



# Children and Books

Family and Consumer Sciences

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Books are truly special for children of all ages. Books can offer ideas, present new information, and even suggest solutions to childhood difficulties. However, from a child's point of view, a book suggests a pleasurable and rewarding experience. No child is too young to have a book read to him or her, nor too old to enjoy re-reading favorites from earlier years.

### Books for Different Ages

A respect and love for books can be developed very early in life. As children grow, their attention span increases and their interests change. From a young age, children model their parents' attitudes toward books. Parents who read usually have children who are interested in books and reading. Here are some suggestions to keep in mind when selecting a book for a child of a particular age:

**Infants and toddlers** are attracted to pictures of brightly colored objects. Pictures should be simple and may not always need words to tell a story. Children at this age are listeners and will enjoy hearing words repeated that name an object or picture. Books should be selected that have sturdy cloth or cardboard pages that lie flat when turned.

Parents can make reading simple books more fun when they raise or lower their voice, make the sounds of the cow, dog, or horn, and point out familiar objects to a youngster. Parents can also encourage the child to tell what they see, and what sounds are made. As infants grow older they will enjoy jingles, rhymes, and verses.

**Two- and three-year-olds** are interested in stories about people, actions, and activities. They like to hear stories about animals or familiar ideas. Since children at this age are able to sit and listen for a longer period of



time, simple stories with simple plots are popular.

Parents may choose stories that have repeated phrases or sentences, and children at this age often repeat these lines in unison with their parents. Repetitive language in books is also important for language development. Parents may find that their child is wanting to "read" or tell the story now. Allow youngsters this chance to have fun with words and remembering story ideas. These language experiences are pre-reading skills that parents can help their children to develop.

**Four- and five-year-olds** are interested in many types of stories. Their attention span is increasing, so they can read more words and longer stories. However, pictures are still important in explaining an idea within the story.

Parents now note that children at this age have definite interests in story characters. Children may also enjoy telling their version of a familiar story, in a totally

different way from how it was written. Children at this age like using words to communicate. At times, their imagination helps them enjoy books and stories they know well.

**The early school years (ages 6 to 8)** are a time when children begin to develop independent reading skills. Books for children at this age should be selected according to the child's reading ability. Some pictures may still be important, but gradually, fewer pictures will be needed for the children to understand story ideas. A straightforward story that uses many familiar words termed "an easy reader" can be best for children who are just beginning to read independently.

Books for children at this age should be selected with their interests in mind. The 6-, 7-, and 8-year old will want to choose their own books from the library, book fairs, or book stores. With adult guidance, children can begin to choose stories that are appropriate to their reading level and appeal to their interests.

Parents should remember that reading to children should be continued even at this age. Books that may be too difficult for the child to read may be wonderful for a reading time at home. Developing a reading habit can include reading with children at set times each evening...and it only takes a few minutes to read a chapter, or a short story. At this age, children can remember story plots from one day to another and are content to have stories continued.

**Older children (ages 9 to 12)** demonstrate even greater personal preferences in the books they choose to read. Novels and informational books are extremely popular with children at this age. Although reading abilities influence the length of stories selected by older children, occasionally the size of the print used in a book will also encourage or discourage a child from selecting a book. Parents should encourage children to read books that interest them.

Although children at 9 years of age may enjoy having books read to them, by 12 years this interest is decreasing. As children develop greater skill and speed in their reading abilities, they may be less interested in having others read to them. This does not occur with all children, however. Parents should encourage reading together when it is a mutually enjoyable activity for all family members.



### Suggestions for Reading with Children

- Sit in a comfortable area away from distractions and noise. Turn off the television and the radio.
- Establish a set time during the day for reading with children. This might be after lunch, or in the evening before bedtime.
- Young children will enjoy the story even more if they can see the pictures. Hold the book in a comfortable position so that both you and your child can view the pages.
- Read slowly. Reading should be slower than regular conversation.
- Stories should be shorter for younger children. The younger the child, the shorter his interest span.
- Read the story as it is written. Answer questions that the child has, but try not to analyze the story yourself.
- Try to use your natural voice when reading. Change your voice tone for different characters. This can make the story more fun for your child and for you, too.
- After the story has been read, you may want to go back and talk about it. This will help your child develop memory and language skills.

### Major Awards for Children's Books

The following awards recognize the special contributions made by authors and artists to children's litera-

ture. Books that have earned one of the awards have notable value for youngsters of different ages.

**The Caldecott Medal** is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children to the artist of the most distinguished picture book for children published in the U.S. during the preceding year.

**The Newberry Medal** is awarded annually by the Association for Library Service to Children to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American Literature for children during the preceding year.

**National Book Awards** are presented annually to a U.S. author whose books have contributed most significantly to human awareness, national culture, and the spirit of excellence.

**Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal** is presented every five years to an author or illustrator who has made a lasting contribution to children's literature. It was named after the author of the "Little House" series.

**Children's Book Award** is presented each year by the International Reading Association to an author whose work shows unusual promise.

**Carnegie Medal** is awarded each year to an outstanding book first published in the United Kingdom.

**Hans Christian Andersen International Medal** is presented every two years to a living artist and author for outstanding quality of their total works for children.

**Sequoyah Children's Book Award** is an award that is unique to Oklahoma. This award is presented by the Oklahoma Library Association annually; however, the selection is made by children in grades 3 through 6. Children in these grades review books from a list prepared by the Oklahoma Library Association. The award is based upon literary quality and is voted upon by children throughout the state.

**Children's Choices** is published by the Children's Book Council and annually lists favorite books selected by children.

### **Books Help Children Understand Their Concerns**

Books can help children to express their concerns about events occurring in their lives. These events could involve changing friendships, moving to a new school, entering school for the first time, the separation or divorce of parents, or the death of a friend or family member. What follows is only a partial listing of some of the books that help children and their parents begin to discuss events that have greatly concerned them.

### **For Children to Five Years of Age**

#### **Divorce or Separation of Parents**

*The Dinosaurs Divorce*, Laurene and Marc Brown (Little, Brown & Company)

*Where is Daddy? The Story of a Divorce*, Beth Goff (Beacon Press)

*Dear Daddy*, John Schibedel (Albert Whitman)

*A Father Like That*, Charlotte Zolotow (Harper & Row)

*Daddy Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, Betty Boegehold (Golden)

#### **Friends and Friendships**

*Little Duck's Friends*, Muff Singer (Reader's Digest Association, Inc.)

*Clodrow's Adventure: A Book about Friendship*, Mark McCord (Chariot Family Publishing)

*Pooh's Wishing Star*, Bruce Talkington (Little, Brown & Company)

*Let's Make Friends*, Patrick Yale (Viking Books)

*The Berenstain Bears and the Trouble with Friends*, Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House)

*Best Friends Sleep Over*, Jacqueline Rogers (Scholastic, Inc.)

*Peter Rabbit and His Friends*, Beatrix Potter (Frederick Warne & Company)

*A Friend is Someone Who Likes You*, Joan W. Anglund (Harcourt, Brace & World)

#### **Death and Dying**

*Jinka Jinka Jelly Bean*, Molly Dingles and Aimee Bingler (Dingles/Treehouse Court)

*The Goodbye Boat*, Mary Joslin (W. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co.)

*When a Pet Dies*, Fred Rogers and Jim Judkins (Putnam Publishing Group)

*The Dead Bird*, Margaret Wise Brown (Young Scott Books)

#### **Jealousy**

*Abby*, Jeannette Caines (Harper & Row)

*No Fighting, No Biting!* Else Minark (Harper & Row)

*Peter's Chair*, Ezra Jack Keats (Harper & Row)

#### **Independence/Dependence**

*Are You My Mother?* P.D. Eastman (Random House)

*Curious George*, H.A. Rey (Houghton Mifflin)

*Harry The Dirty Dog*, Gene Zion (Harper & Row)  
*The Runaway Bunny*, Margaret Wise Brown (Harper & Row)  
*The Tale Of Peter Rabbit*, Beatrix Potter (Warne)  
*Three Billy Goats Gruff*, Peter Christen Asbjornsen (Harcourt)

### **Moving**

*Franklin's Bad Day*, Paulette Bourgeois (Scholastic Inc.)  
*The Leaving Morning*, Angela Johnson, (Orchard Books)  
*Melanie Mouse's Moving Day*, Cyndy Szekeres (Western Publishing Company)  
*We are Moving*, Rachel Biale (Tricycle P.)  
*Best Friends Together Again*, Alike (Greenwillow Books)  
*The Berenstain Bears Moving Day*, Jan & Stan Berenstain (Random House)

### **Understanding Ourselves**

*Elmo's Good Manners Game*, Catherine Samuels (Western Publishing Company, Inc.)  
*Oh, The Things You Can Think!*, Dr. Seuss (Beginner Books)  
*Look, I'm Growing Up*, Marilyn Knoepfel and Betty Farber (Standard Publishing Company)  
*Goodnight Moon*, Margaret Wise Brown (Harper & Row)

### **Fears**

*A Baby For Max*, Katheryn Lasky (Scribner's)  
*Curious George ( Goes To The Doctor, Visits The Dentist, and other's)*, Margaret & H. A. Rey (Houghton Mifflin)  
*Going To Day Care*, Fred Rogers (Putnam)  
*Peter's Chair*, Ezra Jack Keats (Harper & Row)  
*Sometimes I'm Afraid*, Sylvia Tester (Children's Press)  
*The Berenstain Bears In The Dark (Bad Dreams, Go To The Doctor, Strangers, and others)*, Jan & Stan Berenstain (Random House)  
*Who's Afraid Of The Dark?* Crosby Bonsall (Harper & Row)  
*You Go Away*, Dorothy Corey (Whitman)

### **For Children Five Years and Older**

#### **Divorce**

*Why Are We Getting a Divorce*, Peter Mayle (Crown Publishing Group)

*At Daddy's on Saturdays*, Linda Girard (Albert Whitman)  
*When Mom and Dad Separate*, M. Heegaard (Woodland Press)  
*The Divorce Workbook: A Guide For Kids and Families*, Ives, Fassler & Lash (Waterfront)  
*It's Not the End of the World*, Judy Blume (Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers)  
*How to Survive Your Parents' Divorce, Kids' Advice to Kids*, Gayle Kimball, Ph. D (Equality Press)  
*How it Feels when Parents Divorce*, Jill Krementz (Alfred A. Knopf)  
*The Divorce Express*, Paula Danzier (Putnam Publishing Group)  
*I Wish I Had My Father*, Norman Simon (Whitman)  
*Dinosaurs Divorce*, Marc Brown (Little, Brown)

#### **Friends and Friendship**

*The Very Best of Friends*, Margaret Wild (Harcourt Brace & Company)  
*The Lion King: Friends in Need*, Justine H. Korman (Western Publishing Company, Inc.)  
*We're Very Good Friends, My Brother and I*, Patrick K. Hallinan (Hambleton-Hill Publishing, Inc.) Part of a Series including: *My Mother and I*, *My Sister and I*, *My Grandpa and I*, and others.  
*Making Friends*, Kate Petty and Charlotte Firmin (Barron's Educational Series, Inc.)  
*Friends*, Helme Heine (Simon & Schuster)  
*Best Friends For Frances*, Russell Hoban (Harper & Row)  
*Brothers*, Florence B. Freedman (Harper & Row)  
*Feelings*, Alike (Greenwood)  
*Frog And Toad Are Friends*, Arnold Lobel (Harper & Row)  
*George And Martha*, James Marshall (Houghton Mifflin)  
*Let's Be Enemies*, Janice May Udry (Harper & Row)

#### **Jealousy**

*The Berenstain Bears and the Green-Eyed Monster*, Stan and Jan Berenstain (Random House, Inc.)  
*Brunus and the New Bear*, Ellen Stoll Walsh (Harcourt Brace & Company)  
*Jealous*, Sylvia Root Tester and Nancy Inderieden (Child's World)  
*Pooh: Oh, Brother! Someone's Jealous!*, Betty Birney (Western Publishing Company, Inc.)  
*Feelings*, Alike (Greenwood)

*I'll Fix Anthony*, Judith Viorst (Harper & Row)  
*It's Not Fair*, Charlotte Zolotow (Harper & Row)  
*Stevie*, John Steptoe (Harper & Row)  
*Worse Than Willy*, James Stevenson (Greenwillow)

### **Independence/Dependence**

*Amos And Boris*, William Steig (Penguin)  
*Arnold Of The Ducks*, Mordicai Gerstein (Harper & Row)  
*Frederick*, Leo Lionni (Pantheon)  
*Pelle's New Suit*, Elsa Beskow (Harper & Row)  
*The Little Engine That Could*, Watty Piper (Bucaneer)  
*The Story About Ping*, Marjorie Flack (Penguin)

### **Moving**

*Alexander, Who's Not (Do you hear me? I mean it!)*  
*Going to Move*, Judith Viorst (Simon & Schuster )  
*It's Starting to Feel like Home*, Stephen Krensky, (Scho-lastic, Inc.)  
*Goodbye, House: A Kids' Guide to Moving*, Ann Banks (Crown Publishing Group)  
*The Lost and Found House*, Michael Cadnum (Viking Penguin)  
*Pinky and Rex and the New Neighbors*, James Howe (Simon & Schuster)  
*Time to Go*, Beverly Fiday (Harcourt Brace & Com-pany)  
*What You Know First*, Patricia MacLachlan (HarperCollins Children's books)  
*Moving Gives Me a Stomach Ache*, Heather McKend (Firefly Books)  
*Aldo Applesauce*, Johanna Hurwitz (Puffin Books)  
*Ramona Quimby, Age 8*, Beverly Cleary (Avon Books)

*The Monster in the Third Dresser Drawer: And Other Stories about Adam Joshua*, Janice Lee Smith (Demco Media)

### **Understanding Ourselves/Fears**

*There's a Nightmare in My Closet*, Mercer Mayer (Dial Books for Young Readers)  
*Scary Night Visitors: A Story for Children with Bedtime Fears*, Irene Wineman Marcus and Paul Marcus (American Psychological Association)  
*There's An Alligator Under My Bed*, Mercer Mayer (Dial Books for Young Readers)  
*Life Doesn't Frighten Me*, Maya Angelou and Jean-Michel Basquiat (Stewart, Tabori & Chang, Inc.)  
*Horton Hears a Who!*, Dr. Seuss (Random House Inc.)  
*When I Was Little: A Four Year Old's Memoir of Her Youth*, Jamie Lee Curtis (HarperCollins)  
*Arthur's Honey Bear*, Lillian Hoban (HarperCollins Children's Books)  
*A Baby Sister for Frances*, Russell Hoban and Lillian Hoban (HarperCollins)  
*The One in the Middle Is the Green Kangaroo*, Judy Blume (Bantam Doubleday Dell Books for Young Readers)  
*Alexander And The Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*, Judith Viorst (Atheneum)  
*Crow Boy*, Taro Yashima (Viking)  
*Is It Hard? Is it Easy?* Mary Green (Young Scott/ Addison-Wesley)  
*Where The Wild Things Are*, Maurice Sendak (Harper & Row)

The above listing of books for children having special concerns is only a partial compilation. Numerous other books on similar topics are available. Keep in mind that books recommended for children at one age may also be enjoyed by older children. Contact your public library for additional titles of books that address specific issues of concern to you and your children.



## References

Some additional sources of information about children and books are:

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*Lindskoog, J. & Lindskoog, K. (1994). How to Grow a Young Reader: A Parent's Guide to Books for Kids. New York: Harold Shaw ISBN: 087788353X*  
Trelease, J. (1995). *The Read-Aloud Handbook*. New York: Penguin Books USA, Inc. ISBN: 0140469710

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