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Disrupting Notions of Stigma while Empowering Voices: Examining Language Identity, Mental Illness, and Disability through Young Adult Literature

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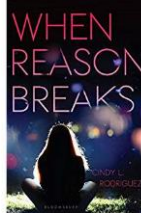
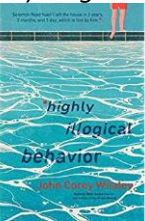
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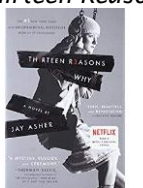
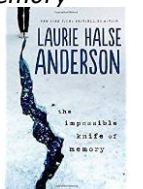
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Language Use in Young Adult Literature: Mental Illness

Young Adult NOVEL	Authentic Terms Used by Characters (labels, symptoms)	Negative connotations/slang used	DSM-5
<p><i>Your Voice is All I Hear</i> –</p>  <p>Schizophrenia</p>	<p><i>depression, anxious, mental illness, bipolar disorder, hallucinating, psychotic disorder, paranoid, delusional, depressed, delusions, schizophrenia, schizoaffective disorder, anorexia, bulimia, paranoid schizophrenic, voices</i></p>	<p>Brain control, paranoid rant, CRAZY**, lunatic, mental ward, psychotic boyfriend, NUTS, WEIRD, CRAZY people, SICK, mental patient, seemed off, insane</p>	<p>DSM-5's list for that disorder, which can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • racing or jumbled thoughts • a pressing need to pace or walk around • auditory and visual hallucinations • paranoia
<p><i>When Reason Breaks</i> –</p>  <p>Depression</p>	<p><i>depressed, anxious, suicide, irritable, mind refusing to rest, no energy, exhausted</i></p>	<p>Broken beyond repair, driving in circles, FREAK out, troubled child, hard to love, , dropping down, difficult, antics, attitude, tired, pale, fine, quiet, distant, shut out, stressed, snap out of it, take a pill, messed up, screwed up, one CRAZY girl, scared, SICK, numb, hurt, angry, embarrassed, alone, CRAZY misfits, the monster inside</p>	<p>DSM-5's list for that disorder, which can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • depressed mood • insomnia or hypersomnia • exhaustion • guilt or worthlessness • suicidal ideation or attempt
<p><i>Highly Illogical Behavior</i> –</p>  <p>Agoraphobia & anxiety</p>	<p><i>Panic attacks, agoraphobic, severe anxiety disorder, obsessive-compulsive tendencies, social anxiety, acute agoraphobia, severe panic disorder, debilitating anxiety, thoughts that start looping, anxious, body shaking, hyperventilating, heart racing, hands shaking, cycling thoughts, can't control, pace, afraid</i></p>	<p>meltdown, calm, easy to get along with, full-blown agoraphobe, WEIRD, WEIRD habits, , sinking feeling, drained, go CRAZY, different, completely NUTS, FREAK out, closed in, head hurt, complete psychopath, not CRAZY CRAZY, lonely agoraphobe, CRAZY guys like me, CRAZY gay kid, overthinking, safe, all right, legitimate mental illness, insane, disease, overwhelm, CRAZY kid, bad relationship with the world, full-blown meltdown, a fast one, crying, moving in slow motion, loopy, not CRAZY, too normal, accepting, worries, pressure, not nothing, aching pit in stomach, triggers, guilt, worse, hitting himself, yelling, throwing things, twitched, my friend, our friend, very complicated disorder, unpredictable, frantic, survived it, CRAZY people, invisible</p>	<p>DSM-5's list for that disorder, which can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • marked anxiety or fear of situations such as using public transportation, being in open spaces, being confined in enclosed spaces, standing in line or being in a crowd, or being outside of the home alone • panic attacks
<p><i>Not as CRAZY as I Seem</i> –</p>	<p><i>Anxiety, anxious, obsessive, depressed, OCD, obsessive thoughts, compulsions,</i></p>	<p>WEIRDos, crazies, maniacs, NUTS, panicky, CRAZY, flipped out, loser, nervous, sad,</p>	<p>DSM-5's list for that disorder, which can include:</p>

 <p>Obsessive-compulsive disorder</p>	<p><i>habits,</i></p>	<p>dejected, rejected, ejected, powerless, stuck, bad thoughts, odd compulsion,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • recurrent and persistent thoughts, impulses, or images experienced as intrusive, inappropriate, • thoughts/impulses cause marked anxiety or distress • repetitive behaviors or mental acts • a person feels driven to perform the behaviors/acts in response to an obsession or rigidly applied “rules”
<p><i>Thirteen Reasons Why</i> -</p>  <p>Depression, trauma-related disorder (PTSD)</p>	<p><i>Suicide, paranoia, counseling, sudden change in appearance, giving away possessions, therapist</i></p>	<p>Swallowing a handful of pills, stupid little girl, SICK and twisted people, FREAKing out, Peeping Tom, pervert, depressed loner, FREAK, CRAZY, a SICK game</p>	<p>DSM-5’s list for PTSD, which can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • exposure to actual threat of death or sexual violence • persistent negative emotional state • feelings of detachment • heightened startle response <p>Note: PTSD is associated with suicidal ideation and suicide attempts</p>
<p><i>The Impossible Knife of Memory</i></p>  <p>- Alcohol intoxication, anxiety, PTSD,</p>	<p><i>panic, fear, catastrophizing, worry, fear, nightmares, fatigue, suicidal, therapist, depressed, blacked out, suicidal</i></p>	<p>FREAK, zombie, CRAZY, unstuck in time, drifting, attacks, heart revved, FREAKish visions, drunk, passed out, get his head on straight, SICK, lunatics, messed up, werewolf, fraying wires in his head, broken, weed had driven the CRAZY back under his skin, certifiable, dead quiet for days, brain in hibernation mode</p>	<p>DSM-5’s list for Alcohol intoxication, which can include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • significant problematic behavioral or psychological changes due to alcohol ingestion, • slurred speech, • Impairment in attention or memory • stupor or coma

**most frequently used slang – freak, crazy, sick, weird, nuts

Richmond, K.J. (August 23, 2017). [Language and Symptoms of Mental Illness in Young Adult Literature](#). (Dr. Bickmore’s YA Wednesday Blog).

Richmond, K.J. (2014) Using literature to confront the stigma of mental illness, teach empathy, and break stereotypes," *Language Arts Journal of Michigan*, 30 (1), Article 6. <https://doi.org/10.9707/2168-149X.2038>

Richmond, K.J. (forthcoming). *Mental illness in young adult literature: Exploring real struggles through fictional characters*. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO (Greenwood Press).