

Dear Parents,

The following two websites will help your child continue the gains they made this school year.

Typing.com is a keyboarding site, and **webmathminute.com** is for practicing adding, subtracting, multiplying, and dividing, both online and in print. It would be very helpful to your child if they know their multiplication tables 1-12 by the start of fourth grade.

The **Favorite Fourth Grade Books'** descriptors are a good place to help you choose books. I would encourage your child to read at least 30 minutes a day, if possible. You can start reading to your child, and then have them read to you. The local libraries have a challenge for children and incentives that go along with the amount of books they read.

All the best this summer!

T. Dafna

Favorite books for Rising 4th graders

Our panel of children's book experts recommends these great books for your fourth grader.

by: [GreatSchools Staff](#)

[Print book list](#)

2030: A Day in the Life of Tomorrow's Kids

by: *Amy Zuckerman and Jim Daly*, illustrated by: *John Manders* - (Dutton, 2009) 32 pages.

A talking dog, a housecleaning robot and a three-dimensional “data orb” are among the many cool features that kids might enjoy in the future, according to this lighthearted look at 2030. The breezy narrative follows one boy through a typical day, highlighting many interesting aspects of his world. Fanciful cartoon drawings show a lively and appealing world full of new and intriguing activities that correspond neatly to modern equivalents. Schools are now made from plasticized blocks that snap together, for example, while recess features virtual batting practice and a “smart trampoline.” Recreational activities include magnetized hovering skateboards and a virtual-reality “Fanta-trek Center.” Some social changes are briefly noted, such as new career paths and the increase of marriages between different ethnicities. Interaction with the natural world is not mentioned, although many of the new technologies have eco-friendly components and the food is all meatless and delicious.

Find [2030: A Day in the Life of Tomorrow's Kids](#) at your local library.

The Contest: Everest #1

by: *Gordon Korman* - (Scholastic, 2002) 138 pages.

In *The Contest*, the first installment of Gordon Korman's Everest trilogy, 20 young mountaineers vie for four spots on Summit Quest — the world's youngest team to ascend Mt. Everest. As climbers are cut from the team, tensions build, personalities clash and the remaining hopefuls struggle to deal with their own fears and weaknesses. This gripping story will have readers holding their breath — especially since we know from the prologue that one of the climbers doesn't make it off the mountain.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [The Contest: Everest #1](#) at your local library.

The Cricket in Times Square

by: *George Selden* - (Ariel Books, 1960) 144 pages.

The Cricket in Times Square has been initiating bookworms since 1960 and shows no sign of stopping. These days, fantasy-series books rule the bookshelves, yet this quiet tale of friendship endures. Chester Cricket, Tucker Mouse and Harry Cat meet at a newsstand in a New York subway station when a lonely little boy, Mario Bellini, finds the cricket in a pile of trash. He decides to keep Chester as a pet, and a series of adventures follow. Perfect for a quiet read on a long trip this summer.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [The Cricket in Times Square](#) at your local library.

The Misadventures of Maude March

by: *Audrey Coulombis* - (Random House, 2005) 295 pages.

The Misadventures of Maude March is a Wild West story about two orphan girls who become outlaws. Set within the historical context of prairie life, 11-year-old tomboy Sallie March is a lover of dime-store novels. She and her sister become the main characters of their own “real-life” story when they escape their guardians and encounter rattlesnakes, cougars, an unsavory gang and a blizzard. The pages practically turn themselves in this roller-coaster ride of a book.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [The Misadventures of Maude March](#) at your local library.

Crickwing

by: *Janell Cannon* - (Harcourt, 2000) 48 pages.

This is the story of an unfortunate cockroach named Crickwing, called this because of a twisted wing earned when fleeing a predator. Crickwing finds he has a talent for food presentation: He is a food sculptor! He builds his creations out of roots, leaves and petals, and then eats them...when he can. Crickwing is constantly thwarted by lizards, ocelots and food-stealing monkeys. As he watches thousands of busy leaf-cutting ants, he wonders, “Why isn’t anyone bothering these little twerps?” Thus, a bully is born. Crickwing harasses the ants until their Queen orders him to be captured and offered as a sacrifice to the army ants. Luckily, kind leaf-cutters set him free, and he redeems himself by using his special talents to rid the leaf-cutters of the army ants once and for all. Cannon’s illustrations are lush and invigorating, guaranteed to enrapture the most reluctant reader.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [Crickwing](#) at your local library.

The Quest Begins: Seekers #1

by: *Erin Hunter* - (HarperCollins, 2008) 293 pages.

Erin Hunter, author of the popular *Warriors* series, brings us a new series to love. *The Quest Begins* follows three young bears — a polar bear named Kallik, a black bear named Lusa and a grizzly named Toklo — whose stories begin to connect when they're all separated from their families. This first *Seekers* book is a compelling read. Hunter has definitely started enough threads to weave a richly detailed, adventurous series.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [The Quest Begins: Seekers #1](#) at your local library.

Beezus and Ramona

by: *Beverly Cleary*, illustrated by: *Arthur Dorros and Tracy Dockray* - (W. Morrow, 1955) 176 pages.

Nine-year-old Beezus is much too grown up to hang out with her little sister, Ramona, who does embarrassingly babyish things like wearing paper bunny ears and dragging around an imaginary pet lizard on a string. Beezus tries to be patient, but Ramona is impossible! This story is more than 50 years old, but today's kids will still crack up when Ramona powders her nose with a marshmallow and takes a single bite out of every apple in the house. And they'll sympathize with Beezus, who learns that while she'll always love her attention-getting little sister, that doesn't mean she always has like her.

Want to see the movie? Check out *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) starring Selena Gomez as Beezus, which adds elements from several books in the series to the *Beezus and Ramona* plot.

Perfect for: Kids with siblings, older and younger.

Find [Beezus and Ramona](#) at your local library.

Chronicles of Prydain #01: The Book of Three

by: *Lloyd Alexander* - (Henry Holt, 2006) 224 pages.

Ah, the fantasy series, how we love thee. For children today, there is no higher praise than to compare a book to the *Harry Potter* series. *The Book of Three* is the first of the fabulous *Chronicles of Prydain* series and has Taran and his Psychic pig, Henwyn, taking on the evil Horned King. This is a great "under the covers, past your bedtime, flashlight" read. Most highly recommended.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [Chronicles of Prydain #01: The Book of Three](#) at your local library.

The Great Brain

by: *John D. Fitzgerald*, illustrated by: *Mercer Mayer* - (Dial Press, 1967) 175 pages.

Set in the early 1900s, Tom Fitzgerald, aka “The Great Brain,” is of the “Tom Sawyer” ilk. He is a shrewd and wily kid with a keen ability to earn a penny. Nevertheless, his intelligence ends up saving the day when he and his younger brother get lost in Skeleton Cave. I challenge you to try to pry this out of the hands of your fourth-grade adventure lover.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [The Great Brain](#) at your local library.

James and the Giant Peach

by: *Roald Dahl*, illustrated by: *Quentin Blake* - (A.A. Knopf, 1961) 126 pages.

James Henry Trotter leads a happy life until his parents are eaten by an escaped rhinoceros and he is thrust into the world of his nasty aunts, Sponge and Spiker. Then he becomes “the saddest and loneliest boy you could find.” When a little man in a dark green suit gives James a bag of magic crystals, the story takes off. James finds an “ancient peach tree that never gave any peaches,” but with the magic crystals, it suddenly does! A single peach grows and keeps growing until James can climb inside and roll away from his horrible aunts to a whole new life. James befriends overgrown garden dwellers, Grasshopper, Earthworm, Miss Spider and Centipede. James and the Giant Peach is considered by many to be one of the finest children’s books ever written.

Want to see the movie? The 1996 adaptation combines stop-motion and live action, plus a few musical numbers.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [James and the Giant Peach](#) at your local library.

Jumanji

by: *Chris Van Allsburg* - (Houghton Mifflin, 1981) 32 pages.

Judy and Peter’s parents go to the opera, leaving them with instructions “to keep the house neat.” The children soon find themselves bored with their toys, after making a mess with them as soon as Mom and Dad have walked out the door. They go to the park, where they find a board game and bring it home only to discover that it is not the usual run-of-the-mill game. With

a roll of the dice, a real lion may appear or an erupting volcano, and of course, let's not forget the monkeys. Boredom is no longer an issue! Van Allsburg's artistry is top notch as the children's predicament gets more and more fantastic. The sculptured drawings and play between shadow and light demonstrate how a regular house can transform into a raging jungle. *Jumanji* was a New York Times Best Illustrated Book and winner of the 1982 Caldecott Medal. Want to see the movie? Check out the 1997 film starring Robin Williams, which fleshes out the short story into a full-length feature.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [Jumanji](#) at your local library.

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

by: *Eleanor Coerr*, illustrated by: *Ronald Himler* - (Putnam, 1977) 80 pages.

This is a book to teach your child about the horrors of war and illness, but most importantly about hope. Based on a true story set in World War II Japan, Sadako attempts to carry out the legend that the crafting of 1,000 paper cranes would heal her disease. Young readers learn indelible lessons that will stay with them for life. *Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes* is a stunning portrait of life, death and the power of courage.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes](#) at your local library.

Shiloh

by: *Phyllis Reynolds Naylor* - (Simon and Schuster, 1991) 144 pages.

Nothing is simple in this taut, unforgettable drama. Kids love this edge-of-the-seat story of a boy going up against a really scary mean man to protect an abused dog.

Want to see the movie? The 1997 film changes some plot details but stays true to the spirit of the book.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [Shiloh](#) at your local library.

Bone #1: Out From Boneville

by: *Jeff Smith* - (Scholastic, 1995) 138 pages.

The first book of this humorous full-color graphic novel series describes the misadventures of the three Bone cousins as they explore a forested valley populated with frightening creatures. As the plot unfolds, the Bones meet strange characters and forces of evil.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Bone #1: Out From Boneville](#) at your local library.

The Boy Who Painted Dragons

by: *Demi* - (Simon & Schuster, 2007) 52 pages.

Author/artist Demi has created another stunningly illustrated children's book, *The Boy Who Painted Dragons*. It's the story of Ping, a talented young boy who secretly fears the dragons whose images he paints. As he attempts to hide his fear, he covers every possible surface with brilliant golden dragons. When asked why he paints them, Ping lies and says, "Because I love dragons! ... He is the spirit of life. He is the secret force in nature." The book reads like an ancient folktale, carrying timeless spiritual messages about inner strength and facing one's fears. It also puts a literal spin on the expression "pearls of wisdom" — the dragons live in heaven and collect pearls carved with words such as "Seek your heart," or "Dare to be great." Demi's gold-tinged illustrations are dramatically beautiful, combining paint and ink with Chinese silk brocade.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Boy Who Painted Dragons](#) at your local library.

The Gruesome Guide to World Monsters

by: *Judy Sierra*, illustrated by: *Henrik Drescher* - (Candlewick Press, 2005) 64 pages.

How do you protect yourself from a sisiutl? Read this book to be safe! Based on monster folklore around the world, it shares a gruesomeness rating, description and survival tip for encounters with 63 monsters. Short passages will hook readers.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Gruesome Guide to World Monsters](#) at your local library.

Magyk: Septimus Heap Book One

by: *Angie Sage* - (HarperCollins, 2005) 576 pages.

This story of babies switched at birth is complete with midwives, wizards, witches, spells and mischief. It is a fun read full of imagination and intrigue. Students will enjoy getting to know Sage's characters.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Magyk: Septimus Heap Book One](#) at your local library.

The Mistmantle Chronicles Book One: Urchin of the Riding Stars

by: *M.I. McAllister*, illustrated by: *Omar Ryann* - (Miramax Books, 2005) 282 pages.

Urchin, a foundling, was found on the shore of Mistmantle Island. Leaving the peaceful life of his adopted parents, Urchin is caught in the intrigue of the court when the king's son is murdered.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Mistmantle Chronicles Book One: Urchin of the Riding Stars](#) at your local library.

The Trouble With Wishes

by: *Diane Stanley* - (HarperCollins, 2007) 32 pages.

Noted writer Diane Stanley's newest picture book is a humorous take on both the Greek myth "Pygmalion," and the old adage "Be careful what you wish for." Set in ancient Greece, the story follows a young sculptor named Pyg and his quest to win the heart of a stone goddess.

Observing the action is a real flesh-and-blood girl named Jane, whose own desire (to become a renowned sculptor) is far more attainable than Pyg's. The stone goddess comes to life thanks to Pyg's artistic talents, but his ideas of perfect beauty are severely challenged as he learns the woman is as cold and disdainful as she is lovely. Stanley's colorful illustrations depict ancient Greece with a folk-art flair and a great eye for detail. This story teaches valuable lessons about appearances and relationships in a non-preachy manner, and even young readers can identify with Jane, recognizing before Pyg does that true beauty comes from the inside.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Trouble With Wishes](#) at your local library.

Walter the Giant Storyteller's Giant Book of Giant Stories

by: *Walter M. Mayes*, illustrated by: *Kevin O'Malley* - (Walker Books for Young Readers, 2005) 48 pages.

Using both tall-tale and fairy-tale giants, this book tells short stories from each giant's point of view. The author provides personality and humor for each of the characters as they plead their case to the readers.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Walter the Giant Storyteller's Giant Book of Giant Stories](#) at your local library.

Walter, the Story of a Rat

by: *Barbara Wersba*, illustrated by: *Donna Diamond* - (Front Street Books, 2005) 83 pages.
Alternately funny, spooky, thought-provoking and magical, this is a vividly illustrated and accessible collection of Mexican folktales.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Walter, the Story of a Rat](#) at your local library.

Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet: Mexican Folktales

by: *Neil Philip*, illustrated by: *Jacqueline Mair* - (Clarion Books, 2003) 83 pages.
Alternately funny, spooky, thought-provoking and magical, this is a vividly illustrated and accessible collection of Mexican folktales.

Perfect for: Kids who like myths and folktales.

Find [Horse Hooves and Chicken Feet: Mexican Folktales](#) at your local library.

Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters

by: *Patricia C. McKissack*, illustrated by: *Andre Carrilho* - (Random House, 2006) 160 pages.
Pour the lemonade, climb aboard the porch swing and prepare to pass the time listening to these nine original stories hung on the bones of the “slicksters, tricksters and other wily characters” the author came to know and love as a child growing up in the rural south. The storytelling cadence is just right; the characters are a colorful mix of guile and gumption; and the lessons vary from laugh-out-loud funny to touching. ... A thoroughly engaging collection handsomely presented: what more can you ask?

Perfect for: Kids who like myths and folktales.

Find [Porch Lies](#) at your local library.

How Much Is a Million?

by: *David Schwartz*, illustrated by: *Steven Kellogg* - (HarperTrophy, 1985) 40 pages.
David Schwartz offers the perfect read-aloud for the child who has difficulty conceptualizing a million. Join a magician who specializes in mathematics, as he reveals that it would take a

fishbowl the size of a city's harbor to hold a million goldfish! Steven Kellogg's illustrations help readers visualize the enormity of this number in an entertaining way. This book will surely tickle your funny bone.

Perfect for: Kids who like numbers.

Find [How Much Is a Million?](#) at your local library.

Math Curse

by: *Jon Scieszka*, illustrated by: *Lane Smith* - (Viking, 1995) 32 pages.

Jon Scieszka, a former teacher and a popular author for boys, presents a hilarious read for anyone who suffers from a math phobia. Imagine how you would feel if your math teacher told you, "You can think of everything as a math problem." Would your head immediately start hurting? Would your heart start to race? Spend the day with a girl who wakes up one morning to find that every event in her life has been reduced to some sort of math problem. Have fun solving the problems she encounters, and see if you agree that she has been cursed!

Perfect for: Kids who like numbers.

Find [Math Curse](#) at your local library.

Day of Tears : A Novel in Dialogue

by: *Julius Lester* - (Hyperion Books for Children, 2005) 177 pages.

A prize-winning story of the biggest slave auction in history. Parents need to know that the way slaves are treated is disturbing – they are beaten into unconsciousness, treated like animals with no feelings and separated from their families. Readers will encounter the whipping of slaves, a forced fight in which a slave loses an eye, the death of a baby in a rainstorm and a suicide. Families who read this book could discuss the historical background of the American slave system. How could people who considered themselves to be good, decent people have treated others in this way? How could the slaves endure it? How could Sampson, a slave, come to identify so strongly with being a slave that he resisted freedom?

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Day of Tears : A Novel in Dialogue](#) at your local library.

The Earth Dragon Awakes

by: *Laurence Yep* - (HarperCollins Publishers, 2006) 128 pages.

This story is a short, powerful example of historical fiction. Readers see the experiences of a wealthy white family and an immigrant Chinese family at the time of the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. A subplot describes discrimination that is experienced and overcome.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [The Earth Dragon Awakes](#) at your local library.

Homesick

by: *Jean Fritz* - (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1982) 176 pages.

Celebrated children's author Jean Fritz turns her eye on her own childhood. Born in China of American parents, young Jean feels torn between her homesickness for the America of her grandmother's letters and the devout love she feels for the Chinese people and their culture.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Homesick](#) at your local library.

Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story

by: *Beverly Naidoo*, illustrated by: *Eric Velasquez* - (J.B. Lippincott, 1985) 96 pages.

During the time of apartheid in South Africa, a brother and sister, Naledi and Tiro, travel from their small village to bring back their "Mma" from her job in the city because their baby sister is very ill.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Journey to Jo'burg: A South African Story](#) at your local library.

Keeping Score

by: *Linda Sue Park* - (Clarion Books, 2008) 208 pages.

Linda Sue Park is familiar to readers as the winner of the 2002 Newbery Medal for her book, *A Single Shard*. A daughter of Korean immigrants, Linda grew up outside of Chicago as an avid baseball fan. She wrote *Keeping Score*, about a girl living in Brooklyn during the Korean War, combining her passion for baseball with her own family's past. Being a Brooklyn Dodgers fan in the early 1950s meant season after season of dashed hopes, but main character Maggie goes on rooting for the Dodgers. Against a background of major league baseball and the Korean War on the home front, Maggie looks for, and finds, a way to make a difference. A wonderful, heartwarming story that harkens back to the greatest children's literature.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Keeping Score](#) at your local library.

Bunnicula Meets Edgar Allan Crow

by: *James Howe*, illustrated by: *Eric Fortune* - (Atheneum, 2006) 160 pages.

The Monroe family is visited by the famous author of the *FleshCrawlers* books. When the author and his crow show an unusual interest in Bunnicula, the Monroe pets are sure that their favorite rabbit is in danger.

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find [Bunnicula Meets Edgar Allan Crow](#) at your local library.

Circle of Doom

by: *Tim Kennemore* - (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003) 206 pages.

The Sharp children live in Cleve Cottage at the end of Cleve Road. Lizzie, the eldest, is 13, Dan is 10, and Max is 7. When their only neighbors, the ancient Potwards, complain and ruin her birthday party, Lizzie decides to become a witch and cast a spell on them. When Lizzie agrees to let younger brother Max be the “witch’s assistant,” he is ecstatic to be playing with his sister instead of his imaginary friends. With coincidences piling up on top of spells, Lizzie begins to believe in her own power, Dan becomes uneasy and Max is absolutely positive that Lizzie can work magic and that magic runs in the family. This book is a wonderful combination — ludicrously funny and touching.

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find [Circle of Doom](#) at your local library.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid

by: *Jeff Kinney* - (Amulet Books, 2007) 244 pages.

The main character Greg is a kid who usually doesn’t do the right thing the first time around. His cluelessness about what would keep him out of trouble and why parents, teachers and friends are upset with him is part of the book’s humor, which leads the reader to any lesson Greg should be learning. Parents will appreciate that his friend’s dad looks up video games on a parent Web site to see if they have too much violence. Also, you can tell that Greg’s mom is working hard to raise respectful sons. When a bikini picture from her oldest son Rodrick’s heavy metal magazine ends up in her youngest son’s hands for show-and-tell, she makes Rodrick apologize to all women on paper. Parents will also be thrilled to know that despite the fact that the book is written in less-formal journal style with fun cartoons, everything is spelled correctly (i.e., no texting slang in sight!).

Want to see the movie? The 2010 film version tells the story of Greg's quest to become popular and features lots of goofy lowbrow jokes about bodily functions.

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find [Diary of a Wimpy Kid](#) at your local library.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules (Book 2)

by: *Jeff Kinney* - (Amulet Books, 2008) 224 pages.

This book has sibling rivalry, one wild party and some scheming to cheat on tests and get out of chores. The great thing is, like most middle school kids, the characters get caught and are punished. Families can talk about lying and friendship. Why was Greg's mother more upset when she found out he lied? How would you feel if your friends treated you like Greg did Chirag? Have you ever done something in school that made other people feel bad, but made you feel cool and popular?

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find [Diary of a Wimpy Kid: Rodrick Rules](#) at your local library.

The Not-Just-Anybody Family

by: *Betsy Byars* - (Delacorte, 1986) 160 pages.

The Blossoms are not an ordinary family. With a mother who is a rodeo trick rider, a grandfather who innocently manages to scare the local citizenry and get himself arrested, and a dog who wears a red bandana — not to mention a boy who thinks he can fly — it is not surprising that the Blossoms attract misadventures.

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find [The Not-Just-Anybody Family](#) at your local library.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School

by: *Louis Sachar*, illustrated by: *Julie Brinckloe* - (Avon Books, 1978) 128 pages.

The hook: On the 30th floor of the wacky Wayside School is Mrs. Jewl's class. Sharie falls asleep and rolls out the window. Joe counts all wrong and gets the right answer. Calvin is sent to the 19th floor to deliver a note, but there is no 19th floor — the builder forgot it. This nutty world is built on the sort of playful twists of logic that kids love.

Perfect for: Kids who like humor stories.

Find **our favorites** at your local library: [Sideways Stories from Wayside School](#), [Wayside School is Falling Down](#), [Wayside School Gets a Little Stranger](#).

Boy of a Thousand Faces

by: *Brian Selznick* - (Harper, 2000) 48 pages.

Ten-year-old Alonzo King is an expert about monster movies. He spends hours with Scotch tape and makeup trying to master his beloved monster faces in the mirror. When a mysterious beast is rumored to be stomping on flower beds and scratching up cars, Alonzo is called on for his monster expertise.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [Boy of a Thousand Faces](#) at your local library.

Edgar & Ellen Under Town

by: *Charles Ogden*, illustrated by: *Rick Carton* - (Tricycle Press/Star Farm Productions, 2004) 140 pages.

The cover art on this book immediately draws children's attention. The concept of twins and the mystery of a prankster draw students into the story plot.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [Edgar & Ellen Under Town](#) at your local library.

Framed

by: *Frank Cottrell Boyce* - (HarperCollins Children's Books, 2006) 306 pages.

The story is told by a young boy who is endearingly naive and who understands less than the reader about what is really going on. He is missing a parent and doing the best he can with his limited understanding to make things better for everyone. And his well-meaning but clueless actions change not only his family, but his town. Dylan lives with his sisters and parents, and is the only boy in a small, rainy town in Wales. They run a small garage, the Snowdonia Oasis Auto Marvel, on the brink of insolvency. Dylan is obsessed with the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, as is Tom, the man who tried to rob them and whom they hire instead. Then a series of seemingly unrelated events starts to change things in their lives and community.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [Framed](#) at your local library.

Jim Ugly

by: *Sid Fleischman* - (Greenwillow Books, 1992) 131 pages.

The year is 1894. Jake Bannock and his father Sam are on the run and hiding out in Blowfly, Nevada. When Sam unexpectedly disappears and is presumed dead, it's up to Jake and Sam's dog, Jim Ugly, (who is part wolf and part dog) to get to the bottom of the mystery.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [Jim Ugly](#) at your local library.

The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo: An Eco Mystery

by: *Jean Craighead George* - (Harper, 1992) 144 pages.

Liza and her mother are seeking refuge in Gumbo Limbo, a lush hammock of trees in the Florida Everglades. Also in residence is Dajun the alligator, caretaker of this precious ecosystem. When Dajun is seen as a threat to the nearby condos in development, he is ordered killed and Liza becomes determined to keep him safe at any cost.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [The Missing 'Gator of Gumbo Limbo: An Eco Mystery](#) at your local library.

Murder, My Tweet: A Chet Gecko Mystery

by: *Bruce Hale*, illustrated by: *Bruce Hale and Brad Weinman* - (Harcourt Children's Books, 2004) 136 pages.

Chet Gecko plunges into another troublesome case when his mockingbird sidekick, Natalie, is suspended for a crime she didn't commit. Bullying, blackmail, and tongue-in-cheek humor run rampant at Emerson Hickey Elementary in this 10th installment of these private-eye mysteries.

Perfect for: Kids who like mysteries.

Find [Murder, My Tweet: A Chet Gecko Mystery](#) at your local library.

Atherton Book 1: The House of Power

by: *Patrick Carman* - (Little, Brown Young Readers, 2007) 330 pages.

While this is a pertinent title for the San Francisco Peninsula, this book has nothing to do with the small, affluent town just north of Kepler's Books! It is, however, a fantastic adventure based in a three-tiered world. As the Earth begins to shake, the residents of Atherton wonder what is happening to their world and their societies as the upper echelon begins to sink into the lower

tier. How will the inhabitants overcome the rules of their existence and work together to face down the unthinkable? The first in a series, this installment will leave the reader clamoring for more.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Atherton Book 1: The House of Power](#) at your local library.

Do the Funky Pickle

by: *Jerry Spinelli* - (Scholastic, 1992) 133 pages.

Eddie Mott has been in love with his friend Sunny from the first time he met her. The school dance is coming up and he has asked his friends Pickles and Salem for help. This hilarious story describes Eddie's varied and unsuccessful attempts to get Sunny to notice him, while avoiding Angelpuss and her boyfriend Weasel, a tough and nasty eighth-grader, whose attention Eddie's antics has attracted.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Do the Funky Pickle](#) at your local library.

Love That Dog

by: *Sharon Creech* - (HarperCollins Children's Books, 2001) 95 pages.

A terrific book for reluctant readers and discussion groups, it packs a load of emotional and intellectual depth into a very accessible package.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Love That Dog](#) at your local library.

Lunch Money

by: *Andrew Clements*, illustrated by: *Brian Selznick* - (Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2005) 222 pages.

Parents should know that this is exactly the kind of book you hope your kids will find and love — showing the best examples of kids and adults behaving in caring, intelligent and positive ways.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Lunch Money](#) at your local library.

Picklemania

by: *Jerry Spinelli* - (Scholastic, 1993) 132 pages.

Eddie, Sunny, Salem and Pickles are now in the sixth grade and their adventures are still going strong. Eddie wants to bulk up, Sunny desperately wants to take karate and Salem is trying to figure out who sent her a mysterious Valentine's Day message in the school newspaper. And Pickles? Well, he just finished building a new invention, but he won't unveil it until it starts snowing.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Picklemania](#) at your local library.

Prizefighter en mi Casa

by: *E. Charlton-Trujillo* - (Random House, 2006) 224 pages.

Chula Sanchez wished her parents hadn't decided against naming her Esperanza. "Cause Chula means pretty and there ain't nothing pretty 'bout me now." Pape was driving drunk when he and Chula crashed. With the head of the household now paralyzed and unable to work, and Chula scarred with a disfigured face and the onset of epilepsy, the Sanchez family is struggling to make ends meet. Humiliated but still determined, Pape is convinced that El Jefe, the most revered prizefighter in Mexico, is their ticket to financial salvation. ... As readers will learn, neither El Jefe, nor Chula are who or what they appear to be.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Prizefighter en mi Casa](#) at your local library.

Sahara Special

by: *Esmé Codell* - (Hyperion Books for Children, 2003) 175 pages.

Esmé Raji Codell's first novel for children is not a new story: Unconventional Teacher Bucks Authority, Changes Student Lives. It has a noble pedigree, from *Goodbye, Mr. Chips* to *Conrack* to *Miss Nelson is Missing*. But Codell's lyrical take on it is sharply observed and poignantly funny. This is a lovely, moving book.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Sahara Special](#) at your local library.

The School Story

by: *Andrew Clements* - (Simon & Schuster, 2001) 196 pages.

Readers will grin from beginning to end of this enchanting story. A kid getting a novel published — too ridiculous to be believable, right? Just ask Gordon Korman, whose first novel, which he

wrote as a seventh-grade English project, was published when he was 12. It sold very well, and he had five more published before he graduated from high school. Publishers are looking for good school stories — who better to write one than a kid? This book should prompt many fruitful family discussions, and inspire young authors to reach for their dreams.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [The School Story](#) at your local library.

There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom

by: *Louis Sachar* - (Scholastic, 1987) 195 pages.

This book tells the story of Bradley Chalkers, a boy who tells enormous lies, picks fights with girls, spits on people and is considered by his teachers to have behavioral issues. Bradley has no friends, is disliked by all the students and teachers in the school and, always sits by himself in the last seat, last row. Things start to change when Jeff Fishkin, a new student, arrives and is placed in the only empty seat left in the room, right next to Bradley. The school hires a new counselor, Carla, who sees potential in Bradley and works with him to make him see the potential in himself, a difficult task for a boy who sees himself as a monster.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [There's a Boy in the Girl's Bathroom](#) at your local library.

Waiting for Normal

by: *Leslie Connor* - (Katherine Tegen Books, 2008) 290 pages.

Sixth-grader Addie's life is complicated. Her "Mommers" is given to long absences and immature outbursts. Addie has dyslexia, so learning is an act of will and persistence. Her father died when she was small, but her stepfather, Dwight, now divorced from her mom, cares deeply for her and the couple's other two natural children. The court awards him custody of the younger girls, but not of Addie, because he is not her "real" dad. As Mommers falters, he continues to support them, but the only home he can purchase for them is a small trailer parked across from a mini-mart. Addie attempts to "normalize" her life around meals, learning pieces on her flute and visiting her beloved "neighbors" at the convenience store. I found it impossible to leave Addie until I had finished. This book will force you to think about "normal" – about what you, and all of us, really desire and where to find joy.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [Waiting for Normal](#) at your local library.

Snow Treasure

by: *Marie McSwigan* - (Scholastic, 1942) 208 pages.

Ever dream of saving the world by sled? During World War II and the German occupation of Norway, children in a small Norwegian town prevented \$9 million worth of gold from reaching their captors by smuggling it on their sleds in the form of bricks. This suspenseful tale is based on a true story and makes for an amazing read.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Snow Treasure](#) at your local library.

William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale

by: *Bruce Coville*, illustrated by: *Bruce Coville* - (Dial, 2007) 40 pages.

Shakespeare's classic play is masterfully retold in narrative form. Full of romance, redemption and the strength of friendship and true love, Shakespeare's work is born again for a new audience. This is a brilliant introduction to the Bard, with beautiful watercolor illustrations that capture the cold nature of the setting.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [William Shakespeare's The Winter's Tale](#) at your local library.

Deep in the Swamp

by: *Donna M. Bateman*, illustrated by: *Brian Lies* - (Charlesbridge, 2007) 32 pages.

Young readers engage with poetry, information and counting practice as they learn about swamps and the animals that live there. Illustrations are bright and entertaining.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [Deep in the Swamp](#) at your local library.

Extreme Animals: The Toughest Creatures on Earth

by: *Nicola Davies*, illustrated by: *Neal Layton* - (Candlewick Press, 2006) 64 pages.

A book to engender a lot of "Did you know...?" conversations, Extreme Animals will amaze readers with facts about animals that withstand earth's extreme conditions. The most amazing animal of all can live through all of the extremes scientists can produce.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [Extreme Animals](#) at your local library.

Oh, Rats! The Story of Rats and People

by: *Albert Marrin* - (Dutton, 2006) 48 pages.

The life-like picture of a rat on the cover of this book will be enough to pique the interest of many kids. "Revolting, revealing, and riveting," says the book's back cover, and it's an apt description of the nine fact-filled chapters about these "champions of survival." The author provides information about rats' habits and intelligence, as well as their role as disease carriers, lab animals, predators, pests, pets and even as food. The gross-out factor alone will make this a must-read for many kids.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [Oh, Rats! The Story of Rats and People](#) at your local library.

Owen & Mzee: The Language of Friendship

by: *Isabella and Craig Hatkoff and Paula Kuhumbu*, illustrated by: *Peter Greste* - (Scholastic Press, 2007) 40 pages.

This book tells the true story of the friendship that developed at a Kenyan wildlife sanctuary between Owen, a baby hippopotamus orphaned by the 2004 Southeast Asian tsunami, and Mzee, a 130-year-old giant Aldabra tortoise. The authors detail the animals' system of communication (nudges, nips and a special call), how they play together and how Owen acts more like a tortoise than a hippo. The text is clearly written and accompanied by full-color photos of this unique pair.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [Owen & Mzee: The Language of Friendship](#) at your local library.

Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea

by: *Sy Montgomery*, illustrated by: *Nic Bishop* - (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) 79 pages.

The author and photographer accompanied scientist Lisa Dabek and her team on a trek through the remote forests of Papua New Guinea in search of the elusive Matschie's tree kangaroo. Little is known about this rare animal that looks like a bear, has a pocket like a kangaroo and lives in trees. The book is filled with wonderful photographs of the tree kangaroos, their lush forest habitat, and other exotic plants and animals. Information included about Dabek's background may be of special interest to aspiring young naturalists and biologists. None of her friends, family or teachers encouraged her in her passionate interest in animals when she was growing up, thinking it was strange, and she struggled with the challenge of asthma. This book

provides fascinating information about a little-known place on Earth, a newly discovered species and how one woman overcame the odds to follow her dreams.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [Quest for the Tree Kangaroo](#) at your local library.

The World Record Paper Airplane Book

by: *Ken Blackburn and Jeff Lammers* - (Workman Publishing, 1996) 256 pages.

This revised new edition of the popular paper-airplane book soars with 112 ready—to—crease airplanes based on 20 very cool and colorful designs — all of them easy enough for young paper—plane pilots to cut out of the book, fold according to directions and toss into the air. The co-authors are gurus in the world of amateur aerodynamics. Aerospace engineer Blackburn holds the Guinness World Record for paper airplane tossing “time aloft,” and Lammers is an engineer and part-time pilot. Together they share folding and tossing secrets that will make anyone into a paper—airplane connoisseur. ... But this book isn’t about educational text; it’s about educational experience and the thrill of flight. The real stars here are the paper airplanes themselves. From the Stunt plane to the Eagle, and the Space Shuttle replica to a Hammerhead, this book is fueled by science and fun.

Perfect for: Kids who like arts and crafts.

Find [The World Record Paper Airplane Book](#) at your local library.

The Book Club Kit

by: *Patti Kelley Criswell*, illustrated by: *Ali Douglass* - (American Girl Publishing, 2007) 56 pages.

This kit contains helpful directions for starting a book club and includes question cards, bookmarks and activity cards. Suggestions for being a good listener and participant are also included to encourage children to talk about what they are reading.

Perfect for: Kids who like arts and crafts.

Find [The Book Club Kit](#) at your local library.

Friends: Making Them and Keeping Them

by: *Patti Kelley Criswell*, illustrated by: *Stacy Peterson* - (American Girl Publishing, 2006) 80 pages.

Making friends isn’t always easy. In this book, girls learn the importance of friends and making a friendship work. These real-life stories, activities and quizzes can be read alone or with a friend.

Perfect for: Kids who like making friends.

Find [Friends: Making Them and Keeping Them](#) at your local library.

The Best of Times: Math Strategies That Multiply

by: *Gregory Tang*, illustrated by: *Harry Briggs* - (Scholastic, 2002) 32 pages.

Does the thought of memorizing your multiplication facts drive you crazy? Are you tired of those pesky speed drills in math class? If you want a fun way to learn how to multiply, you must read this clever picture book. Tang uses simple rhymes and puzzles to help students understand the concept of multiplication. Today's kids are mesmerized by rap and rhyme, so this book is sure to motivate as well as encourage children to use different strategies to solve multiplication problems.

Perfect for: Kids who like numbers.

Find [The Best of Times: Math Strategies That Multiply](#) at your local library.

Crazy Cars

by: *Matt Doeden* - (Lerner, 2007) 48 pages.

From Henry Ford's Quadricycle to the fastest dragster, the most unique cars of all time are spotlighted in this captivating book that enthralls young readers as they learn about the history of and continuing fascination with the automobile.

Perfect for: Kids who like history.

Find [Crazy Cars](#) at your local library.

Fooled You! Fakes and Hoaxes Through the Years

by: *Elaine Pascoe* - (Henry Holt and Co., 2005) 87 pages.

This book outlines over a dozen famous frauds from the 1800s to the present, including P.T. Barnum's bogus Fejee mermaid, the Piltdown Man fossil fraud, Bigfoot film footage and the discovery of "mysterious" crop circles in England. The author begins and ends the book with familiar examples of present-day Internet hoaxes and encourages healthy skepticism by urging readers to ask themselves, "Would I have been fooled?" Kids will enjoy reading about how people were so easily fooled, and the resource list at the back of the book will encourage further research. 87 pages.

Perfect for: Kids who like history.

Find [Fooled You! Fakes and Hoaxes Through the Years](#) at your local library.

Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village

by: *Laura Schlitz*, illustrated by: *Robert Byrd* - (Candlewick Press, 2007) 85 pages.

The book will appeal to many kids, including those who don't usually choose nonfiction, and will be useful for history classes and drama productions and workshops. Even reluctant readers will enjoy the clear, direct text, short length, and dramatic content. We can even hope that this brilliant book, with its awards and attendant success, may lead to a renaissance of books for kids that make history come alive. In 19 monologues and two dialogs in verse and prose, the lives of a cast of characters from a medieval village — nobles and peasants, but all children — are illuminated. Through them, along with margin notes and periodic background sections, a portrait of life in the Middle Ages is created.

Perfect for: Kids who like history.

Find [Good Masters! Sweet Ladies! Voices from a Medieval Village](#) at your local library.

On Board the Titanic: What It Was Like When the Great Liner Sank

by: *Shelley Tanaka*, illustrated by: *Ken Marschall* - (Hyperion Books for Children, 1996) 48 pages.

One of the book's diagrams depicts the number of survivors according to their station on the boat. It's tragic — although no shock — that the higher one's class, the higher one's chance of survival. You may want to discuss the concept of class differences with your kids.

Perfect for: Kids who like history.

Find [On Board the Titanic: What It Was Like When the Great Liner Sank](#) at your local library.

The Down-to-Earth Guide to Global Warming

by: *Laurie David and Cambria Gordon* - (Orchard Books, 2007) 128 pages.

Laurie David and Cambria Gordon's Down-to-Earth Guide to Global Warming makes a concept as complicated as global warming easy to understand. With the first half devoted to the science behind climate change, it's still relevant and enjoyable for kids. Visuals abound and the book concludes with some significant ways for kids to make a difference. This guide will educate and empower young readers, leaving them with the knowledge they need to understand this problem and a sense of hope to inspire them into action.

Perfect for: Kids who like science and nature.

Find [The Down-to-Earth Guide to Global Warming](#) at your local library.

50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth

by: *The EarthWorks Group* - (Andrews McMeel Publishing, 1990) 208 pages.

A practical guide to conserving resources and protecting the environment, each brief chapter of 50 Simple Things provides information and tips designed to inspire ideas and action. Statistics and measurements are translated into age-appropriate terms, such as comparing children's weight to the amount of garbage thrown away in a year. The book also explains how everyday items — like a light switch or a toilet — are connected to the rest of the world. Fun ideas for the whole family to discuss and implement!

Perfect for: Kids who like science and nature.

Find [50 Simple Things Kids Can Do to Save the Earth](#) at your local library.

Gaia Girls: Enter the Earth

by: *Lee Welles* - (Daisyworld Press, 2006) 336 pages.

Like eco-Nancy Drews, the characters of the Gaia Girls series will appeal to girls ready to take on modern-day environmental challenges. Gaia Girls: Enter the Earth is the first in the series and introduces Elizabeth, who possesses the power of “earth” — the ability to work with and command soil, trees and creatures in the soil. Illustrated throughout, this chapter book is for more mature fourth-grade readers, as it does not pull any punches when taking on subjects like factory farming. Highly recommended for its compelling story and sensitivity to current issues.

Perfect for: Kids who like science and nature.

Find [Gaia Girls: Enter the Earth](#) at your local library.

Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Writing

by: *Paul B. Janeczko*, illustrated by: *Jenna LaReau* - (Candlewick Press, 2004) 144 pages.

This book has everything a budding spy or cryptographer wants to know about creating codes, ciphers, and the methods of concealment. An answer key provides a great opportunity to practice new skills from pictographs to Igpay Atinlay.

Perfect for: Kids who like mystery.

Find [Top Secret: A Handbook of Codes, Ciphers, and Secret Writing](#) at your local library.

No Talking

by: *Andrew Clements*, illustrated by: *Mark Elliott* - (Simon & Schuster, 2007) 146 pages.

This is an ear-to-ear-grinningly delightful school story. Parents need to know that there is nothing to be concerned about here and lots to cheer. It's a story that even reluctant readers can love, about good-hearted children and adults who grow in compassion and understanding. Families can talk about silence and civil disobedience. Why does the silence seem so powerful? How does it change everyone's perceptions? What do you think of the standoff between Dave and the principal?

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [No Talking](#) at your local library.

The Shakespeare Stealer

by: *Gary Blackwood* - (Puffin Books, 1998) 216 pages.

Fourteen-year-old orphan Widge works for a mean and unscrupulous master who goes by the name of Falconer. Ordered to steal the script for Hamlet, Widge is taken to London and forced to attend a performance of the play. Instead of concentrating on stealing the script, he becomes engrossed in the show. Reluctantly, Widge admits his failure to Falconer and is told to return until his mission is accomplished. Nothing goes as planned and a very surprised Widge finds himself an accepted member of the backstage crew. Once a lonely outcast, he has friends and a place to call home for the first time in his life. Will he have the moral integrity to disobey his master or will he betray his new family? Set in Elizabethan London, *The Shakespeare Stealer* introduces us to Shakespearean stagecraft, life on the streets of London and to the truth behind the youthful appearance of Queen Elizabeth I!

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [The Shakespeare Stealer](#) at your local library.

Natural Disasters

by: *Claire Watts and Trevor Day* - (DK Children, 2006) 72 pages.

Part of the Eyewitness Books series, *Natural Disasters* covers a wide variety of natural disasters, from earthquakes to epidemics. Written in plain language and illustrated with spectacular photos and diagrams, it contains a wealth of valuable information, including a historical timeline of major disasters, a glossary, and a list of Web and real-world resources (natural history and science museums) for additional research.

Perfect for: Kids who like science and nature and striking visuals.

Find [Natural Disasters](#) at your local library.

Matilda

by: *Roald Dahl*, illustrated by: *Quentin Blake* - (Viking Juvenile, 1988) 240 pages.

With his hallmark wit and humor, Dahl tells the tale of Matilda, a child prodigy who defends her sweet teacher against the terrible school principal, Mrs. Trunchbull. Children will love learning about Matilda and her extraordinary powers.

Want to see the movie? The 1996 film sets the action in America instead of England but stays fairly true to the book's plot.

Perfect for: Kids who like school.

Find [Matilda](#) at your local library.

Nim's Island

by: *Wendy Orr*, illustrated by: *Kerry Millard* - (Yearling Books, 2001) 125 pages.

Take a spunky heroine competently surviving on her own on a deserted island (the ultimate kid fantasy). Add in animal friends who seem to understand, the vaguest of villains hovering in the background and easily overcome, a smattering of scientific information effortlessly absorbed and a very satisfying conclusion. Then write it in breezy style, making the various pieces of the story fit together in a nicely coincidental, jigsaw-puzzle way. All together it makes for one delightful story.

Want to see the movie? Check out the sweetly imaginative, family-friendly 2008 film starring Jodie Foster.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [Nim's Island](#) at your local library.

Tuck Everlasting

by: *Natalie Babbitt* - (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975) 40 pages.

When Winnie Foster is kidnapped she's terrified at first, but she soon realizes her kidnapers, the Tuck family, are kind people with an astonishing secret. The Tucks will never die, which turns out to be less of a blessing than one might think. The situation — and Winnie's choices — grows complicated when a stranger shows up, hoping to profit off of the spring water that made the Tucks immortal. A gentle but powerful reflection on mortality, and on what constitutes a meaningful life.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 2002 adaptation, in which the character Winnie is 15 instead of 10.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Tuck Everlasting](#) at your local library.

Inkheart

by: *Cornelia Funke* - (Scholastic, 2003) 534 pages.

Meggie's life changed forever one rainy night when she looked out the window and saw a stranger standing outside her window. This was her first sighting of Dustfinger, one of many colorful characters that her father brought to life from the pages of the book *Inkheart*. Meggie's father, Mo, has a special talent — when he reads aloud, characters from the book switch places with people from the outside world. In fact, Meggie does not know this yet, but this is how her own mother disappeared nine years before. Now, the evil Capricorn wants another character brought to life, and is determined to have Mo read aloud. This fascinating multi-layered story is an enjoyable but dark read for anyone who loves a good story within a story.

Want to see the movie? The 2009 adaptation stars Brendan Fraser and Helen Mirren and stays fairly close to the book's storyline.

Perfect for: Kids who like science fiction and fantasy.

Find [Inkheart](#) at your local library.

A Wrinkle in Time

by: *Madeleine L'Engle* - (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962) 256 pages.

Meg, an awkward girl who doesn't quite fit in, has a lot to worry about. Her beloved father has suddenly disappeared, and neighbors are beginning to gossip that he's run off with another woman. It turns out that his disappearance is connected with his scientific work, and Meg, her brilliant little brother, and her friend Calvin set out to find him — a search that takes them on an exciting but dangerous galactic adventure.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 2006 adaptation, which dramatizes the struggle between good and evil, or the new release coming spring 2018.

Perfect for: Kids who like science fiction and fantasy.

Find [A Wrinkle in Time](#) at your local library.

The Little Prince

by: *Antoine de Saint-Exupery* - (Harcourt Brace, 1943) 96 pages.

A pilot crashes in the Sahara Desert. A thousand miles from any habitation, while attempting to fix his plane, he meets a strangely dressed little boy who seems to have come from nowhere, and who demands that he draw a sheep. “When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey,” so the pilot attempts to draw a sheep. Gradually the Little Prince reveals his story. He comes from a small asteroid, where he lives alone until a rose grows there. But the rose is demanding, and he is confused by his feelings about her. Eventually he decides to leave and journey to other planets in search of knowledge. After meeting many confusing adults, he eventually lands on Earth, where he befriends a snake and a fox. The fox helps him to understand the rose, and the snake offers to help him return to his planet — but at a price. Many adults look back on this book with a catch in the throat and have a special place for it in their hearts. This gentle picture book, concerned with the true “matters of consequence,” was as much a part of growing up for those of a certain age as *The Lord of the Rings* or the Beatles. There quite literally has never been anything like it, though others have certainly tried.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Little Prince](#) at your local library.

The Invention of Hugo Cabret

by: *Brian Selznick* - (Scholastic, Inc., 2007) 544 pages.

Hugo is an orphan who tends the clocks in a Paris train station. He lives a lonely existence in the shadows of the station, stealing food and dodging the Station Inspector. One day he encounters a flinty old man who has even more secrets than he does. With the support of his friend, Isabelle, Hugo discovers the key to his past and the old man’s — and both find a measure of happiness. This powerful story is beautifully illustrated to create the pace and visual effects of a movie.

Want to see the movie? Check out Martin Scorsese’s 2011 *Hugo*, which won five Academy Awards.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [The Invention of Hugo Cabret](#) at your local library.

Little House in the Big Woods

by: *Laura Ingalls Wilder*, illustrated by: *Garth Williams* - (Harper & Bros., 1953) 256 pages.

Little House In The Big Woods is a classic reborn with great illustrations by Garth Williams. New readers and those familiar with Laura Ingalls and her family will love following along as Laura takes them through a year in the life of the little family of pioneers. This story is a straightforward, fun read with a child’s look into the life of a pioneer. It’s great to see Laura and her sisters take simple pleasure in playing with their dolls, making homemade goodies and listening to their father’s stories. Laura Ingalls is a kid who loves to help her family, is afraid of

wolves and hates her “boring” brown hair. She lives in a little house in the big woods where she and her siblings work hard at their many chores, mind their ma and pa, go to school all in one room and have lots of frontier adventures.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 1974 TV series, which loosely follows the storylines of all of the Little House books.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [Little House in the Big Woods](#) at your local library.

Mr. Popper’s Penguins

by: *Richard and Florence Atwater*, illustrated by: *Robert Lawson* - (Little, Brown & Co., 1938) 139 pages.

The hook: *Mr Popper’s Penguins* is one of those classic childhood books that kids always remember, and even ranks up there with *Charlotte’s Web* and *James and the Giant Peach*. The chapter book’s witty dialogue (albeit with dated language), clever characters and an ethical predicament make this book as enjoyable today as in the 1930s. In fact, many teachers today use it as part of their language arts curriculum. *Mr. Poppers Penguins* is a good fit for most first- and second-grade readers, and can also be read aloud to kindergartners.

Want to watch the movie? The 2011 adaptation is only loosely based on the original story but has plenty of slapstick gags to keep the elementary school crowd entertained.

Perfect for: Kids who like classics.

Find [Mr. Popper’s Penguins](#) at your local library.

When You Reach Me

by: *Rebecca Stead* - (Wendy Lamb Books, 2009) 208 pages.

Set in late-1970s New York City, *When You Reach Me* is the story of Miranda, a sixth grader who’s caught up in reading the classic children’s fantasy *A Wrinkle in Time* while negotiating the complexities of her friendships and reflecting on her life.

Bottom line: A nuanced book about a girl’s life in the city and a surprising mystery.

Find [When You Reach Me](#) at your local library.