

Sibling Stories: 21 Books That Celebrate Sib Bonds

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FAMILY MEDIA/BOOKS

Sibling Stories: 21 Books That Celebrate Sib Bonds

Help your kids bond with stories that normalize supportive sibling relationships

BY GEMMA ALEXANDER

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“I just got an A-minus. I've been relegated to the huddled, unwashed masses of minuses — like you!”

Siblings in classic children's books are more likely to be friends than rivals, but the pacing in those old books doesn't always grab today's kids. My 12-year-old is an avid reader, but she just can't find the sisterhood and girl power in *Little Women's* old-fashioned sentences.

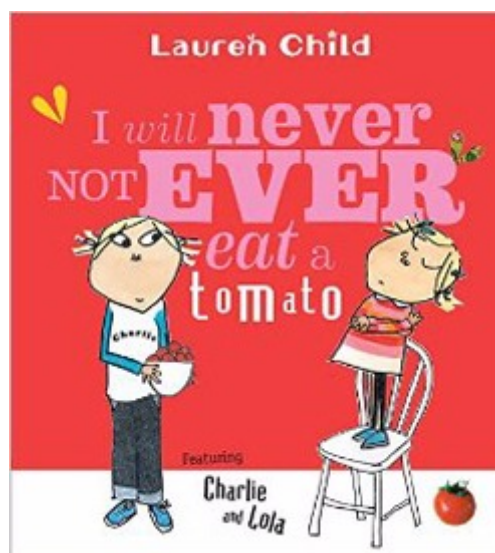
Here are some contemporary kids' books that normalize healthy, supportive sibling relationships — naturally embedded in entertaining stories.

Ages 3-6

Charlie and Lola

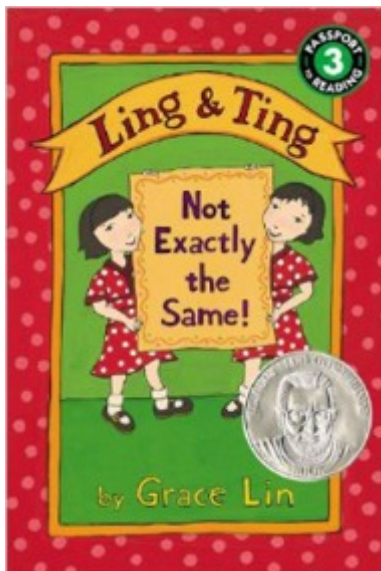
By Lauren Child, 2000 to 2012

Like the Berenstain Bears (Stan and Jan Berenstain), human children Charlie and Lola share everyday adventures, but with more humor and spunk. Patient big brother Charlie always has time to show his clever little sister Lola the ropes — and sometimes gets schooled in the process. The British cartoon series is charming for all ages; Lauren Child's picture books are perfect for an older sibling to read to a younger one. Thanks to *I Will Never Not Ever Eat a Tomato* we still



younger one. Thanks to [I WILL NEVER NOT EVER Eat a TOMATO](#) we still eat moonsquirters at my house.

[Ling and Ting](#)



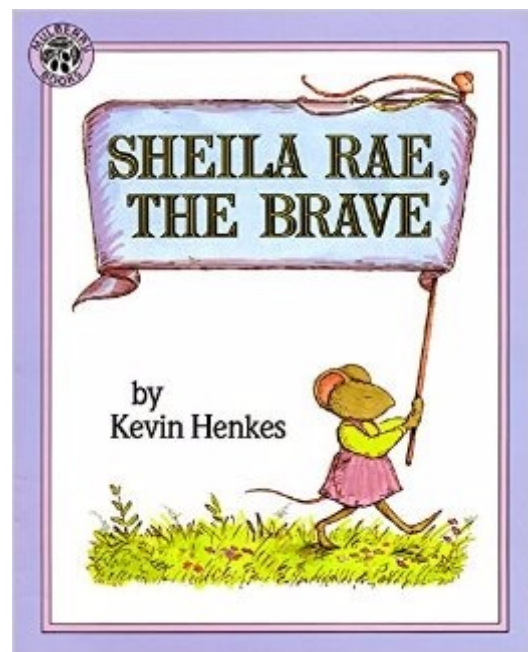
By Grace Lin, 2010 and ongoing

Ling and Ting are identical twins who do everything together, but who enjoy being *not exactly* the same in award-winning children's author Grace Lin's charming illustrated early reader series. Early readers who enjoy Ling and Ting can graduate to the Pacy Lin easy chapter books based loosely on Grace Lin's own childhood as one of three sisters navigating multiple cultures in a Taiwanese-American family.

[Sheila Rae, the Brave](#)

By Kevin Henkes, 1996

Sheila Rae is the brave sister who doesn't care about thunder or barking dogs. But when she gets lost taking a new route home from school, it's her timid sister Louise who takes charge to get them home safely.



[A+ for Big Ben](#)

By Sarah Ellis, 2015

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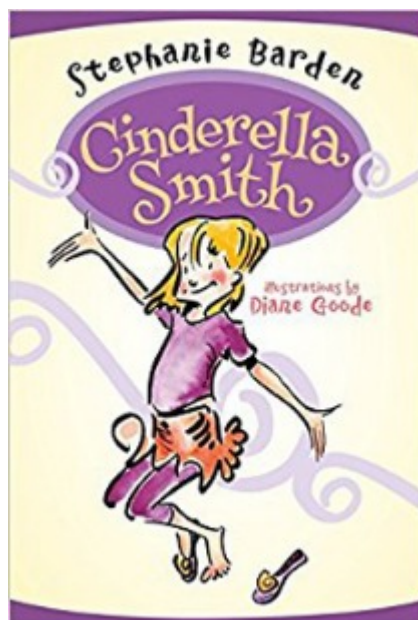
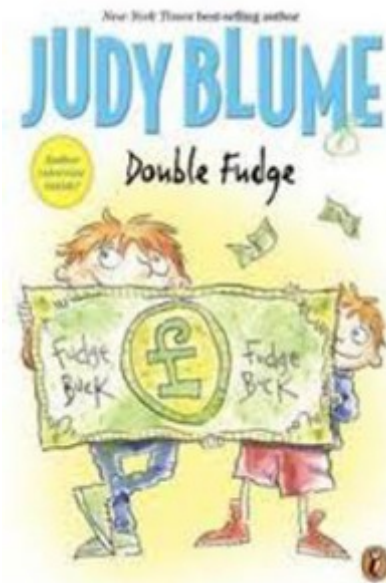
Ben is the youngest of three, and can't do all the cool and important things his older brother and sister do. But they present him with a report card, grading Ben on all the things that little brothers do best. Available as a picture book and a board book.

Ages 6-12

The Fudge Series

By Judy Blume, 1972 to 2002

Beginning with *Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing*, Blume follows the often-hilarious misadventures of Peter Hatcher and his younger brother, Fudge, across four books. The Hatchers enjoy a flawed, yet loving and entirely relatable family life.



Cinderella Smith

By Diane Goode, 2011 to 2013

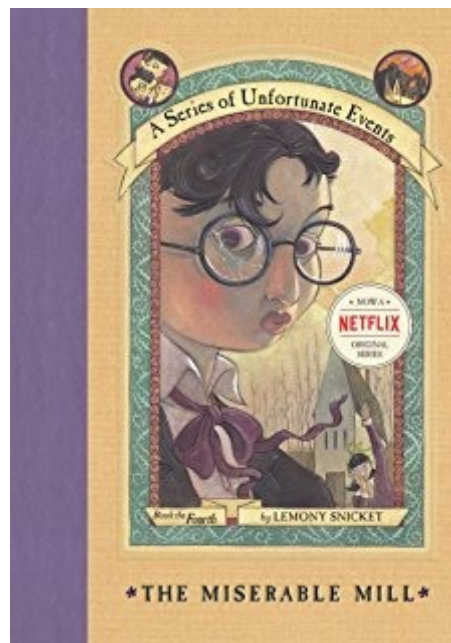
Cinderella Smith loses shoes, but she doesn't have any problem with her little sister Tess, who tags along on Cinderella's adventures whenever she can. In the first book, the new girl Erin is about to get a stepfamily, and she wants Cinderella to help her figure out how to deal with wicked

stepsisters before it's too late. Bonus: The author is local.

[A Series of Unfortunate Events](#)

By Lemony Snicket, 1999 to 2006

Like *The Boxcar Children* (Gertrude Chandler Warner), the Baudelaire children are responsible for their own survival. But the Baudelaire children are trying to escape the evil Count Olaf in Lemony Snicket's *A Series of Unfortunate Events*,



a wickedly sarcastic chapter book take on Victorian Gothic, which showcases strong sibling bonds and children's resourcefulness and resilience. A movie adaptation stars Jim Carrey, and a new TV series with Neil Patrick Harris as Olaf. If your kids enjoy *Unfortunate Events*, give them Maryrose Wood's [The Mysterious Howling](#) next: it's a faux-Victorian governess novel about a young woman who must civilize a trio of raised-by-wolves siblings in time for a fancy Christmas party.



[As Brave as You](#)

By Jason Reynolds, 2016

This brand-new Coretta Scott King Honor book, the middle grade debut of YA author Jason Reynolds, tells the



story of two brothers sent to spend the summer with their grandparents. The story deals with heavy issues — family rifts, disability, grief, gun safety — but the reader and the 10-year-old protagonist can take comfort in the

relationship between the brothers, which is also the key to healing their family.

Frozen

Novelization by Sarah Nathan 2013

Parents may be burned out on Disney's ubiquitous *Frozen*, but the story remains remarkable. No other princess story puts sisters before misters love this!. The movie is great for all ages, but there's also a chapter book novelization that fills in extra detail for kids who want more depth. Bonus: *Frozen's* director has confirmed Tarzan is Elsa and Anna's little brother; maybe we can hope for a sibling reunion?

The Misadventures of the Family Fletcher

By Dana Alison Levy, 2014 and ongoing

Celebrate boys in this series about an all-male family: four brothers ages 6 to 10 and their two dads. From annoying homework to best friends, strange pets and stranger neighbors, each Fletcher boy is unique and faces his own problems, but none of them is alone. It's a beautiful and down-to-earth update of family-life stories like the classic *Melody* series by Elizabeth Enright. (For a more feminine

CLASSIC MIGHTY SERIES BY ELIZABETH LIMIGHT. (If you're looking for a more recent update, try *The Penderwicks* by Jeanne Birdsall.)

Mighty Miss Malone

By Christopher Paul Curtis, 2012

Christopher Paul Curtis' books capture American history through the completely authentic eyes of young children. In *The Mighty Miss Malone*, the bright, book-loving Deza Malone's life is turned upside-down by the Great Depression. The family loses their home and their father, and faces great hardships. But Deza never gives up, because she has the best brother in the world. (There's not a lot of everyday kindness among the three siblings in another of his books, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963*, but they certainly look out for each for each other — they literally jump into rivers and run into burning buildings when one of them is in danger.)



Kane Chronicles

By Rick Riordan, 2010 to 2012

Riordan's Percy Jackson series is more famous, but in my house, Sadie and Carter Kane are the most beloved. Biracial siblings who have been raised apart, the Kanes are reunited just in time to save the world from dark magical forces out of ancient Egypt in *The Red Pyramid*. There's plenty of hickering but their love is never in doubt

— they routinely risk life, limb and the fate of the world to protect each other over the course of three books.

[Land of Stories](#)

By Chris Colfer, 2012 and ongoing

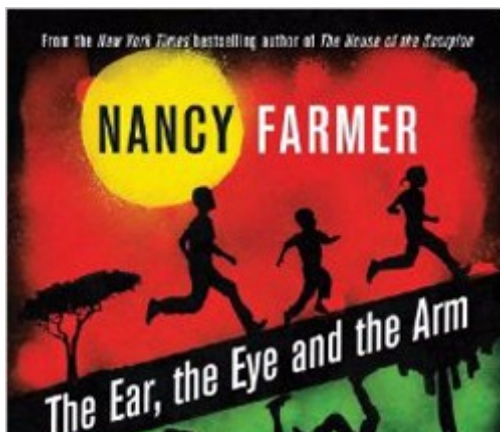
A part of my soul will always reside in Narnia (C.S. Lewis) with the Pevensie children, but my kids' hearts dwell in *The Land of Stories*. Beginning with *The Wishing Spell*, Chris Colfer's series presents familiar ingredients in a fresh and delightful way. Twins Alex and Conner are transported to a land where all the fairy tales are true. The bandit Goldilocks riding a stolen horse named Porridge raises the bar on fractured fairy tales. Bonus: Blow your kids' minds when you show them the author performing as Kurt Hummel on the TV show *Glee*. (For more books in this vein, check out [The Sisters Grimm](#) series by Michael Buckley.)



[The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm](#)

By Nancy Farmer, 2014

The Newbery Honor book *The Ear, the Eye, and the Arm* blends science fiction





tropes and Zimbabwean culture. In 2194, siblings stifled by their privileged life escape the family compound in search of adventure. Instead, they get kidnapped, escape (repeatedly) and find out about the hard world their

parents were protecting them from.

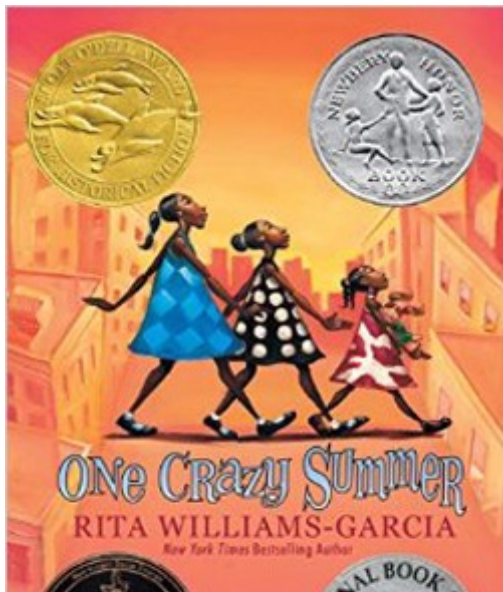
Millions

By Frank Boyce, 2005

Millions is about two brothers who have recently lost their mother. When a bag of money literally lands at their feet, moral compasses don't always point north. The boys learn twin lessons about how little happiness money can buy and how much family is really worth. Bonus: It's also a movie.

One Crazy Summer

By Rita Williams-Garcia, 2010



All the books about the Gaither sisters are pure gold. The first in the series, *One Crazy Summer*, sends them to spend the summer of 1968 with their estranged mother in Oakland, where the three girls are left almost entirely to

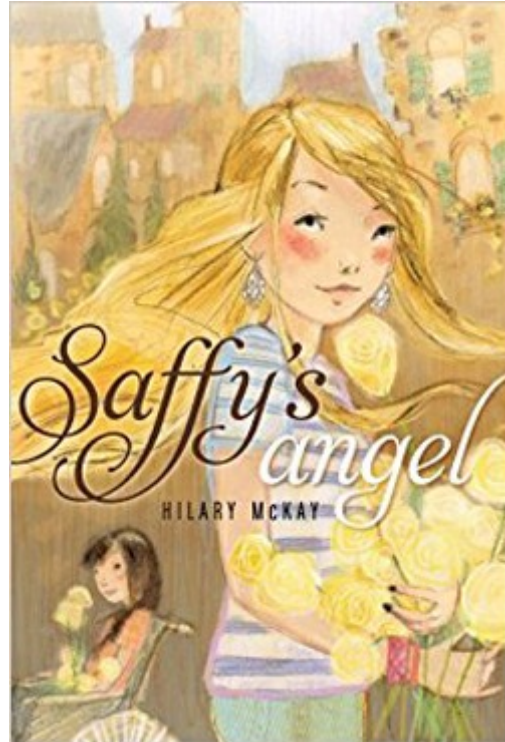


their own devices. There is naturally a lot of bickering and bossing, but the girls take their responsibility for each other very seriously. Bonus: Readers will learn as much about the Black Panthers' history as the Gaither girls do.

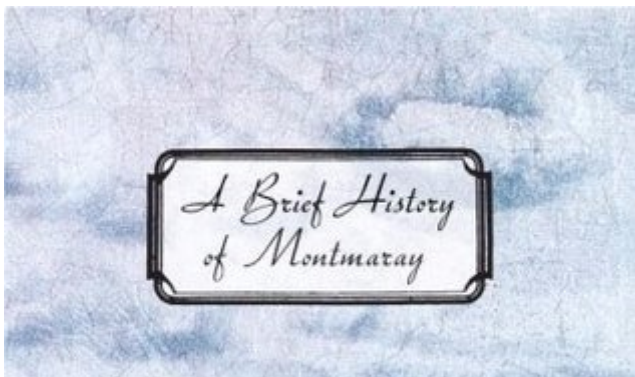
Saffy's Angel

By Hilary McKay, 2005

In *Saffy's Angel*, Hilary McKay reminds us that family is family, no matter what — even if it's weird, even if it's adopted. When Saffy discovers that her sisters and brother are really her cousins, she hopes that recovering a special item willed to her by her grandfather will help her figure out who she really is. The predictable results are filled with charming characters and quintessentially British humor.



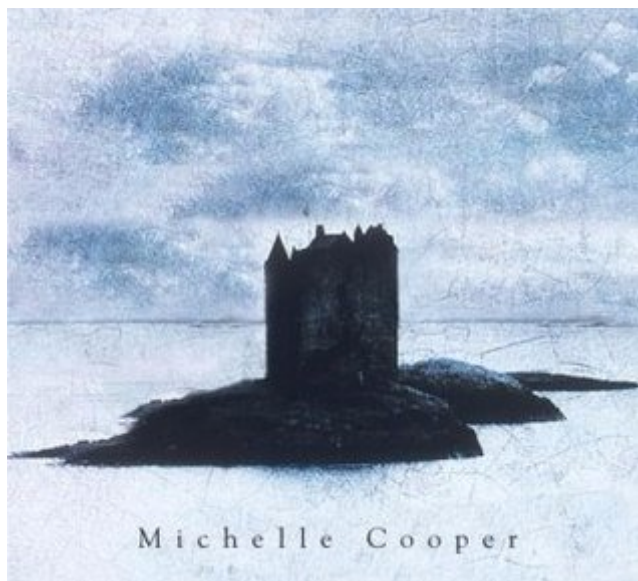
Ages 12+



The Montmaray Journals

By Michelle Cooper, 2009

A Brief History of Montmaray
(first of the *Montmaray Journals*)



(most of the *Mermaid's Journal*) by Michelle Cooper is a young adult book set in a tiny island kingdom during the run-up to the second world war. The teenagers of an eccentric royal family learn, grow and defeat Nazis together. The series is heavily influenced by Dodie Smith's *I Capture the Castle*, but

with more adventures and less infatuation.

Six Feet Over It

By Jennifer Longo, 2014

In this debut novel, Leigh has lost her best friend and been put to work in a graveyard. After years making herself invisible while her family fought her older sister Kai's leukemia, Leigh is having a hard time figuring out how to be alive now that Kai is in remission. Leigh gives more in the unbalanced relationship between the sisters, but Kai is still the only person in their emotionally exhausted family to notice that Leigh has needs, too. Bonus: The author is local.

Girl Mans Up

By M-E Girard, 2016

Pen is the butch teen daughter of conservative immigrant parents. She doesn't want to be a boy, or to be a girl the way everyone else wants her to be a girl. She just wants to be left alone to be herself.

but faces constant bullying, parental pressure and unstable friendships. The only person who really gets her is her older brother. M-E Girard's new novel fills an important representation gap in YA fiction.

The Rest of Us Just Live Here

By Patrick Ness, 2015

The Rest of Us Just Live Here has a delightful premise — what is it like to be an average kid in a world of superheroes? While the “chosen ones” open interdimensional portals and stave off apocalypses, Mikey deals with more ordinary problems, like getting a date to prom and dealing with his two sisters (one has an eating disorder).

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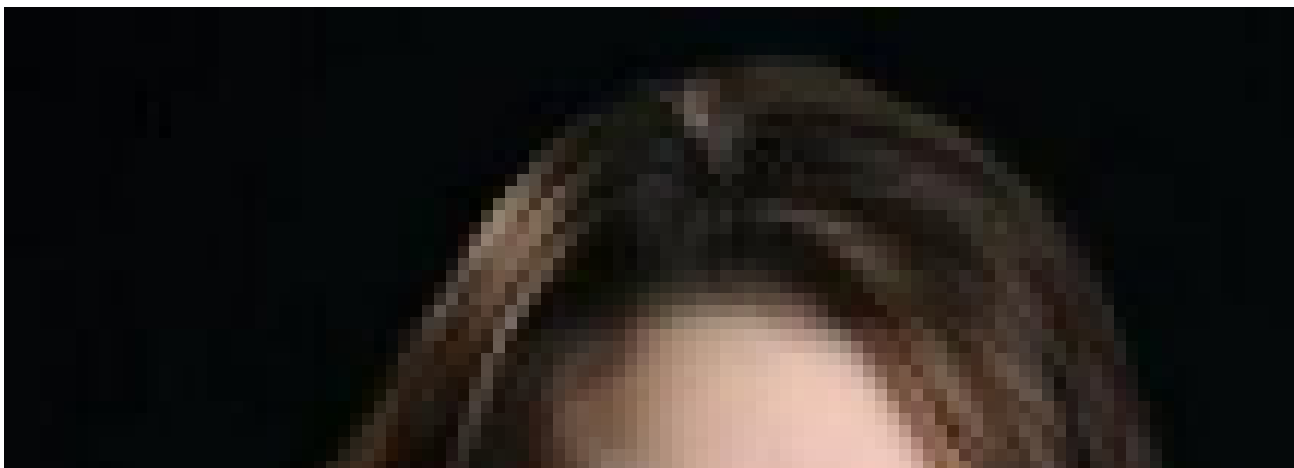
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Gemma Alexander is a Seattle-based freelance writer with two daughters. When she is not writing for ParentMap, she [blogs about books and travel](#) and spends too much time on Twitter.

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