



Books featuring a character with ME

1, John Conolly - A Song of Shadows

#MEAction review

"I know some people with ME, and tried hard to get it right."

John Connolly

If like me you are a fan of thrillers – especially ones with a more than the unusual twist – then you probably don't need me to introduce the almost legendary work of Irish-born John Connolly, and his stalwart hero, detective Charlie Parker.

But, I think it is an important development when we come across such a renowned author choosing to include ME/CFS as an illness within their work. Indeed I am left wondering if this is the first occasion such a thing has occurred and if it might indicate an increased level of acceptance as to the legitimacy and seriousness of our disease.

In Connolly's latest novel A Song of Shadows our hero is nursing his wounds and recuperating in a rented house next door to nine year old Amanda and her mother:

<https://www.meaction.net/2015/09/04/bestselling-authors-latest-novel-features-girl-with-mecfs/>

2. Girl In The Window by Penny Joelson

YA novel

Author Penny Joelson knows what it's like to have Myalgic Encephalomyelitis (ME): to feel exhausted and in constant pain, trying to explain the condition to others. It's why she wanted to write a book for teens and young adults with a character going through exactly the same thing...

<https://www.booktrust.org.uk/news-and-features/features/2019/may/girl-in-the-window-what-its-like-to-have-me-or-chronic-fatigue-when-youre-young/>

Authors with ME

1. A Girl Behind Dark Glasses by Jessica Taylor-Bearman

From a darkened world, bound by four walls, a young woman called Jessica tells the tale of her battle against the M.E Monster. The severest form of a neuro immune disease called Myalgic Encephalomyelitis went to war with her at just 15 years old. From beneath her dark glasses, Jessica glimpses a world far different from the one she remembers as a teenage school girl.

<https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/36528910-a-girl-behind-dark-glasses>

2. Shirley Conran

“After contracting M.E., I could no longer work full time. I started to write books, nearly all of which have been international bestsellers. They include Superwoman (1975); Down with Superwoman (1991, the revised and updated edition of Superwoman) and other self-help books for women. My first novel, Lace, was filmed (No. 1 mini-series movie, USA 1984). My other novels are Savages, Crimson, Tiger Eyes and The Revenge.”

<https://www.shirleyconran.com/shirleys-books/>

3. Laura Hillenbrand

Laura Hillenbrand is author of two award-winning, best-selling books: Seabiscuit: An American Legend, about a champion race horse who became a national legend during the Great Depression, and Unbroken: A World War II Story of Survival, Resilience, and Redemption, about a promising track Olympian who suffered years as a WWII POW in Japan. Both books were adapted into acclaimed movies.

Hillenbrand lives with myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome (ME/CFS) and is open about her illness, writing "A Sudden Illness," a poignant 2003 essay in the The New Yorker about the onset and her long confinement as she slowly recovered. At the same time, when asked in a 2011 The New York Times interview whether she would ever write an autobiography, she said: "I have to spend so much time being vigilant on my body and worrying about my body and suffering. So much of my own autobiography would be about my health, and I don't know if I want to spend my professional life thinking about that. I write to escape my circumstances."

https://me-pedia.org/wiki/Laura_Hillenbrand

4. Ali Smith

At the age of 27, she developed chronic fatigue syndrome, from which it took her many months to recover. “I got quite ill; I had a bout of chronic fatigue syndrome. It was like I'd hit a wall, so I waited quietly to see what would happen next. I had it very lightly – people have it much more harshly than I had it - but the 'lightly' I had it was horrible. I was pretty out of it for a year and a half.” About cycling, she stated: “For me it was fantastically practically useful, because Cambridge is flat. If you have Chronic Fatigue Syndrome it's quite hard to walk, but cycling is easier because it uses one third of the amount of energy that walking does. All of a sudden I was mobile again and it was just blessed relief.”

https://www.goodreads.com/author/show/68992.Ali_Smith

https://me-pedia.org/wiki/Ali_Smith

5. Jo Jakeman

“At a Derby Book Festival event recently, I mentioned that I gave up my job because of Chronic Fatigue Syndrome and this gave me more time to write. Someone asked, 'How do you manage to write with a chronic illness?' I said something bland like, 'Self-care... naps... eating well...' Two people thanked me for being candid about my illnesses and to tell me their own struggles with their health. But I wasn't as honest as I could have been.”

<https://www.jojakeman.com>