



Suggested Reading

3rd to 4th Grade

This year, it was a great pleasure to receive the enthusiastic readers of third grade. The children's literature choices were healthy and varied, and I hope during summer this dynamic continues as children mine libraries and bookstores for new and familiar topics.

In this journey from third to fourth, as children cherish a bit more independence, I caution parents to remain solidly in the literary loop. This is a perfect time to bring the classics, reading them aloud to your children. Laura Wilder's Little House series, Joanna Spry's Heidi, Francis Hodson Burnett's The Secret Garden and the Little Princess, Sewell's Black Beauty, Kipling's Jungle Book, Trenton Lee Stewart's Mysterious Benedict Society, The Narnia Series, are examples of books that you can enjoy anew as you read them to your child.

They underscore the dynamic power of words, their power not only to create vivid pictures in our children, but to influence who they become and how they potentially communicate with others. As your children travel the book aisles, please guide them in their choices. Parent read-alouds are still rewarding social exchanges even with proficient readers, and conversation around stories can give revealing glimpses into how your children experience and interpret the world.

On the Farm: Level "3" I-Can-Read Books

For children learning to read, these texts—with simple prose and supportive illustrations—can be enjoyed with a caregiver or sibling. During the initial reading, consider focusing on the book cover (What do you see? What might this story be about?). Next, look at the pictures, making story predictions, then return to the opening page to spot recognizable words. Finally, partner read—alternating sentences. Above all, have fun and read a book more than once. If a child worries about reading slowly, remind him or her the authors took a long time to write the books, finding perfect words just for them.

- **Abe Lincoln's Hat** by Barbara Brenner (1994). Abe Lincoln, known for being absent minded, kept important notes, contracts, and even his checkbook in his stovepipe hat. What would happen if pranksters knocked the hat off into the street? This book includes several amusing stories about our famous president.



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- **A Bear for Miguel** by Elaine Alphin (1996). In El Salvador, a girl helps her father trade for basic necessities at the local market. Will Maria need to give up her treasured stuffed bear, Paco? This is a contextualized story for children asking about war, relating events for younger ears and presenting a young child's optimism and love of family; end-notes are for parents. Beautiful, interpretive watercolors by Joan Sandin.
- **Clara and the Book Wagon** by Nancy Levinson (1988). Told by her father that farmers do not have time to read, Clara is determined to do so when the community's first book-wagon arrives with a woman ready to teach Clara how to access the books she carries.
- **Dust for Dinner** by Ann Turner (1995). Jake and Maggy loved the farm of their early childhood, which their parents must sell when dust storms kill the crops and force a move to California. The realities of finding work and rough travel create ample drama.
- **Johnny Appleseed: My Story** by David Harrison (2001). A fictionalized autobiography relates Appleseed's planting exploits as it examines the unusual myths and truths about this legendary life. Also read *George Washington and the General's Dog*, *Eat My Dust: Henry Ford's First Race*, and *Lewis and Clark: A Prairie Dog for the President*.
- **Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie** by Peter Roop (1987). This doesn't take place on farm, but rather on a remote Maine island, where a girl must keep the lighthouse fire burning in a storm until her father returns four weeks later.
- **Wagon Wheels** by Barbara Brenner (1978). When the three Muldie boys travel a long way to Kansas, they must fend for themselves in their temporary dug-out as their father moves on to find better land for his family.

On the Farm: Early Chapter Books (under 125 pages)

- **Breath of the Dragon** by Gail Giles (1997). When Malila is left with her grandmother in a small Thailand village, she encounters many trials and acts of unkindness from neighbors. The trials, however, like the "breath of a dragon," make Malila strong, ultimately giving her sanouk, as her grandmother says, or joy in living.
- **The Cabin Faced West** by Jean Fritz (1958). Ann longs for her old life as she faces her new home in the Pennsylvania wilderness until a terrible storm brings a sense of her fortitude and competence—and a visit from George Washington.



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- **The Chickenhouse House** by Ellen Howard (1991). A family settling in a new territory must spend their first winter in a chicken house until spring provides them with the fine weather and friend to help them build a permanent home.
- **Cloud Tea Monkeys** by Mal Peet (2010). When her mother becomes too ill to harvest tea on a nearby plantation, Tashi is too small to fill in, but when she tells the monkeys she has befriended why she is so sad, they bring her a basket filled with a rare and valuable wild tea—suddenly her status shifts.
- **The Corn Grows Ripe** by Dorothy Rhoads (1956). When Tigre’s father is injured, his family asks: Who will plant and harvest the corn to help them survive and please the Mayan gods? Tigre—only 12—knows he must do a man’s work, helping his mother.
- **Justin and the Best Biscuits of the World** by Mildred Pitts (1987). Growing up with sisters, Justin wants a week of manly tasks—riding horses, tending livestock—when he visits his grandfather’s ranch. History of the rodeo and African-American cowboys forms an interesting back story, along with housekeeping tasks even cowboys need to master.
- **Li Lun: Lad of Courage** by Carolyn Treffinger (1947). Banished to a mountaintop with only a few grains of rice because he is afraid of the sea, Li Lun, finding in himself a stalwart farmer, gently nurtures the rice seedlings into a crop, proving that not just fishermen have value in his village.
- **The Golden Goose** by Dick King-Smith (2006). Farmer Skint and his family have fallen on hard times at Woebegone Farm until their seemingly ordinary goose lays a golden egg and their fortunes begin to change.
- **McBroom’s Wonderful 1-Acre Farm** by Sid Fleischman (1972). Tongue-in-cheek farming hilarity taking place on turf that grows vegetables overnight. Why? Because the 80 acres of farm are actually 80 fertile 1-acre parcels mounted one on top of the other.
- **Midnight Fox** by Betsy Byars (1968). Tom—a city boy—is uncomfortable spending the summer at his Aunt Millie’s farm until he discovers a black fox in the forest and tracks her to her den. Will he be able to save her and her small cub when they are threatened?



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- **Mountain Born** by Elizabeth Yates (1994). Wolves, weather, a black lamb, and a trusty dog are all part of a boy's life on a mountain farm.
- **Tales from Maple Ridge: The Lucky Wheel** by Grace Gilmore (2015). Wanting to raise money to repair the local schoolhouse, Logan finds an old wagon wheel by the side of the road and works hard to repair it, hoping to get a good price. Books in this series celebrate the industry and resourcefulness of a young boy.
- **Tornado** by Betsy Byars (1996). As they wait out a tornado in a storm cellar, boys listen to their farm hand's tale of a dog blown into his life many years ago by similar weather.

On the Farm—Longer Works

- **Black-eyed Susan** by Jennifer Armstrong (1997). A young girl, who with her father loves her new life on the plains, must come to terms with the fact that her mother may never feel completely at home there.
- **Blue Willow** by Doris Gates (1941—Newbery Honor). Janey Larkin, who wants to have a real home and go to a regular school hopes her family, whose new home so closely resembles the farm on her blue willow plate, will settle down for good.
- **Caddy Woodlawn** by Carol Brink (1935—Newbery Medal). Considered a clock-fixing tomboy, Caddy would much prefer to run wild in the woods of Wisconsin or make a midnight gallop across a frozen river than tend to more womanly household chores. Based on the true stories of the author's grandmother.
- **Charlotte's Web** by E.B. White (1952—Newbery Honor). Even if you have read this, it is worth reading again for its window on family life as well as the beauty and sacrifices of friendship.
- **The Fox and The Hound** by Daniel P. Mannix (1967). This book tells the tale of a young fox raised by humans for the first year of his life and the half-bloodhound dog, who is his close companion. Will friendship or natural instincts win?
- **Ivy Takes Care** by Rosemary Wells (2013). Brokenhearted when her best friend leaves for the summer, Ivy turns her attention to taking care of farm animals and developing a new sense of purpose.



Suggested Reading

- **Little House in the Big Woods Series** by Laura Ingalls Wilder (1953-). This time-honored celebration of tight-knit family in newly farmed lands needs no elaboration.
- **The Loner** by Ester Wier (1963). A slightly older read, this book chronicles the journey of a boy and his dog, a boy who can't remember who he is, but who survives by picking fruit from farms, relying on the kindness of strangers. A story with a satisfying ending.
- **Me and the Pumpkin Queen** by Marlane Kennedy (2009). Is Mildred focused or obsessed? To remember her mother, an intrepid 11-year-old wishes to grow the biggest pumpkin in the world. What could interfere? Tornados? Dogs? The low expectations of a difficult aunt? Mildred's father is a vet; parents might want to preview a calf-birthing moment and talk to their children about the grammar of the title.
- **My Friend Flicka** by Mary O'Hara (1941). This is the story of a ten-year-old boy on a remote Wyoming ranch, who wishes to break a filly, part mustang, and redeem himself in the eyes of his exacting father.
- **Rabbit Hill** by Robert Lawson (1944). New folks are coming to live in the Big House, and the animal inhabitants of the field wonder if they will plant a delicious and fertile garden as well as be good providers.
- **Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm** by Kate Wiggin with new illustrations by Barbara McClintok (1903). Homespun tale of a high-spirited, 10-year-old girl being raised by her two mannered aunts on a Maine farm. The author of this book helped establish the first "free" kindergarten west of the Rockies—in San Francisco, actually.
- **Seven Wonders of Sassafras Springs** by Betty Birney (2007). In this old-fashioned tale, set in 1911, Eben searches his town for anything comparable to the Seven Wonders of the World. Can he find the extraordinary in the ordinary? His father thinks "yes!" and offers Eben a train ticket to Colorado to see his first mountain, but only if he can find Seven Wonders in his own back yard.
- **Thimble Summer** by Elizabeth Enright (1938—Newbery Award). A few hours after Garnet finds a silver thimble in a dried-up Wisconsin riverbed, rains come, ending the drought on her farm. With thimble luck, good things follow. Could Garnet's well-tended pig win a blue ribbon, perhaps? Could her family build a new barn?



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- **Strawberry Girl** by Lois Lenski (1946—Newbery Award). Birdie Boyer was a “Florida Cracker;” she belonged to a large “strawberry family,” who lived on a flat woods farm in the lake section of the state. This short novel recounts Birdie’s ambitions to go to school and play the organ while dealing with drought, fires, and roving hogs. Also read recently re-issued *Houseboat Girl*, *Flood Friday*, and *Prairie School* by the same author.
- **Unusual Chickens for the Exceptional Poultry Farmer** by Kelly Jones (2015). Through a series of letters, Sophie Brown, a spunky girl from a biracial family, records her family’s move from Los Angeles to her Uncle Jim’s farm, where she cares for “supernatural” chickens with the assistance of caring neighbors.
- **Willow Wind Farm: Betsy’s Story** by Anne Pellowski (1981). On the farm where Betsy lives, all ten children must help with numerous chores, but there is still much fun—for instance, the day the pigs get tipsy on fermented blackberry preserves! (Also read *Winding Valley Farm: Annie’s Story*, *First Farm in the Valley: Anna’s Story*, *Stair Step Farm: Anna Rose’s Story*.)
- **Worth** by A. LaFaye (2004). When Nathaniel’s leg is crushed in an accident, his father brings in a boy from the Orphan Train heading West. For Nathaniel, It is difficult seeing someone take over his work and also, seemingly, his father’s attention.

Early Chapter Books: Animals (under 125 pages)

- **The Blue Hill Meadows** by Cynthia Rylant (1997). A gentle story about the Meadow Family, who live in a quiet Virginia town, and the dog they discover there.
- **Chester Cricket’s Pigeon Ride** by George Selden (1981). Chester, who misses star gazing in the city, rides on his friend’s back to discover the lights are closer than they seem.
- **The Gingerbread Rabbit** by Randall Jarrell (1964). The story of a mother who bakes a wonderful gingerbread rabbit for her daughter only to find the cookie jump off the cookie sheet and escape into the woods. *Gooseberry Park: & the Master Plan* by Cynthia Rylant (2015). Stumpy the squirrel, Kona the Labrador, Murray the bat, and Gwendolyn the hermit crab enlist the assistance of a crow and 200 owls to help them battle a month-long drought.



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- **Lady Lollipop** by Dick King-Smith (2000). A quick-witted swineherd and a pig named Lollipop are royally rewarded after they reform a very spoiled princess.
- **Not My Dog** by Colby Rodowsky(1999). Ellie wanted a cute puppy, not a full-grown mutt...so she resists her new pet until one day her resistance almost makes her lose the only pet she's ever likely to have.
- **Sable** by Karen Hesse (1998). Tate is delighted when a stray turns up at her doorstep, but the dog makes so much trouble for the neighbors it may not be able to stay.
- **Tippy Lemmey** by Patricia McKissack (2003). A dog (and possibly a bit of a monster) meets three children who don't want him nipping their heels as they bike, following them everywhere, and generally being a nuisance. What does he have to do to convince Leandra, Paul, and Jeannie he's a good soul?

Early Chapter Books: Fantasy/Science Fiction (under 125 pages)

- **Clockwork** by Phillip Pullman (1996). A haunting tale that includes a writer with a story that is out of his control, a prince whose mechanical heart is failing, a girl who must develop courage to match her kindness, and a knight with evil intentions. Not for the faint of heart.
- **The Dragon's Boy** by Jane Yolen (1990). Young Arthur meets a dragon he comes to accept as a friend and mentor.
- **The Green Book** by Patton Walsh (1986). A family needing to leave Earth to live on a new planet takes little with them, so must use their wits and resourcefulness in the place carefully chosen for them. A slightly older read.
- **The Ice Dragon** by George R. R. Martin (1980). Adara is a winter child, born to cold and capable of seeing the Ice Dragon and harnessing its forces to save her people from the fiery dragons from the north.
- **The Iron Giant** by Ted Hughes (1999). A feared, but misunderstood metal-eating giant is destructive and yet somehow filled with heroic potential. But only a young boy knows enough to lead the giant to a noble outcome.

Early Chapter Books: Moments in History (under 125 pages)



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- **Anna Maria's Gift** (2010). The gifted daughter of a talented violinmaker is sent to an orphanage, the Pietà in Venice, when she loses her loving father. Fortunately, the composer, Vivaldi, takes her under wing, but what can she do when a jealous classmate throws her instrument into a canal?
- **Cora Freer: Brave Kids from America's Past** by Susan E. Goodman (2002). Based on the true story of a girl in rural 19th-century Iowa, this book recounts her courage as she and her doctor father fight a prairie fire as he journey's to care for a sick baby. Also read Robert Henry Hendershoot and Hazel Boxberg by the same author.
- **Elin's Amerika** by Marguerite de Angeli (1941). Set in the New Sweden Colony of North America, around 1648, this narrative tells the story of Elin, her daily chores, her loneliness, and her interaction with a kind native American medicine woman, Lamefoot. Also read *Thee, Hannah!*, *Yonnie Wondernose*, and *Henner's Lydia* by the same author. Books have been re-released through the American Swedish Historical Museum.
- **A Horn for Louis** by Eric Kimmel (2004). When Louis Armstrong, at age 7, too poor to go to school, wishes for a trumpet, he starts off with a tin-horn cast-off. Can he put aside his pride to accept a coronet from well-intended neighbors in his boarding house, who gives Louis this treasured gift from their own slender stores for Hannukah?
- **Toliver's Secret** by Esther Woods by Judith Griffin (1993). Brady When her grandfather is injured, 10-year-old Ellen, disguised as a boy, deliver's his top-secret message to General Washington. Also read *Phoebe, the Spy* by Esther Wood Brady.

Early Chapter Books: Children & A Challenge or Two (under 125 pages)

- **A Likely Place** by Paula Fox (1987). A little boy who can't spell or ever seem to please his parents spends a week with an odd babysitter and makes a special friend.
- **Sideways Stories from the Wayside School** by Louis Sachar (1978). "John was one of the boys in Mrs. Jewl's class. But he had one problem. He could only read upside down." "Terrence was a good athlete, but a bad sport." "Kathy doesn't like you. She doesn't know you, but she still doesn't like you." Who wouldn't want to watch these children transform—and don't we all know someone just like them? Glorious humor.
- **Skinny Bones** by Barbara Park (1982). The smallest boy on a baseball team gets more than he bargains for when he challenges the team's star pitcher with his active sense of



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humor.

- **Yang the Youngest and his Terrible Ear** by Lenson Namioka (1994). Chinese and American cultures are lightly contrasted in this book about a boy, who is not a natural musician like others in his family, favoring baseball in his new home in Seattle. Also read *In the Year of the Boar and Jackie Robinson* by Bette Bao Lord.
- **The Year of Miss Agnes** by Kirkpatrick Hill. In 1948, a school teacher arrives in a remote part of Alaska to give the children an educational experience they haven't encountered in years...at the same time accepting their odd-smelling fish sandwiches and insisting that the deaf-boy, Bakko, attend school with everyone else.

Animal Tales

- **Firstborn** by Tor Seidler (2015). Lamar does not take after his noble wolf father, Blue Boy, who is the forest's fierce predator. Lamar likes to study butterflies, waits for his siblings if they fall behind, and actually has the nerve to befriend a coyote. This book, which thumbs its nose at stereotypes, dances between *White Fang* and *Ferdinand*. Also read *Toes* by the same author.
- **A Nest for Celeste: A Story about Art, Inspiration, and the Meaning of Home** written and illustrated by Henry Cole (2012). In this beautifully illustrated work, a mouse befriends Audubon's apprentice in her search for a home. Will it be the toe of a worn boot, a boy's pocket, an attic dollhouse, or her old domain under the floorboards?
- **Poppy** by AVI (1995). A tiny and intrepid deer mouse urges her family to move to a nearby field of corn; unfortunately, the field is threatened by an owl, Mr. Ocax. Winner of the Boston-Globe Horn Book Award. Also read the sequels.
- **Sheep** by Valerie Hobbs (2009). After a fire destroys the farm where he was born, a young border collie acquires a series of owners on his way to fulfilling his life dream of shepherding sheep.
- **The Tale of Despereaux** by Kate DiCamillo (2003—Newbery Medal). The adventures of Despereaux Tilling, a small mouse of unusual talents, the princess he loves, the servant girls who wishes to be royalty, and one devious rat.



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- **Tua and the Elephant** by R. P. Harris (2012). A young girl, who lives in Chang Mai, Thailand, yearns for a sister, but instead discovers a distressed elephant, Pohn-Pohn, in the local markets. Together, they journey from the bustling stalls, to a Buddhist temple, and finally to a refuge, where Pohn-Pohn will lead a more humane animal existence.
- **White Fur Flying** by Patricia MacLaughlin (2103). Rescue dogs and one rescue parrot help a 9-year-old boy, who refuses to speak, socialize once again with friends and family in a rural Maine setting.
- **Young Fredle** by Cynthia Voigt (2012). Cast out of his kitchen-cabinet home, a young and slightly anxious mouse must face the novelty of snakes, rain, and lawn mowers as he also discovers the beauty of the outdoors and a possible new safe setting for a home.

Time for a Mystery

- **The Boxcar Children** by Gertrude Chandler Warner (1924). The Alden children begin their independent lives by making a home in an abandoned boxcar—a beautiful story about optimism, loyalty, and resourcefulness.
- **Gold Dust Letters** by Janet Taylor Lisle (1996). When nine-year-old Angela and her friends begin investigating letters she is receiving from her fairy godmother, they start an organization called The Investigators of the Unknown to discover the messages' source; complex family issues make this a worthy read-aloud.
- **Gone-Away Lake** by Elizabeth Enright (1957). When Portia and Julian discover a ghost town bordering a swamp where they are vacationing for the summer, two residents who never left help them fathom the mystery of an old resort's origins.
- **The Mysterious Benedict Society** by Trenton Lee Stewart (2007). The ad: "Are you a gifted child looking for splendid opportunities?" Following a series of tests, only four children will be able to attend The Learning Institute for the Very Enlightened and graduate to secret missions where the only rule is that there are no rules.
- **The Mystery of the Missing Lion** by Alexander McCall Smith (2014). Young Precious Ramotswe, a superlative sleuth, visits her aunt at a Botswana safari camp, to solve the dilemma of a missing lion, Teddy, starring in a film. Also read "The Great Cake Mystery" and "The Mystery of Meerkat Hill."



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- **Ophelia and the Marvelous Boy** by Karen Foxlee (2014). Ophelia, a shy 11-year-old lamenting the loss of her mother, revisits her belief in things non-scientific when she discovers a boy—from another time, it seems—locked up in the museum.
- **Peter Nimble and His Fantastic Eyes** by Jonathan Auxier (2010). A blind 10-year-old orphan, schooled in a life of thievery, tries on a pair of magical eyes and is promptly transported to a hidden island.
- **Mr. and Mrs. Bunny—Detectives Extraordinaire** by Polly Horvath (2011). National Book Award winner Horvath tells the story of two talented bunnies who assist a girls whose parents have been kidnapped by nefarious foxes.
- **The Rescuers** by Marjorie Sharp (New York Review Books Children Collection re-issue from 1959). Miss Bianca, a mouse of great beauty and exceptional vanity, also reveals herself as a mouse of brilliance and compassion as she rescues an imprisoned poet from the Black Castle.
- **The Seven Treasure Hunts** by Betsy Byars. On Saturday, Jackson and his best friend, Goat, hide treasures for one another to find, and then on their next challenge discover someone else has gotten to them first.

Adventure Beckons

- **Chitty Chitty Bang Bang** by Ian Fleming (1964). A flying car takes the Pott family on a colorful range of adventures as they try to catch an elusive gang of thieves. Also consider *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang Flies Again* by Frank Cottrell Boyce.
- **Faith and the Electric Dogs** by Jennings (1998). Set in San Cristobal de las Casas, Mexico, this story celebrates the courage of a 10-year-old girl seeking to escape her local tormentors and return to San Francisco on a rocket fueled with pork fat and chili peppers.
- **Francis Tucket Series** by Gary Paulsen. In this five-book series beginning with *Mr. Tucket*, a 14-year-old boy, separated from his wagon train, unites with a one-armed trapper, who with him braves adventures in the West to help Francis reunite with his family.



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- **From the Mixed-up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankenweiler** by E. L. Konigsburg (1967—Newbery Award). An engaging story of two children who leave home and take up residence in the Metropolitan Museum of Art (very nice furniture and artwork!).
- **Journey to the River Sea** by Eva Ibbotson (2003). Going to the Amazon with her stern governess, Miss Minton, orphan Maia, expects a lush jungle-filled adventure, but instead finds a disagreeable aunt and uncle. Friendship with an Indian boy and a homesick child actor turn her visit into a more palatable mystery experience.
- **The Lost Island** by Eilís Dillon (1987). The book begins with a simple market day and progresses to a young boy, navigating dangerous waters, to locate his missing father and supposed treasure on the fabled island of Inishmananan.
- **Madame Pamplemousse and her Incredible Edibles** by Rupert Kingfisher (2008). This book tells the story of a young girl in Paris (yes, her name is Madeleine), who has extraordinary talent as a cook, but also a horrid Uncle who makes the most atrocious food in the land: Pig's Ear Pizza or Kidney Burger with Double Cream anyone?
- **Miss Hickory** by (1947—Newbery Award). Well, the main character's head is eaten, but other than that this tale of a humble doll with applewood body and hickory nut head recounts the kindness of friends—a crow, squirrel, and doe—in a New England winter.
- **The Penderwicks in Spring** by Birdsall (2015). For those who know the series, Book Four is told from the perspective of Batty, now 10—graced with a beautiful singing voice and planning a grand surprise. She starts a dog-walking business to pay for voice lessons.
- **The Twenty-One Balloons** by William Pene DuBois (1947). When Professor Sherman leaves San Francisco in a hot air balloon, he expects a fairly predictable journey; dealing with hungry seagulls and plummeting onto the island of Krakatoa teaches him otherwise. Winner of the 1948 Newbery Medal.
- **A Week in the Woods** by Andrew Clements (2002). Known in his school as a student who doesn't work as hard as he could, privileged Mark is sent to New Hampshire, where he experiences a trek with snow shoes, the discovery of an old barn, and surviving overnight in the wilds to prove to a teacher his is more rugged than all had thought.



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- **The Wolves of Willoughby Chase** by Joan Aiken (1962). Two cousins, left in the care of an evil governess, are rescued from a workhouse by a dear friend, Simon, who leads them on a 400-mile trek to London with his geese (sequels are equally exciting).

Family Life: Contemporary

- **Adventures with Waffles** by Maria Parr (translated from Norwegian, 2015). Lena and Trille, friends through a hole in the hedge in Mathildewick Cove, have done everything together: lured a cow onto a boat, sledded with chickens, devoured waffles, and shared secrets.....well, perhaps not all secrets. There is one Lena feels she must hold back.
- **Ava & Pip** by Carol Weston (2014). Extroverted 9-year-old Ava is puzzled her older sister, Pip, 13, is so quiet and not quick to make friends. Wishing to help, Ava writes a story, but things do not turn out as planned. Also read the sequel *Ava and Taco Cat* (2015).
- **Because of Winn Dixie** by Kate DiCamillo (2001). A ten-year-old girl learns 10 things about her mother, who abandoned her preacher father, as she explores her new town of Naomi, Florida, with a lost dog. Inhabitants of the town offer entertaining stories: a librarian who fights off a bear in a parking lot with a copy of *War and Peace*?
- **11 Birthdays** by Wendy Mass (2009). When Amanda is ready to turn 11, she finds the friend she has always shared a birthday with is not really her friend any more. How will the two manage this potentially difficult day?
- **Fortunately, the Milk** by Neil Gaimon (2013). A father, left suddenly on his own to tend his family, discovers he has forgotten to supply milk to go with the cereal. Returning home following a trip to the corner store, Dad describes his fantastic, time-travel, tongue-in-cheek exploits. Lively Illustrations.
- **Love, Ruby Lavender** by Deborah Wiles (2005). When her quirky grandmother goes to Hawaii for the summer, 9-year-old Ruby learns how to survive on her own in Mississippi by writing letters, befriending chickens, and making a new best friend.
- **Maggie & Oliver and a Bone of One's Own** by Valerie Hobbs (2012). A young maid tossed out into the street and a stray dog discover new beginnings through a golden locket.



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- **Secret Letters from 0 to 10** by Susie Morgenstern (1996). Ten-year-old Ernest lives a dull and fiercely predictable life until Victoria (she has 13 brothers) enters to add a profound amount of color. Eating soup every night? Try fondue. Fear contact with others? Hold a squirming baby. Translated from the French.
- **Sun and Spoon** by Kevin Henkes (1998). A young boy, navigating the death of a beloved grandmother, tries to find something special he can remember her by—an Apostle Spoon—but is it really his to borrow?

Family & Friends: Long Ago

- **All-of-a-Kind Family** by Sidney Taylor (1951). In the turn-of-the-century Lower East Side of New York City, five sisters indulge in old-time fun: exploring the basement warehouse of Papa's peddler's shop, looking for hidden buttons while dusting the parlor, and enjoying special family holidays.
- **Anne of Green Gables** by L.M. Montgomery (1908). The beloved novel about an 11-year-old girl finding her place among new friends (and a few spiteful people—young and old) on Prince Edward Island.
- **The Five Little Peppers and How They Grew** by Margaret Sidney (1881). A fatherless family, raised by an industrious and joyous mother, finds strength in their simple life and ultimately the generosity of a neighbor.
- **Ginger Pye** by Eleanor Estes (1951—Newbery Medal). The disappearance of a new puppy named Ginger and the appearance of a mysterious man in a mustard yellow hat bring excitement into the lives of the Pye children. Winner of the 1952 Newbery Medal.
- **The Lost Flower Children** by Janet Taylor Lisle (1999). After their mother's death, two sisters move in with their great aunt and slowly bring a weedy garden back to life.
- **The Saturdays** by Elizabeth Enright (1941). Four siblings pool their allowances so that each one may choose an adventure on consecutive Saturdays...sequel include *Then There Were Five*, *Four-Story Mistake*, and *Spiderweb for Two*).
- **The Secret Language** by Ursula Nordstrom. Going to boarding school, Victoria North feels very lonely until a friend teaches her a language only a few can understand.



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- **Roller Skates** by Ruth Sawyer (1935). In the 1890s, when her family left her in the care of the Misses Peters, young Lucinda is delighted to find they don't give a hoot about promoting the social graces and give her the freedom to roam the city—on rollers skates—meeting its many interesting dwellers. Winner of the 1936 Newbery Award.
- **Rufus M.** by Eleanor Estes (1942). Rufus accomplishes a great deal, but using his own unique approaches. For one, when food is in short supply, he plants beans, digging them up every day to check on them, and somehow they miraculously grow.

Fantasy

- **Any Which Wall** by Lynn Snyder (2009). Inspired by the Half Magic series, this delightful story follows siblings on their journeys through a wall in a nearby cornfield that takes them back in time to nearly insurmountable adventures.
- **A Boy and a Bear in a Boat** by Dave Shelton (2012). A boy and a bear, who wish for a short adventure, find themselves lost at sea, sending out a message in a bottle, and hoping their small vessel The Harriet will return them safely to shore.
- **The Castle in the Attic** by Elizabeth Winthrop (1993). A gift of a toy castle, complete with a silver knight, introduces William to an adventure involving magic and a personal quest.
- **The Enormous Egg** by Oliver Butterworth (1956). A young boy is surprised when he goes to his hen's nest one morning to find a gigantic egg and even more surprised when the egg hatches a triceratops dinosaur.
- **Five Children and It** by E. Nesbit (look for versions illustrated by H.R. Miller or Paul Zelinsky (1902). When four children, digging to Australia, discover a Psammead, or sand fairy, in the gravel pit of their house, they look to a future of adventure and wish-making.
- **Horns & Wrinkles** by Joseph Helgerson (2006). River trolls, rock trolls, and blue-wing fairies are the usual suspects in a Mississippi tale, where Claire must transform her difficult cousin, Duke, who has suddenly sprouted horns and a tusk.
- **Jeremy Thatcher, Dragon Hatcher** by Bruce Colville (1991). Small for his age, but artistically gifted, Jeremy purchases a dragon's egg; adventures ensue (part of the



Suggested Reading

author's humorous "Magic Shop" series).

- **The Ordinary Princess** by M. M. Kaye (1980). The most beautiful and gifted princess in the kingdom has a spell put on her shortly after birth making her "merely ordinary" and, thus, destined for a very different life from her sisters', one she seeks at first as "the fourteenth assistant kitchen maid" in a neighboring castle.
- **Pals in Peril: Jasper Dash and the Flame-Pits of Delaware** by M.T. Anderson (2009). Technonaut Jasper Dash and his friends, Lily and Katie, travel into forbidden mountains of Delaware to decipher a mystery involving lost cities, tentacles, lost cities, etc.
- **The Secret of Platform 13** by Eva Ibbotson (1994). Odge Gribble, a young hag, travels with a wizard, fey and ogre travel from their magical Island to London to rescue a prince stolen as a baby from their King and Queen.
- **Whittington** by Alan Armstrong (2005). A blend of a rags-to-riches folktale, barnyard lore, and a tale of a wise cat who teaches a young boy to read.

Fantasy, Mystery & Animal Series Easy Reads and more challenging

- **The Borrowers** by Mary Norton
- **Emily Windsnap series** by Kessler
- **Cat Wings** LeGuinn
- **Hardy Boys**
- **Chronicles of Prydain** by Lloyd Alexander
- **Narnia Series** by C.S. Lewis Start with
- **The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe!!!**
- **Redwall Series** by Brian Jacques
- **The Princess and Curdie, Curdie and the Goblins** by George MacDonald

Family & Friend Series

- **Betsy-Tacy** by Maud Lovelace
- **Cobble Street Cousins** by Cynthia Rylant
- **Iva Honeysuckle** by Candice Ransom
- **Jake Drake** by Andrew Clements
- **Julian series** by Ann Cameron
- **Lulu series** by Hilary McKay



Suggested Reading

- **Marvin Repost series** by Louis Sachar
- **The Year of the Book series** by Andrea Cheng
- **The Life of Ty** by Lauren Myracle
- **Soup series** by Robert Peck

This Feels Ridiculous

Understanding literary humor is a developmental talent requiring an ability to muster a spontaneous response toward what should have happened and what actually occurred. In young literature, there is the hyperbole of *Swamp Angel*,

the practical jokes of *George and Martha*, the pun-sensing antics of *Amelia Bedelia*, the curative nonsense of *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*, and the tongue-in-cheek humor or flat-out nonsense of *Tales for Very Picky Eaters* or *the Wayside School*. These types of humor are fine for this age group, and we all can use the soothing levity of a good joke.

What parents might consider avoiding are narrative sarcasm and laughter at another's expense, or at least bullying laughter that is not immediately noted and resolved.

Third-into-fourth is still a humor threshold; know your children and appreciate what they are ready to receive. For example, can they manage the irreverence of *Dahl*? For a child, to not get a joke is to feel excluded, and reading should be a positive, self-affirming moment.

- **Arabel and Mortimer** by Joan Aiken (1972). A troublesome and hilarious friendship between a young girl and her pet raven. An example: Mortimer decides to go to sea on a grand piano, attacks the giraffes at the zoo for stealing his doughnuts, unearths a priceless treasure buried in the local park. Also read others in the series.
- **The Castle Corona** by Sharon Creech (2007). There was a spoiled king whose primary wish was to be able to nap and have a gown that didn't itch. And then there were two plucky and proud peasants in possession of a pouch that could change their lives.
- **The Fabled Fourth Graders of Aesop Elementary School** by Candace Fleming (2007). How does one turn morals, such as "Be careful what you wish for" and "Don't count your chickens before they hatch" into tales about children with challenges? Read this book to find out. Also read *The Fabled Fourth Graders of Aesop Elementary*.



Suggested Reading

- **Gooney Bird Greene Series** by Lois Lowry (2002). A unique child at Watertower Elementary School, Gooney Bird loves telling stories with wonderful word play and plot twists; Gooney Bird, herself, is a delightfully complex, eccentric, and confident character.
- **How to Eat Fried Worms** by Thomas Rockwell (1973). Two boys prove that worms can make a fantastic meal by eating (in many different ways) 15 worms in 15 days.
- **Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle** by MacDonald. Children have problems and Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle fixes them in humorous and inventive ways.
- **The Stories Julian Tells** by Ann Cameron (1981). A quick fibber and inspired storyteller, Julian entertains his little brother, Huey, with tales about cats that come in the mail and fig leaves, when eaten, that make you grow tall, but sometimes the stories backfire.
- **Tom, Babette, & Simon: Three Tales of Transformation** by AVI (1995). Tom turns into a cat. Babette is invisible (her mother, the Queen wished for a perfect baby with no discernable flaws). And indulged Simon yearns for undivided attention—but from a bird? Read this trilogy to see how children transform.
- **The Willoughbys** by Lois Lowry (2008). Four children, abandoned by their ill-humored parents, are overseen by a seasoned nanny and rescued by their sudden brush with an abandoned baby and reclusive candy magnate.