

The Ables

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Age 14

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The Ables is a novel about a group of superhero kids that are disabled in some way that affects their powers. Phillip Salinger is a young telekinetic, one who can move things with his mind, is blind. After learning about his powers at the age of 13, he soon goes to super hero high school. He is placed in a disabled superhero class with about ten other kids including the kids that will be part of the Ables, Phillip's superhero group. Phillip soon learns of a prophecy that foretells of a superhero that has all known powers and will bring great evil and there is a group that believes this called the Believers. They believe he will be reincarnated before that, they participate in the SuperSim, a simulation that feels like being a real superhero. They meet a mysterious man named Finch who is leader of the Believers. Finch believes Phillip is the reincarnation of the man who can do all. He will try to force Phillip in any way possible to follow the prophecy. There will be some shocking plot twists until it all comes down to one big finale.

One of the brilliant ways the author separates this from other superhero stories is by making the main characters disabled. This leaves them in between superhero and human as they have some disability that impairs their powers. This allows the author to look at the humanity of superheroes and show they're only humans after all. I feel this makes the story better than most as superhero stories because they are mostly escapism. This story is escapism partially, but it also shows how the real world reacts to disabled superheroes. It is darker than your average superhero story. I applaud the author for making it more than a superhero story; he makes it a conspiracy thriller and a psychological drama. It is drama first, superhero second.

The target audience would probably be age 13 or older as it is darker than most superhero stories. There are some dark and mature themes as well. It will also appeal to anyone who likes superhero stories of any kind. If you liked this book, I would recommend *Hero* (Mike Lupica), *Steelheart* (Brandon Sanderson), and *The Villain's Sidekick* (Stephen Brophy). The one thing *The Ables* and all the other books I recommended have in common is a willingness to use the conventions of superhero narratives to tell stories that have nothing to do with superhero tropes. That's not to say that these four books don't borrow from the decades of superhero archetypes out there — there are versions of Batman and/or Superman, more or less, in all of them. But in all four of them, the systems that create and sustain superheroes are somewhat different, and a bit more well-thought-out, than the standard Justice League pastiche.

All four novels also pack twists and surprises, in which people aren't who you think they are, or someone turns out to be on a different side than everybody believed.