

Top 10 books to get you through high school

1. [There's a Boy In the Girl's Bathroom by Louis Sachar](#)

Sachar is better known for the bestselling *Holes*, but this earlier work is perfect in its simplicity. Bradley Chalkers is a true outcast – he's a bully, a pathological liar, he spits, he hurts people. And yet you will fall in love with him. As you realise that Bradley is as much a victim as a bully, you begin to understand the complexity of his situation. The story documents the gentle relationship between Bradley and the school counsellor, Carla. You are completely on Bradley's side, and feel every up and down of his journey. As with *Holes*, you'll laugh and cry in equal measure, often at the same time.

2. [Carrie by Stephen King](#) / [Matilda by Roald Dahl](#)

Nothing got me through school more than the glimmer of hope that I might one day develop telekinetic powers and kill everyone. Luckily for my classmates, that never happened. Two similar stories, with very similar heroes – you'll be rooting for both Carrie and Matilda right up to the equally moving (albeit quite different) finales.

3. [Looking For Alaska by John Green](#)

Green was allowed to get away with things my editor would never allow, and perhaps presents the most life-like addition to this list. Miles 'Pudge' Halter starts a new boarding school and soon befriends potty-mouthed sex-fiend Alaska Young, beginning a *Skins*-esque coming-of-age story as Pudge falls for the complex titular character. Rich in philosophy and dripping with pithy quotes.

4. [The Boy In The Dress by David Walliams](#)

Anyone in need of an inspirational battle cry should look no further than the Little Britain star's debut novel. It tells the simple tale of a boy called Dennis, who loves Vogue and the problems this presents. Hilarious and

very, very British. What I love about this book is that it actually has nothing to do with sexuality, instead looking at the freedom to be who we want to be.

5. Strange Boy by Paul Magrs

The only book on the list not set in a school, this is a semi-autobiographical account of a boy growing up in South Shields. David knows he's different, he's just not sure how, so decides the only rational explanation is that he has secret super powers. Actually, young David is gay and has fallen for John down the road. I so wish I'd read this when I was 12 – things would have made a lot more sense.

6. Noughts and Crosses by Malorie Blackman

This was the book that made me want to write young adult fiction. A powerful look at racism in a parallel world where young Callum is about to become the first white pupil at an elite all-black school. Things only get worse as his friendship with a black girl, Sephy, deepens. Injustice, discrimination, violence...a rollercoaster ride and a book to make you think.

7. Stargirl by Jerry Spinelli

Leo's world is rocked when mysterious and quirky Stargirl arrives at his school one day. Is she a breath of fresh air or a fake? As the pair begin to fall in love, the novel examines the pros and cons of Stargirl's individuality and the power of peer pressure. Spinelli's prose is poetic and dreamy - imagine reading a Sophia Coppola film.

8. The Prince by Niccolò Machiavelli

"It is much safer to be feared than loved," wrote Machiavelli. Now, I grant you he was referring to the royal courts of 15th century Florence, but the only place more complex than that is high school. His guide for social domination is an essential for anyone seeking to topple a tyrant or dethrone a Queen Bee.

9. The Worst Witch by Jill Murphy

Long before that other wizard school rocked up, poor Mildred Hubble was struggling away at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches. Ok, it's aimed at younger readers, but this is still one of my favourites. Everyone loves an underdog, and Mildred always saves the day, albeit in her own clumsy way. These stories are uplifting whatever your age.

10. Inventing Elliot by Graham Gardner

A darkly intelligent story about a cruel secret society that rules over an ordinary school. It's into this mess that poor Elliot Sutton arrives, fleeing bullies at his old school. More than any other book, Elliot explores the painful intricacies of bullying and the importance of being noticed "the right way". Harrowing at times, but ultimately an optimistic read.