special focus on one subject—forensic analysis. A police scanner in his room clues him in to crime scenes, and he's always showing up and telling the cops what to do. And he's usually right. But when Jacob's small hometown is rocked by a terrible murder, law enforcement comes to him. Jacob's behaviors are hallmark Asperger's, but they look a lot like guilt to the local police. Suddenly the Hunt family, who only want to fit in, are directly in the spotlight. For Jacob's mother, Emma, it's a brutal reminder of the intolerance and misunderstanding that always threaten her family. For his brother, Theo, it's another indication why nothing is normal because of Jacob. And over this small family, the soul-searing question looms: Did Jacob commit murder?



***Love Anthony* by Lisa Genova**

Olivia Donatelli's dream of a "normal" life shattered when her son, Anthony, was diagnosed with autism at age three. He didn't speak. He hated to be touched. He almost never made eye contact. And just as Olivia was starting to realize that happiness and autism could coexist, Anthony was gone. Now she's alone on Nantucket, desperate to find meaning in her son's short life, when a chance encounter with another woman brings Anthony alive again in a most unexpected way. In a warm, deeply human story reminiscent of *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-time* New York Times bestselling author Lisa Genova offers us two unforgettable women on the verge of change and the irrepressible young boy with autism whose unique wisdom helps them both find the courage to move on.

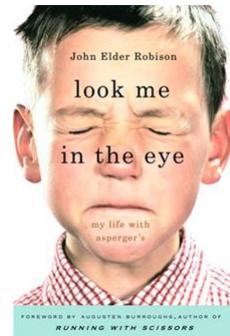
Adult Nonfiction

***Ten Things Every Child With Autism Wishes You Knew* by Ellen Notbohm**

Framed with both humor and compassion, the book describes ten characteristics that help illuminate—not define—children with autism. Ellen's personal experiences as a parent of children with autism and ADHD, celebrated autism author, and a contributor to numerous publications, classrooms, conferences, and websites around the world coalesce to create a guide for all who come in contact with a child on the autism spectrum. This book delves into expanded thought and deeper discussion of communication issues, social processing skills, and the critical roles adult perspectives play in guiding the child with autism to a meaningful, self-sufficient, productive life.

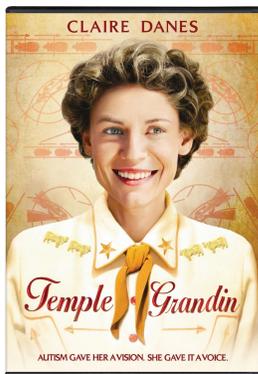
***Look Me in the Eye: My Life with Asperger's* by John Elder Robison**

This is a funny, poignant account of Robison's experiences growing up with Asperger's syndrome. Interestingly, he is the older brother of the wildly successful author of *Running with Scissors*, Augusten Burroughs, who does not have Asperger's. It's fascinating to read about both brothers' completely different and varied experiences in and perception of the same family. I've heard Robison speak, and he is a very animated speaker and passionate advocate for those like himself with Asperger's syndrome.



***Thinking in Pictures: My Life with Autism* by Temple Grandin**

Temple Grandin, Ph.D., is a gifted animal scientist who has designed one third of all the livestock-handling facilities in the United States. She also lectures widely on autism, because Temple Grandin is autistic, a woman who thinks, feels, and experiences the world in ways that are incomprehensible to the rest of us. In this unprecedented book, Grandin delivers a report from the country of autism. Writing from the dual perspectives of a scientist and an autistic person, she tells us how that country is experienced by its inhabitants and how she managed to breach its boundaries to function in the outside world. What emerges in *Thinking in Pictures* is the document of an extraordinary human being, one who, in gracefully and lucidly bridging the gulf between her condition and our own, sheds light on the riddle of our common identity.



Or check out movie version of Temple Grandin's life story produced by HBO and starring Claire Danes!