

# Delve Deeper into *15 to Life: Kenneth's Story*

A film by Nadine Pequenez

This list of fiction and nonfiction books, compiled by Erica Bess, Susan Conlon and Hanna Lee of Princeton Public Library, provides a range of perspectives on the issues raised by the POV documentary *15 to Life: Kenneth's story*.

**15 to Life: Kenneth's Story:** *The United States is the only country in the world that routinely condemns children to die in prison. This is the story of one of those children, now a young man, seeking a second chance in Florida. At age 15, Kenneth Young received four consecutive life sentences for a series of armed robberies. Imprisoned for more than a decade, he believed he would die behind bars. Now a U.S. Supreme Court decision could set him free.* 15 to Life: Kenneth's Story follows Young's struggle for redemption, revealing a justice system with thousands of young people serving sentences intended for society's most dangerous criminals.

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## ADULT NON-FICTION

**Alexander, Michelle.** *The New Jim Crow: Mass Incarceration in the Age of Colorblindness.* New York: Perseus Distribution, 2012. This work argues that the War on Drugs and policies that deny convicted felons equal access to employment, housing, education, and public benefits create a permanent under caste based largely on race.

**Calvin, Elizabeth, Ian Kysel and Alison Parker.** *Against All Odds: Prison Conditions for Youth Offenders Serving Life Without Parole Sentences in the United States.* New York: Human Rights Watch, 2012. Currently, more than 2,500 inmates in the United States await death in adult prison, sentenced to life without parole for crimes they committed while they were under the age of 18.

**Chura, David.** *I Don't Wish Nobody to Have a Life Like Mine: Tales of Kids in Adult Lockup.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2011. Chura, a New York county penitentiary high school teacher, tells the stories of juveniles sentenced as adults, giving voice to a population that is regularly demonized and calling into question the way that our society regularly sentences children as adults.

**Currie, Elliott.** *Crime and Punishment in America.* MacMillan Press, 2013. When *Crime and Punishment in America* was first published in 1998, the national incarceration rate had doubled in just over a decade, and yet the United States remained the most violent industrialized society in the world. Today, there are several hundred thousand more inmates in the penal system, yet violence remains endemic in our society. In this revelatory work, renowned criminologist Elliott Currie offers a vivid critique of our nation's prison policies, showing us the path to a more peaceable and just society.

**Fader, Jamie J.** *Falling Back: Incarceration and Transitions to Adulthood Among Urban Youth.* New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers University Press, 2013. Based on over three years of ethnographic research with black and Latino males, Fader documents the transition to adulthood for a particularly vulnerable population: young inner-city men of color who have, by the age of eighteen, already been imprisoned.

**Feld, Barry C.** *Kids, Cops, and Confessions: Inside the Interrogation Room.* NYU Press, 2012. Barry Feld offers the first report of what actually happens when police question juveniles. Drawing on remarkable data, Feld analyzes interrogation tapes and transcripts, police reports, juvenile court filings and sentences, describing in rich detail what actually happens in the interrogation room.

**Ferguson, Olivia.** *Should Juveniles Be Given Life Without Parole? Detroit, MI: Gale Cengage Learning, 2011.* This collection of essays with opposing viewpoints focuses on the practice of sentencing juvenile criminals to life imprisonment, covering such topics as the possibility of rehabilitation, the safety of communities, and the influence of racial prejudice.

**McCall, Nathan.** *Makes Me Wanna Holler: A Young Black Man in America.* New York: Random House, 1994. Examining the complexities of the problems of black youths from an insider's perspective, an African-American journalist recalls his own troubled childhood, his rehabilitation while in prison, and his successful *Washington Post* career. The author remembers his journey from a working class African American neighborhood to prison to a prestigious position on the *Washington Post*.

**Rosenfeld, Richard.** *Economics and Youth Violence: Crime, Disadvantage and Community.* New York: NYU Press, 2013. Rosenfeld examines how economic conditions such as poverty, unemployment, inflation, and economic growth impact youth violence.

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## ADULT FICTION

**Baxter, Bethany Mackin.** *Two Sons.* Charleston: CreateSpace, 2010. Since the murder of his only child, Steven, two years ago, wealthy Jewish widower Harry Wyman has been consumed with anger at the African American boy who pulled the trigger and the gang members who were with him, but when he accidentally meets James Grey, the shooter, the lonely man's world is turned upside down.



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**King, Stephen. *The Green Mile*. Signet Books, 2000.**

They call death row at Cold Mountain Penitentiary "The Green Mile." John Coffey, sentenced to die for the rape and murder of two young girls, is the latest addition to the Mile. Paul Edgecomb, the ward superintendent, discovers that there is more to John Coffey than meets the eye, for this friendly giant has the power to heal.

**Triggell, Jonathan. *Boy A*. London: Serpent's Tail, 2007.**

Jack has spent most of his young life in juvenile prison institutions. At 24, he is utterly innocent of the world, yet guilty of a monstrous childhood crime. How guilty? Who was the boy who committed that crime, and is he the same person who can now survive only by hiding his real identity.

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## NON-FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Gantos, Jack. *Hole in My Life*. New York: Barrar, Straus and Giroux, 2002.**

In the summer of 1971 Gantos was a young aspiring writer looking for adventure. For ten thousand dollars, he agreed to help sail a yacht loaded with hashish from the Virgin Islands to New York City, where he and his partners sold the drug until federal agents caught up with them. For his part in the conspiracy, Gantos was sentenced to serve up to six years in prison. The author recounts in this memoir how writing helped him endure and ultimately overcome the worst experience of his life.

**Harper, Hill. *Letters to a Young Brother*. New York: Gotham Books, 2007.**

Offering inspirational advice in a down-to-earth style, this unique compilation of letters provides wisdom, guidance, and heartfelt insight to help the reader chart their own path to success. Based on the author's motivational speaking at inner-city schools across the country, the letters deal with the tough

issues that face young people today.

**Harper, Hill. *Letters to an Incarcerated Brother*. New York: Gotham Books, 2014.**

After the publication of the bestselling *Letters to a Young Brother*, accomplished actor and speaker Hill Harper began to receive an increasing number of moving letters from inmates who yearned for a connection with a successful role model. With disturbing statistics on African-American incarceration rates on his mind, Harper set out to address the specific needs of inmates. Harper's powerful message from the heart provides advice and inspiration in the face of despair along with encouraging words for restoring a sense of self-worth.

**Haugen, David M. and Susan Musser. *Juvenile Justice*. Detroit: Greenhaven Press, 2013.**

(Teens Rights and Freedoms series.) *Juvenile Justice* examines the laws and working of the justice system in relationship to juvenile offenders.

**Jacobs, Thomas A. *They Broke the Law, You Be the Judge: True Cases of Teen Crime*. Minneapolis, MN: Free Spirit Publishing, 2003.**

Teens often hear about other teens who get into trouble with the law. But they're seldom asked what they think should happen next and why. A unique introduction to the juvenile justice system, *They Broke the Law—You Be the Judge* invites teens to preside over a variety of real-life cases.

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## FICTION FOR YOUNGER READERS

**Myers, Walter Dean. *Monster*. New York City: HarperCollins, 1999.**

While on trial as an accomplice to a murder, sixteen-year-old Steve Harmon records his experiences in prison and in the courtroom in the form of a film script as he tries to come to terms with the course his life has taken.

**Myers, Walter Dean. *Lockdown*. New York City: HarperCollins, 2010.**

What's it like in juvie jail? Enter the world of fourteen-year-old Reese, who's locked up at Progress juvenile detention facility. Can he get a second chance? In *Lockdown*, acclaimed author Walter Dean Myers offers an honest story about finding a way to make it without getting lost in the shuffle.

**Pileggi, Leah. *Prisoner 88*. Watertown: Charlesbridge, 2013.**

In 1885, ten-year-old Jake is sent to prison for killing a man who threatened his father, and struggles to survive the harsh realities of prison life in the Idaho Territory.

**Sachar, Louis. *Holes*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1998.**

As further evidence of his family's bad fortune, which they attribute to a curse on a distant relative, Stanley Yelnats is sent to a hellish correctional camp in the Texas desert where he finds his first real friend, a treasure, and a new sense of himself.

