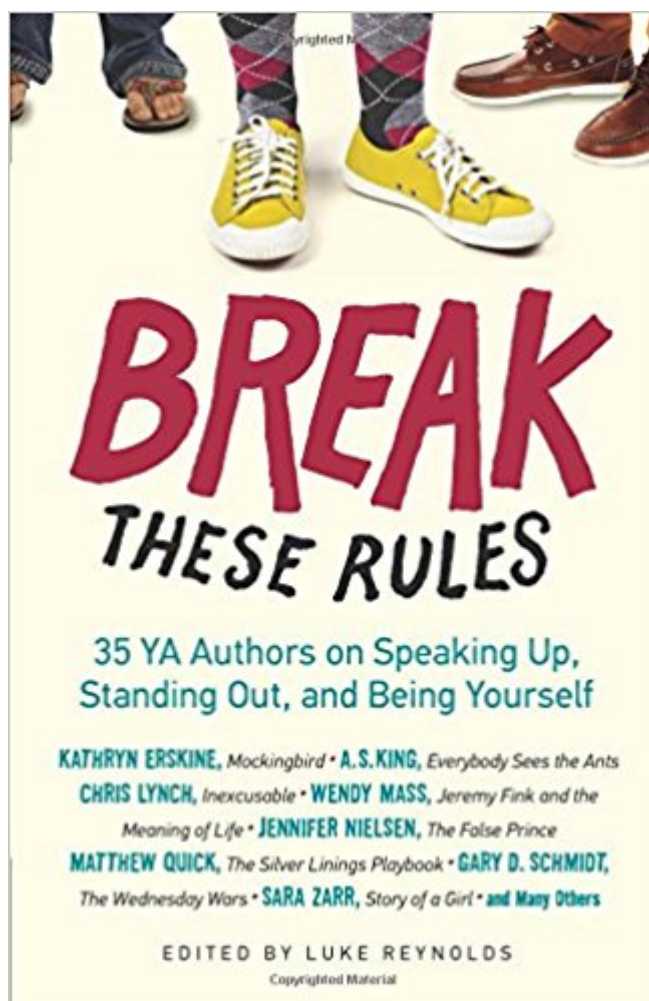


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# Break These Rules: 35 YA Authors On Speaking Up, Standing Out, And Being Yourself



## Synopsis

Middle grade and young adult authors speak candidly on the unspoken "rules" of adolescence in this collection of moving, inspiring, and often funny essays. This unique volume encourages readers to break with conformity and defy age-old, and typically inaccurate, orthodoxy--including such conventions as Boys can't be gentle, kind, or caring; One must wear Abercrombie & Fitch in order to fit in; Girls should act like girls; and One must go to college after finishing high school. With contributions from acclaimed, bestselling, and award-winning young adult authors--including Gary D. Schmidt, author of *The Wednesday Wars*; Matthew Quick, author of *The Silver Linings Playbook*; Sara Zarr, author of *Story of a Girl*; and Wendy Mass, author of *A Mango-Shaped Space*--this collection encourages individuality by breaking traditionally held norms, making it an ideal resource for tweens and teens.

## Book Information

Lexile Measure: 960L (What's this?)

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Age Range: 12 and up

Grade Level: 7 and up

## Customer Reviews

Gr 7 Up "Nearly three dozen young adult authors each address a rule that should be bent or ignored, such as always sit in your assigned seat, dress appropriately, never be alone, or don't quit. Each contributor shares personal experience and advice, which makes for good, varied reading that will surely offer something unique for many readers. The essays are inspiring and thought-provoking, and many offer truly funny moments. Reynolds provides an

excellent flow between essays. This title could easily be read cover to cover or by individual selection based on theme. There is a nice mix of male and female voices. Especially good are Leslie Connor's "Don't Tell Lies," in which she confesses to actually liking rules; Lisa Burman's essay on eating disorders, titled "Don't Get Fat"; and Chris Barton's "Go to College After High School," because it allows readers to think about their options. As readers head back to the classrooms this fall, these essays can serve as discussion starters and give readers a jumping-off point for thinking about the bigger picture and life after high school. Elaine Baran Black, Georgia Public Library Service, Atlanta (c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted.

Thirty-five writers use the 20/20 hindsight of their adult perches to look back and give back. Weaving together this caring anthology is the message to teens to pump up the volume on their inner voice and to consider writing as a vehicle to traverse adolescence. While each contribution is deeply heartfelt, the shining stars of the collection are those that elegantly guide the reader with authentic, personal specifics on journeys that are genuinely transformative. Matthew Quick shares the experience of attending a wedding in Namibia with his wife, Alicia Besette; Luke Reynolds and his brother Chris run the London Marathon; and Lynda Mullaly Hunt's extraordinary big brother Ricky introduces someone who could shape readers' future relationships with friends and family. The contributors' biographies reveal more personal insights along with professional accomplishments, and teens might well use the biographies as references to read more from a favorite new author. Grades 7-12. --Gail Bush

Break These Rules is a great read. It's full of thought provoking social norms and rules that are challenged and reasons why they should be challenged. I enjoyed reading each story. It led to great conversation and dialog on who we are and what we think is right and what society thinks we are and what is right.

this is a really good book, i enjoy all the different perspectives it offers on the societal rules that are okay to break sometimes.

Not sure about the book however, was awesome. Tried to purchase thru Barnes and Noble and a complete disaster.

I thoroughly enjoyed this collection of adolescent rules to be broken. It's a great anthology of adult authors looking back at things they did do-- didn't do-- wish they had done, with a message for teens of today. Some of the most compelling advice gives over-scheduled, over-managed, helicoptered teens permission to sit and be still. I enjoyed hearing from so many different authors, some wildly famous, some less so. The inclusion of plenty of men should answer the criticism that there is no YA for boys, while still celebrating the diversity of the women of YA and the power of girls. Recommended!

As a whole, *Break These Rules* was a bit of a disappointment. I wanted to love it, I really did, but most of the essays just weren't for me. The majority of the 35 YAL authors included in this collection, some whom I recognized by name and most of whom I didn't, try too hard and just don't hit the balance of inspiration and real-life honesty that I was hoping for when I received the book. The essays in this collection are targeted at teens and they encourage them to go break traditional and long-standing rules, to question the norm, and to go against the status quo - all things I encourage both my own children and my teenage students on a regular basis. One overwhelming message running throughout the collection was the idea to be still, embrace calm, and be bored - ideas that are important and should be encouraged in everyone. There is also the standard advice to not worry about your appearance, not second guess yourself, and to trust your judgement and your instincts. So my disappointment isn't with the subject matter, but the collection misses the mark in its delivery of the message. The authors' life experiences range from speech disorders to trips across Africa to hospital ER visits to being flat chested, but many of them had the same tone and I just can't get on board with that. A parent committing suicide and finding a note that says a boy thinks you're not pretty both have an impact, don't get me wrong, but not to the same degree or in the same way. This collection presents the authors' experiences without giving appropriate deference to more weighty topics or having the perspective to acknowledge differences between a one day struggle and a life altering event. And because of this, many of the authors seem like they are reaching and trying too hard to connect with their YA audience. There are some good pieces in the collection (see *Final Word* for my favorite), but for me, unfortunately the essays I had difficulty getting through outweighed the entertaining and/or inspiring ones. It just goes to show that being able to write fiction doesn't always translate into nonfiction or memoir writing. *Final Word*: Not really for me, though there are a few gems hidden in its pages that are worth finding (like Matthew Quick's "It's Better To Be Safe Than Sorry").

First off, this title is slightly misleading: it's a mix of young adult and middle grade authors writing about breaking rules. I'd name and link to all of the authors, but last time I did that I decided the effort wasn't worth it. Second off, most of the authors are worth looking up. Each author focuses on a different rule, which titles their essay. Therefore, a quick scan of the table of contents is probably enough to help you decide whether this collection is for you. I quite enjoyed it, and thought that much of the advice wasn't quite what I expected. I liked Wendy Mass advising people to be bored sometimes. (She's not the only one.) I groaned when I saw the title "Follow the Money, Not Your Heart" (Lisa Schroeder) since I currently am in a position where I really wish I had followed the money, but the advice tends more towards balance. There are times to follow your heart and times to follow the money. (Too bad figuring out which is which is hard!) There's a nice mix of well-known names (A.S. King, Matthew Quick, Carl Deuker) and more obscure authors (Sayantani Dasgupta, Natalie Dias Lorenzi, Anna Staniszewski). There were enough familiar names to draw me in, and enough unfamiliar ones that sounded like they wrote cool stuff that I have plenty of new books to track down and read. BREAK THESE RULES is unlikely to be a revelatory experience for adults, or even for the teens it's aimed at. But it's less pat than you might expect. Some advice is pretty common - speak up or not having to look like a model. Other advice is something a young person might not hear much, like it's okay not to go to college. Others were unexpected, like Sara Zarr advocating talking about religion with people. And, of course, the many authors in the anthology note that some rules are worth following. (I don't know about you, but I'll stick to driving the right way down the road and not touching the power line with bare hands.) But in the end, we all break rules. What rules have you broken lately?

A great and empowering read! Breaks from conventional ideals in a refreshing way. I think this book is a great read for teens "trying to figure 'it' out."

I really enjoyed this...some excellent points and perspectives to help navigate an important but tough phase of life!

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