GREAT STORIES CLUB 2017

STRUCTURES OF SUFFERING

ORIGINS OF TEEN VIOLENCE AND SUICIDE
School shootings, bullying, teen suicide — it seems like you can’t turn on the TV or scroll through your Facebook feed without hearing about some form of teen violence. What’s the cause? It’s true that we all experience challenges like peer pressure, unrequited love and academic stress, but for some young people, these day-to-day anxieties are deepened by feelings of depression, insecurity or self-loathing, feelings that can increase isolation and lead to violence or suicide. Join the Great Stories Club to read and discuss the following three books about characters who are dealing with teen violence and suicide.

**Thirteen Reasons Why**
by Jay Asher
Clay Jensen returns home from school to find a mysterious box with his name on it lying on his porch. Inside he discovers cassette tapes recorded by Hannah Baker — his classmate and crush — who committed suicide two weeks earlier. On tape, Hannah explains that there are thirteen reasons why she decided to end her life. Clay is one of them. If he listens, he’ll find out how he made the list. Through Hannah and Clay’s dual narratives, debut author Jay Asher weaves an intricate and heartrending story of confusion and desperation that will deeply affect teen readers.

**It’s Kind of a Funny Story**
by Ned Vizzini
Like many ambitious New York City teenagers, Craig Gilner sees entry into Manhattan’s Executive Pre-Professional High School as the ticket to his future. Determined to succeed at life — which means getting into the right high school to get into the right college to get the right job — Craig studies night and day to ace the entrance exam, and does. That’s when things start to get crazy.

At his new school, Craig realizes that he isn’t brilliant compared to the other kids; he’s just average, and maybe not even that. He soon sees his once-perfect future crumbling away. The stress becomes unbearable, and Craig stops eating and sleeping — until, one night, he nearly kills himself.

Craig’s suicidal episode gets him checked into a mental hospital, where his new neighbors include a transsexual sex addict, a girl who has scarred her own face with scissors, and the self-elected President Armelio. There, isolated from the crushing pressures of school and friends, Craig is finally able to confront the sources of his anxiety.

Ned Vizzini, who himself spent time in a psychiatric hospital, has created a remarkably moving tale about the sometimes unexpected road to happiness. For a novel about depression, it’s definitely a funny story.

**Romeo and Juliet (No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novels)**
illustrated by Matt Weigle
You may know the basics of Romeo and Juliet, but No Fear Shakespeare Graphic Novels brings the story to life in a new way. These dynamic visual adaptations are impossible to put down. Each of the titles is illustrated in its own unique style, but all are distinctively offbeat, slightly funky, and appealing to teen readers. The book features an illustrated cast of characters, a helpful plot summary, line-by-line translations of the original play, and illustrations that show the reader exactly what’s happening in each scene.