

Reading Lists for Early Readers

As parents we're always looking for books our children will enjoy. Here are a few lists by well-regarded sources; there are so many reading lists on the Internet. The local librarians know what books children love, and once they get to know your child, they can make specific suggestions.

I. Great Books Foundation Reading List K-2 (to get complete list, purchase their books)

The diverse selection of folktales, stories, and poetry in Great Books K–2 captivates young students and helps them develop the skills they need to become good readers.

[Sailing Ship Series](#) Grades K-1

Volume 1

The Shoemaker and the Elves Brothers Grimm as told by Wanda Gág

The Frog Went A-Traveling Russian folktale as told by Vsevolod Garshin

"Night into Dawn" Poetry by Robert Hillyer and John Ciardi, and a Mescalero Apache song

Volume 2

The Tale of Two Bad Mice Beatrix Potter

Bouki Cuts Wood Haitian folktale as told by Harold Courlander

"Fantasy" Poetry by Sylvia Plath, Edward Lear, and Lewis Carroll

Volume 3

Lion at School Philippa Pearce

Coyote Rides the Sun Native American folktale as told by Jane Louise Curry

"Seasons" Poetry by Nikki Giovanni, Robert Louis Stevenson, and Langston Hughes

[Dragon Series](#) Grades K-1

Volume 1

The Frog Prince Brothers Grimm as told by Wanda Gag

Guinea Fowl and Rabbit Get Justice African folktale as told by Harold Courlander and George Herzog

"Nature Speaks" Poetry by Carl Sandburg, James Reeves, and Federico García Lorca

Volume 2

Feraj and the Magic Lute Arabian folktale as told by Jean Russell Larson

The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse Beatrix Potter

"Companions" Poetry by A. A. Milne, Gwendolyn Brooks, and Robert Louis Stevenson

Volume 3

Buya Marries the Tortoise African folktale as told by W. F. P. Burton

The Huckabuck Family and How They Raised Pop Corn in Nebraska and Quit and Came Back Carl Sandburg

"Magical Places" Poetry by Byrd Baylor, William Shakespeare, and Martin Brennan

[Sun Series](#) Grade 1

Volume 1

The Black Hen's Egg French folktale as told by Natalie Savage Carlson

The Mouse and the Wizard Hindu fable as told by Lucia Turnbull
"Imagination" Poetry by Leslie Norris, Mark Van Doren, and Robert Louis Stevenson
Volume 2
Rumpelstiltskin Brothers Grimm, translated by Ralph Manheim
Eeyore Has a Birthday and Gets Two Presents A. A. Milne
"When I Grow Up" Poetry by Rabindranath Tagore and X. J. Kennedy, and a Chippewa song
Volume 3
The King of the Frogs African folktale as told by Humphrey Harman
Snow-White and the Seven Dwarfs Brothers Grimm, translated by Randall Jarrell
"Mysterious Animals" Poetry by T. S. Eliot, Jenifer Kelly, and Robert Graves
[Pegasus Series](#) Grade 1
Volume 1
Chestnut Pudding Iroquois folktale as told by John Bierhorst
The Pied Piper English folktale as told by Joseph Jacobs
"Fanciful Animals" Poetry by Edward Lear and A. A. Milne
Volume 2
The Mermaid Who Lost Her Comb Scottish folktale as told by Winifred Finlay
Hansel and Gretel Brothers Grimm, translated by Randall Jarrell
"Special Places" Poetry by Gwendolyn Brooks and Robert Frost, and a Navajo poem
Volume 3
Mother of the Waters Haitian folktale as told by Diane Wolkstein
Zlateh the Goat Isaac Bashevis Singer
"Secret Messages" Poetry by Robert Louis Stevenson, Barbara Juster Esbensen, and Emily Dickinson
[Series 2, Book One](#) Grade 2
The Happy Lion Louise Fatio
The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin Beatrix Potter
How the Camel Got His Hump Rudyard Kipling
Kanga and Baby Roo Come to the Forest, and Piglet Has a Bath (from Winnie-the-Pooh) A. A. Milne
Arap Sang and the Cranes African folktale as told by Humphrey Harman
Blue Moose Daniel Manus Pinkwater
Anancy and Dog and Puss and Friendship West Indian folktale as told by James Berry
Jack and the Beanstalk English folktale as told by Joseph Jacobs
The Magic Listening Cap Japanese folktale as told by Yoshiko Uchida
The Jackal and the Partridge Punjabi folktale as told by Flora Annie Steel
Nail Soup Swedish folktale as told by Linda Rahm
The Apple of Contentment Howard Pyle
[Series 2, Book Two](#) Grade 2
The Red Balloon Albert Lamorisse
The Other Side of the Hill Elizabeth Coatsworth
The Emperor's New Clothes Hans Christian Andersen
How the Elephant Became Ted Hughes
Anansi's Fishing Expedition African folktale as told by Harold Courlander and George Herzog

The Velveteen Rabbit Margery Williams
The Terrible Leak Japanese folktale as told by Yoshiko Uchida
The Singing Tortoise West African folktale as told by Harold Courlander and George Herzog
Three Boys with Jugs of Molasses and Secret Ambitions Carl Sandburg
Cinderella Charles Perrault
The Mouse's Bride Indian folktale as told by Lucia Turnbull
How Coyote Stole the Sun Native American folktale as told by Jane Louise Cu

II. Scholastic Top 25 Picture Books

1. *Where the Wild Things Are*, by Maurice Sendak, (HarperCollins, 1963) is “so compressed in its language and so exuberant in its pictures and so psychologically right,” says author Jane Yolen, herself nominated for *Owl Moon*. “I return to it again and again.” So do teachers! Max earned three times as many votes as a certain munching insect.

Who it’s for: Grades PreK–3

What it’s about: When Max is sent to bed without his dinner, he imagines an adventure to the land of the Wild Things, where he meets a crowd of fanciful beasts. When he becomes homesick, he wakes up in his bedroom to find his warm supper waiting for him.

2. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* by Eric Carle (Penguin, 1969).

Who it’s for: Grades PreK–2

What it’s about: Eric Carle’s colorful classic depicts the famished insect eating his way through an apple, two pears, three plums, and a smorgasbord of other treats. Along the way, readers learn about colors and counting—not to mention the life cycle of a caterpillar.

3. *The Polar Express* by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin, 1985). For many of you this shadowy story is a winter must, up there with hot chocolate and mittens. Third-grade teacher Janice Wright explains: “It’s magic.”

Who it’s for: Grades K–5

What it’s about: Could there be a better Christmas tale than that of a boy lying awake on Christmas Eve who is taken by Santa himself to the North Pole? This Caldecott winner encourages kids to believe in the spirit of Christmas.

4. *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown (HarperCollins).

Who it’s for: Grades PreK–2

What it’s about: A young bunny tries to stave off sleep by bidding goodnight to every item he can think of leading himself (and readers!) to a quiet sense of peace. Clement Hurd’s illustrations range from small black and white drawings to full color beauties.

5. *Love You Forever* by Robert Munsch, illustrated by Sheila McGraw (Firefly).

“I can’t help myself, I cry every time I read it,” says *Instructor* editor Hannah Trierweiler. Sniff. Pass the tissues.

Who it’s for: Grades K–3

What it’s about: The story of a boy and his mom. While the mother continues to rock her boy to sleep—even if she must sneak in his bedroom to do so—eventually he will do the same for her. A touching cycle-of-life tale.

6. *The Giving Tree* by Shel Silverstein (HarperCollins).

Who it’s for: Grades 2–5

What it's about: This wise and lovely story of the tree that gives her all for love is also a wonderful tale about life transforming the boy that played on her branches to an old man that sits on her stump.

7. *Sylvester and the Magic Pebble* by William Steig (Simon & Schuster).

Who it's for: Grades K–5

What it's about: Once a pebble-collecting donkey finds his lucky stone, misadventure begins. Once Sylvester accidentally turns himself into a stone, it seems all is lost, but eventually he comes back to his donkey self—and wishing is approached more carefully!

8. *Madeline* by Ludwig Bemelmans (Penguin).

Who it's for: Grades K–5

What it's about: Ah, the Parisian adventures of Madeline! Her life with the nuns, her trip to the hospital, and Bemelmans' depictions of the city still satisfy kids of many ages. This long running series never surpasses the charm of its first installment!

9. *The Little House* by Virginia Lee Burton (Houghton Mifflin).

Who it's for: Grades 1–4

What it's about: Before arriving at the happy ending, readers will experience the growth of a city as it surrounds the previously isolated little house. Burton's fanciful drawings add to the delight of the story.

10. *Blueberries for Sal* by Robert McCloskey (Penguin).

Who it's for: Grades PreK–2

What it's about: As Sal and her mom set out to pick blueberries, so do a mother bear and her cub. Eventually the young set swap moms for a cross-species adventure tale and a comedy of errors.

11. *The Snowy Day* by Ezra Jack Keats (Penguin).

Who it's for: Grades K–4

What it's about: A book that makes the simple, everyday activities of a little boy into an epic. When Peter awakes to the first snow of the season, every detail of the day—from kicking snow off a branch to the attempt to save a snowball—becomes magical.

12. *Stellaluna* by Janell Cannon (Harcourt). “Kids really connect to the message,” wrote first-grade teacher Laurie Foote. What higher praise could a book receive?

Who it's for: Grades K–3

What it's about: A story about a fruit bat raised by birds, this book celebrates uniqueness and independence. As a beautifully told tale with gorgeous illustrations and a section of bat information as well, this book has it all.

13. *If You Give a Mouse a Cookie* by Laura Numeroff, illustrated by Felicia Bond (HarperCollins).

Who it's for: Grades PreK–2

What it's about: Oh, that hungry mouse. Once you give him the cookie, the trail of action is unstoppable! By the end, the mouse, the boy that gives him the cookie (and perhaps the reader) are exhausted! With terrific illustrations and a wonderful lead character.

14. *The Other Side* by Jacqueline Woodson, illustrated by E.B. Lewis (Penguin).

Who it's for: Grades 1–4

What it's about: A powerful narrative with echoes of metaphor, this is a story about a fence that divides a white neighborhood from a black one and the two little girls whose need for play and companionship allow them to straddle and then cross it.

[15. Owl Moon](#) by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr (Penguin).

Who it's for: Grades 1–5

What it's about: A classic example of child's mind expanding a simple walk into a glorious adventure. As a girl and her father hike through the moonlit night, the creatures they encounter become thrilling companions for their owl hunt.

[16. The Snowman](#) by Raymond Briggs (Random House) is the only wordless tale on our list.

Who it's for: Grades PreK–2

What it's about: A great book to lead a child into reading. A whimsical story of a boy who makes and then befriends a snowman who both enters his world and takes him out on a nighttime escapade. The enigmatic ending can also be a great beginning.

[17. The Mysteries of Harris Burdick](#) by Chris Van Allsburg (Houghton Mifflin).

Who it's for: Grades 2–6

What it's about: This exquisite book offers fourteen drawing with captions, each its own launch pad for stories and imaginings of any sort. The lack of a cohesive narrative allows, indeed requires, that kids provide their own ideas of what happens next.

[18. Make Way for Ducklings](#) by Robert McCloskey (Penguin). Anita Silvey, author of *100 Best Books for Children*, cherishes McCloskey's "subtle economy in text and art."

Who it's for: Grades K–3

What it's about: Watch out for urban ducks... A great read aloud book, this tale of two mallards who decide to raise their family in the Boston's Public Garden is a perennial favorite. Beautiful drawings and a great story make Boston seem perfect for ducks!

[19. SkippyJon Jones](#) by Judy Schachner (Penguin). This 2003 story of a mischievous cat has the distinction of being the newest teacher pick.

Who it's for: Grades 1–4

What it's about: A wonderful combo of story, rhyme, Spanish-English hybrid, color, action and pure joy, this book has something to enchant any kid and is a fantastic read aloud. SkippyJon is part kitten, part dynamo. A real fiesta (muy caliente)!

[20. No, David!](#) by David Shannon (Scholastic).

Who it's for: Grades K–4

What it's about: As little David careens from one forbidden activity to the next, with his mom shouting the title, David's naughty output is impressive. A kid's book with a "real" soundtrack, the text is drawn from a book the author produced when he was 5!

[21. The Keeping Quilt](#) by Patricia Polacco (Simon & Schuster).

Who it's for: Grades K–3

What it's about: A rich immigrant's tale, this book is the classic American story. A quilt that is made from the bits and pieces of the past to warm up the present, it provides not just the story, but the only color in these otherwise black and white ink drawings.

[22. The Little Engine That Could](#) by Watty Piper, illustrated by George & Doris Hauman (Penguin). Will the real Watty Piper please stand up—and accept our hurrahs? (It's a pseudonym for the original publisher; the author is disputed.)

Who it's for: Grades PreK–3

What it's about: What would childhood be without the whispered "I think I can, I think I can"? This book is possibly the best-known children's classic and a wonderful read-aloud. Its positive message has underscored the days of thousands of children.

23. *The Mitten* by Jan Brett (Penguin). Second-grade teacher Donna Thaggard echoed many voters when she said “any book by Brett” is bound to be an instant favorite.

Who it’s for: Grades K–4

What it’s about: With illustrations to delight, this story of a grandma-knitted mitten that becomes a home to a whole group of chilly winter animals—until a sneeze ousts them all—is a perfect winter companion. Nicki’s glove has a life of its own!

24. *Green Eggs and Ham* by Dr. Seuss (Random House). Thank goodness the good doctor accepted a bet that he couldn’t write a story using only 50 words. As *Instructor* editor Jennifer Prescott sums up in only five words: “I do so like it!”

Who it’s for: Grades PreK–3

What it’s about: I am Sam, Sam I am. Possibly the most fun a kid can have while learning to read, this book’s repetitive phrases, simple drawings and goofy charm make it one of childhood’s must-haves.

25. *Curious George* by H.A. and Margret Ray (Houghton Mifflin).

Who it’s for: Grades PreK–2

What it’s about: The world’s most beloved monkey! Curious George has had many adventures in his day, but it all starts with this classic. Introduce a new generation of readers to his irrepressible chimp.

III. Caldecott Books—Honoring the Best Illustrations in Children’s Books (for complete list see <http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/caldecottmedal/caldecotthonors/caldecottmedal.cfm>)

2009 Medal Winner:

The House in the Night, illustrated by Beth Krommes, written by Susan Marie Swanson (Houghton Mifflin Company)

- ***A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever***, by Marla Frazee (Harcourt, Inc.)
- ***How I Learned Geography***, by Uri Shulevitz (Farrar Straus Giroux)
- ***A River of Words: The Story of William Carlos Williams***, illustrated by Melissa Sweet, written by Jen Bryant (Eerdmans Books for Young Readers, an imprint of Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

2008 Medal Winner:

The Invention of Hugo Cabret by Brian Selznick (Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic)

Honor Books:

- ***Henry’s Freedom Box: A True Story from the Underground Railroad*** illustrated by Kadir Nelson, written by Ellen Levine (Scholastic Press, an imprint of Scholastic)
- ***First the Egg*** by Laura Vaccaro Seeger (Roaring Brook/Neal Porter)
- ***The Wall: Growing Up Behind the Iron Curtain*** by Peter Sís (Farrar/Frances Foster)

- ***Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*** by Mo Willems (Hyperion)

[2007 Medal Winner:](#)

Flotsam by David Wiesner (Clarion)

Honor Books:

- ***Gone Wild: An Endangered Animal Alphabet*** by David McLimans (Walker)
- ***Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom*** illustrated by Kadir Nelson, written by Carole Boston Weatherford (Hyperion/Jump at the Sun)

[2006 Medal Winner:](#)

The Hello, Goodbye Window illustrated by Chris Raschka and written by Norton Juster (Michael di Capua Books/Hyperion Books for Children)

Honor Books:

- ***Rosa*** illustrated by Bryan Collier and written by Nikki Giovanni (Henry Holt and Company)
- ***Zen Shorts*** illustrated and written by Jon J. Muth (Scholastic Press)
- ***Hot Air: The (Mostly) True Story of the First Hot-Air Balloon Ride*** illustrated and written by Marjorie Priceman. (An Anne Schwartz Book/Atheneum Books for Young Readers/Simon & Schuster)
- ***Song of the Water Boatman and Other Pond Poems*** illustrated by Beckie Prange, written by Joyce Sidman (Houghton Mifflin Company)

[2005 Medal Winner:](#)

Kitten's First Full Moon by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow Books/HarperCollinsPublishers)

Honor Books:

- ***The Red Book*** by Barbara Lehman (Houghton Mifflin Company)
- ***Coming on Home Soon*** illustrated by E.B. Lewis, written by Jacqueline Woodson (G.P. Putnam's Son's/Penguin Young Readers Group)
- ***Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*** illustrated and written by Mo Willems. (Hyperion Books for Children)

[2004 Medal Winner:](#)

The Man Who Walked Between the Towers by Mordicai Gerstein (Roaring Brook

Press/Millbrook Press)

Honor Books:

- ***Ella Sarah Gets Dressed*** by Margaret Chodos-Irvine (Harcourt, Inc.)
- ***What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?*** illustrated and written by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page. (Houghton Mifflin Company)
- ***Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*** by Mo Willems. (Hyperion)

2003 Medal Winner:

My Friend Rabbit by Eric Rohmann (Roaring Brook Press/Millbrook Press)

Honor Books:

- ***The Spider and the Fly*** illustrated by Tony DiTerlizzi, written by Mary Howitt (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers)
- ***Hondo & Fabian*** by Peter McCarty (Henry Holt & Co.)
- ***Noah's Ark*** by Jerry Pinkney (SeaStar Books, a division of North-South Books Inc.)

2002 Medal Winner:

The Three Pigs by David Wiesner (Clarion/Houghton Mifflin)

Honor Books:

- ***The Dinosaurs of Waterhouse Hawkins*** illustrated by Brian Selznick, written by Barbara Kerley (Scholastic)
- ***Martin's Big Words: the Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.*** illustrated by Bryan Collier, written by Doreen Rappaport (Jump at the Sun/Hyperion)
- ***The Stray Dog*** by Marc Simont (HarperCollins)

2001 Medal Winner:

So You Want to Be President? Illustrated by David Small, written by Judith St. George (Philomel)

Honor Books:

- ***Casey at the Bat*** illustrated by Christopher Bing, written by Ernest Thayer (Handprint)
- ***Click, Clack, Moo: Cows that Type*** illustrated by Betsy Lewin, written by Doreen Cronin (Simon & Schuster)
- ***Olivia*** by Ian Falconer (Atheneum)

2000 Medal Winner:

Joseph Had a Little Overcoat Simms Taback (Viking)

Honor Books:

- ***A Child's Calendar*** illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman
Text: John Updike (Holiday House)
- ***Sector 7*** by David Wiesner (Clarion Books)
- ***When Sophie Gets Angry-Really, Really Angry*** by Molly Bang (Scholastic)
- ***The Ugly Duckling*** illustrated by Jerry Pinkney Text: Hans Christian Andersen, adapted by Jerry Pinkney (Morrow)