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Favorite Books for First-Graders

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

By GreatSchools Book Nook Experts

Fiction

All About Friends

Frog and Toad Are Friends

by Arnold Lobel (Harper Collins, 1970).

This classic features the escapades of Frog and Toad, an adorable amphibious duo who are the best of friends. Your

child will love these five stories about friendship that include adventures such as feeling embarrassed when wearing a bathing suit, waiting for mail, finding a lost button and waking up from hibernation in the spring. Caldecott Honor Book, 1971. 64 pages.

Reading Level: Kindergarten, Read Aloud; Grades 1-2, Read to Self. PBS Bookfinder

Ivy and Bean

by Annie Barrows, illustrated by Sophie Blackall (Chronicle Books, 2007).

A sure hit with kids starting chapter books. Parents need to know the award-winning book is

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Fiction

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Nonfiction

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Health	about making a new friend, learning about differences and sharing an adventure. On the surface these girls appear very different. One wears dresses and reads books, the
History	
Science and Nature	
Meet Our Experts	

other has a sassy mouth and likes to get dirty. Some sibling issues occur, including fighting with an older sister, stealing her money, playing tricks on her and calling her names like "tightwad." With its over-sized print, frequent black-and-white illustrations and easy-to-follow plot, this first book in the series is a great beginning chapter book for kids who are just emerging from early readers. 120 pages. Awards: ALA Notable Children's Book, Booklist — Editor's Choice, Kirkus Reviews — Best Early Chapter Books.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Read Aloud: Age 5. Read Alone: Ages 6-9.

Common Sense Media

Margaret and Margarita: Margarita y Margaret

by Lynn Reiser (Rayo, 1993).

Your child will love this bilingual (Spanish and English) book about a budding friendship between an English-speaking girl and a Spanish-speaking girl who meet in a park.

For our Spanish readers: A su niño le encantará este libro bilingüe sobre una amistad que crece entre una niña que habla inglés y una niña que habla español que se conocen en el parque. 32 pages.

Reading Level: Grades K-1, Read Aloud. PBS Bookfinder

My Best Friend

by Pat Hutchins (Greenwillow, 1993).

This playful story shows that two little girls can be friends and appreciate each other even though they are good at doing different things. You child will enjoy this book over and over again. 32 pages.

Reading Level: Grades K-1, Read Aloud. PBS Bookfinder

There Is a Bird on Your Head!

by Mo Willems (Hyperion Books for Children, 2007).

Bespeckled and a little stressed out, pessimistic Gerald the elephant has the look of a worried old man while his upbeat friend Piggie is much more kid-like and exuberant. Together they make a great pair, in much the same way as Frog and Toad. The language is simple and repetitive enough for beginning readers to enjoy. And the humor will hold their interest while they struggle with the harder parts. This book is so much fun that even struggling readers will want to read it over and over again, especially if they are able to share parts with another reader. And, happily, this is only one of several in

the *Elephant and Piggie* series. 64 pages.

Read Aloud: Age 4. Read Alone: Age 5.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Common Sense Media

Widget

by Lyn Rossiter McFarland, illustrated by Jim McFarland (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2006).

Widget, a homeless dog, wanders into a delightful house filled with food and warm beds. The only problem is that the food and beds belong to six hostile cats. Widget, a clever dog, convinces the cats that he fits in by learning to meow and purr. If your child loves animals, he is sure to enjoy this delightful tale.

First-grader Read to Self. PBS Bookfinder

Books About the Joy of Reading

Aunt Chip & the Great Triple Creek Dam Affair

by Patricia Polacco (Philomel, 1996).

Television is so beloved in Triple Creek that no one even remembers how to read. Books are still around, but are mostly used to shore-up the local dam. When Aunt Chip teaches Eli to read, his new love of books leads him to pluck a book from the dam, producing a flood that changes the town forever. Krishna Roach

The Boy Who Loved Words

by Roni Schotter, illustrated by Giselle Potter (Random House, 2006).

In this book, a word-loving boy spreads the wealth. Parents need to know that there's nothing to be concerned about and much to be learned in this introduction to the joy of words. Families who read this book could discuss words. What makes some words so much fun? How does knowing a lot of words help? What are some of your favorite words? Together you can also learn the words in the book's glossary and try using them in everyday life whenever you can. Also, how about starting your own collections of wonderful words? 35 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Read Aloud: 5, Read Alone: 7+. Common Sense Media

Carlo and the Really Nice Librarian

by Jessica Spanyol (Candlewick, 2004).

Little giraffe Carlo is very excited to go to the library with his dad, but feels very shy of the librarian, Mrs. Chinca, who happens to be a crocodilian! Once Carlo learns how knowledgeable about books she is, the two become fast friends. Krishna Roach



Edward and the Pirates

Written and illustrated by David McPhail (Little, Brown, 1997). When Edward discovers a mysterious, dusty book on pirates hidden away on a shelf in the library, he can't wait to get it home. When pirates come to his room looking for the secret to hidden treasure, he realizes how precious the gift of reading can be. Krishna Roach

Max's Words

by Kate Banks, illustrated by Boris Kullikov (Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2006).

This homage to the writing life gives new meaning to the educational precept known as "language acquisition." Max's brother Benjamin collects stamps; his other brother, Karl, collects coins; and Max wants a collection of his own. In a sly dig at reviewers and reviewing, he cuts up a publication that looks — suspiciously — like the New York Times Book Review and collects piles of words in a potpourri of fonts. Words, of course, lead to story ... and pretty soon all three brothers are happily engaged in creating a tale about a brown worm, a green snake and a mean crocodile. ... 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

You Read to Me, I'll Read to You: Very Short Fairy Tales to Read Together

by Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Michael Emberley (Little Brown, 2004). Hoberman has written a charming sequel to her first book of the same title. Set for two voices, these hilarious versions of the three bears, pigs and goats, plus a couple of princesses and one



beanstalk, can be read by even beginning readers. The cozy appeal of partnered reading and slightly quirky stories are too snuggly for just one reading. Simple text with abundant humor and comic illustrations follow the invitation: "We'll read each page to one another. You'll read one side, I, the other." Dr. Jan LaBonty

Books About Nature***The Apple Pie That Papa Baked***

by Lauren Thompson, illustrated by Jonathan Bean (Simon & Schuster, 2007).

The Apple Pie That Papa Baked is as homey as Grandma's kitchen, yet it's modern, rich and even scientific. In simple language that is also poetic and true, Thompson tells the heartwarming story of how the apple pie comes to be, including a quick introduction to the whole ecological web of life. And, as a final loving touch, she adds that the true enjoyment comes in sharing the pie with all the creatures on the farm. With that, the circle is made complete. 32 pages.

Read Aloud: Age 5. Read Alone: Age 6.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web

site.

Common Sense Media

Bear Snores On

by Karma Wilson, illustrated by Jane Chapman (Simon & Schuster, 2003).

One by one, cold and hungry forest animals take refuge in brown bear's cave. He snores on as they light a fire, pop popcorn, and brew tea. This delightful rhyming book with beautiful full-page illustrations and an unforgettable ending will capture your child's interest. 32 pages.

First-grader Read to Self. PBS Bookfinder

The Big Snow

by Berta and Elmer Hader (Ailadin, 2005).

This classic Caldecott winner from 1949 illustrates how winter comes to the woods and how the animals make their preparations. While geese fly south, squirrels look for food and shelter and discover that a friendly neighbor in a nearby stone house has left some provisions to add to their winter feast. As quiet and beautiful as a snowflake. 48 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Diary of a Wombat

by Jackie French, illustrated by Bruce Whatley (Clarion Books, 2003).

This humorous diary takes the wombat's point of view as he describes his daily life. In particular, he explains how he trains his neighboring humans to give him the food he likes. 32 pages.

First-grader Read to Self. PBS Bookfinder

The Snow Leopard

by Jackie Morris (Frances Lincoln, 2007).

Very rarely do absolutely gorgeous picture books like this come along. This original, mystical, mountain story tells of a boy who dreams and hears a leopard, once human, that "sang the stars to life." When intruders invade their hidden valley, the leopard passes on both his protective song and his animal form to the boy. Fantastic prose and magical illustrations make this picture book an instant classic. 32 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Winter's Eyes

by Douglas Florian (Greenwillow, 1999).

Winter Eyes is a beautifully illustrated collection of poems about winter. Each poem celebrates some aspect of winter such as sledding, icicles, woolen socks and the mood of a blustery day. Your child is bound to find at least one poem that introduces her to the joys of a snowy winter or reminds her of a favorite winter activity. PBS Bookfinder

Books About School

Clementine

by Sara Pennypacker, illustrated by Marla Frazee (Hyperion, 2006).

Move over, Ramona — here comes Clementine. The main character, Clementine, is a precocious third-grader who frequently gets into mischief, though with the good intention to solve problems. In one week she "fixes" her friend's hair by cutting it all off, helps out the principal by answering her phone and pays attention in class by watching the janitor embrace the lunch lady. A wide age range will enjoy this book and enjoy reading it aloud, from the emergent kindergartner reader up to third-graders. 144 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Read Aloud: 5, Read Alone: 7+. Common Sense Media

The Dot

by Peter Reynolds (Candlewick Press, 2003).

Perfectionism, insecurity, getting started — these are all important topics for budding students to think about, and discuss with their parents. 32 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

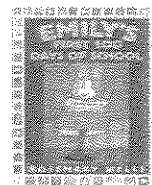
Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 4-8, Read Aloud: 4+, Read Alone: 6+. Common Sense Media

Emily's First 100 Days of School

by Rosemary Wells (Hyperion Books for Children, 2000).

Count the first one hundred days of school with Emily in this fun, fact-filled book.

Children will love learning about Emily's days at school as she learns the alphabet, sings, reads and dances. The oversized format of this book makes the bright illustrations pop off the pages. 64 pages. PBS Bookfinder

***Little Cliff's First Day of School***

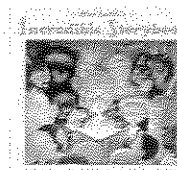
by Clifton L. Taulbert, illustrated by E.B. Lewis (Puffin, 2003).

Little Cliff does not want to go to first grade. He does not want to leave his toys or his family. However, once he sees his friends and hears everyone having a good time, he quickly changes his mind. Any child who has felt ambivalent about starting school will appreciate this story. 32 pages. PBS Bookfinder

Miss Smith's Incredible Story Book

by Michael Garland (Dutton, 2003).

Miss Smith is the cool new teacher in Zach's school, and she has a magic storybook. When Miss Smith reads from her storybook, characters pop out and her class experiences the adventures



from her magic book in real life! Does the magic work for all readers of the storybook? See what happens when the principal tries to read from Miss Smith's storybook. Jennifer Thompson

The New Girl ... and Me

by Jacqui Robbins, illustrated by Matt Phelan (Simon & Schuster, 2006).

Shakeeta is the new girl and like all new kids since schools were first invented she feels out of place. Told in the first person by Mia, wise in the ways of school politics, this gentle story of adjustment and budding friendships carefully sticks to a child-eyed perspective to make its point: it's not so much what you say that makes a difference, it's that you say it at all. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

Ramona the Pest

by Beverly Cleary, illustrated by Tracy Dockray (HarperTrophy, 1992).

Ramona the Pest is one of Cleary's classic stories of the feisty Ramona. Children are sure to love hearing about Ramona's troubles in Miss Binney's kindergarten. Ramona fans will also enjoy *Beezus and Ramona* and *Ramona Quimby, Age 8*. 208 pages. PBS Bookfinder

Books to Calm Childhood Anxieties

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day

by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Ray Cruz (Aladdin, 1987).

Have you ever had a day that you'd rather forget? Then you will certainly be able to relate to poor Alexander when his day starts bad and gets progressively worse as the day goes on. From the moment Alexander wakes up, with gum in his hair, to the disappointment of not getting a surprise in his cereal box, Alexander keeps you laughing as he complains about his horrible day. This is a great book for parents and teachers to read to children when they are having "one of those days!" Jennifer Thompson

Is a Worry Worrying You

by Ferida Wolff and Harriet May Savitz, illustrated by Marie LeTourneau (Tanglewood Press, 2005)

This is a cleverly written and delightfully illustrated book that enables children to investigate their fears and anxieties. An easy introduction to discussion about creative problem solving. Darlene Kenny



Oh Brother!

by Nikki Grimes, illustrated by Mike Benny (Amistad Press).

2008).

This is a special book. Each page-spread is a poem, and together the poems tell the story of a bi-racial, blended family overcoming the trials and tribulations of learning to live and love together. Xavier's mom has just married Chris' dad. To Xavier, the house feels too small, the love not enough for two, and just about everything Chris does, Xavier sees as ill-intentioned or competitive. But that makes the book sound heavy when indeed these are witty, moving poems that skip, sink, soar and take unexpected twists, along with the little boy's emotions. When the brothers work things out and find joy in each other, my 5-year-old daughter in my lap was full of happiness and bounce. The pictures are energetic, expressive and colorful, and more than match the text — they give it life and whimsy. 32 pages. Kepler's Books

Books with Positive Messages

Big Bug Surprise

by Julia Gran (Scholastic, 2007).

Prunella's unending knowledge of insects saves her class from disaster. As her classmates celebrate, Prunella presents a show-and-tell surprise, much to the delight of the students. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Dad, Jackie and Me

by Myron Uhlberg, illustrated by Colin Bootman (Peachtree Publishers, 2005).

An amazing semi-autobiographical picture book about a young boy and his deaf father set in Brooklyn. The year is 1947 and Jackie Robinson has just been signed to the Brooklyn Dodgers. Although Dad was never a sports fan (since he can't hear them on the radio), he becomes determined to meet Jackie in person. He wants to shake the hand of a man he views as a kindred spirit, "who works to overcome thoughtless prejudice." This book is a beautiful social justice story and also a love letter from a son to his father. Krishna Roach

Elena's Serenade

by Campbell Geeslin, illustrated by Ana Juan (Atheneum, 2004).

More than anything, Elena wants to be a glass-blower, but in her region in Mexico, and in her father's eyes, this is an art for boys alone. When she heads to Monterrey, where all the great glass-blowers live and work, disguised as a boy, she learns the depth of her own talent. 40 pages. Krishna Roach

The Empty Pot

by Demi (Henry Holt, 1996).

The emperor of China is looking for a successor, and he gives all the children in the land one seed. He tells them that the one who grows the most beautiful flowers in one year will be emperor. Ping is a little boy with a green thumb who can't seem

to get his seed to grow! Will the emperor be able to see his earnest spirit? 32 pages. Krisha Roach

Henry and Mudge

by Cynthia Rylant (Aladdin, 1996).

Henry and Mudge is a delightful early chapter book that features a young boy named Henry. Henry has no siblings and no friends in his neighborhood. Poor Henry is lonely and is yearning for a pet, so his parents allow him to get a huge, loveable dog named Mudge. Henry and Mudge become fast friends and Mudge follows Henry everywhere. One day, Mudge gets lost. Will Henry and Mudge find each other again?

Jennifer Thompson

How to Be a Good Dog

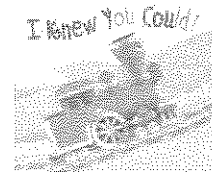
by Gail Page (Bloomsbury Children's Books, 2006).

Bobo was usually a good dog and got lots of treats, but when he was a bad dog, he was sent to his doghouse. When even the cat began to miss him, the cat teaches Bobo how to be a good dog. 32 pages. Children's Choices

I Knew You Could

by Craig Dorfman, illustrated by Christina Ong (Grosset & Dunlap, 2003).

A sweetly written nostalgic book. Singsong rhyming verse combined with the familiar blue engine helps us remember that anything is possible if you persevere. Younger children may need help understanding the greater meanings behind each rhyming verse. This book encourages children to believe in themselves. Darlene Kenny



Raggedy Ann's Wishing Pebble

written by Johnny Gruelle, illustrated by Jan Palmer (Aladdin, 2002).

A beautifully illustrated book with everyone's favorite rag dolls, Ann and Andy. In this Raggedy Ann and Andy adventure, all their animal friends try to help retrieve the magic wishing pebble that has been stolen by a trickster named Minky. Opens discussions about what wishes are important. Darlene Kenny

What's So Bad About Being An Only Child?

by Carl Best, illustrated by Sophie Blackall (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2007).

This sly reversal of the typical older-sibling-jealous-of-the-new-baby picture book tells the story of Rosemary Emma Angela Lynette Isabel Iris Malone, so-saddled because every relative in the extended family took a hand in the naming. Everyone, in fact, from Uncle Jeff to Aunt Barbara to the unnamed grandparents hangs on Rosemary's every need until her life gives new meaning to the term "cosseted." Eventually, she comes to the conclusion that being the target of everyone's

affection is hard work and she takes her complaints all the way to the top. "You need to have another kid right away," she tells her mother, hands firmly planted on her hips. "And that's that." In the end, all is resolved to everyone's satisfaction, though not in the way Rosemary demands or even imagines, and the clever title changes from a statement of fact to an open-ended question. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

Classic Childhood Favorites

Charlotte's Web

by E.B. White, illustrated by Garth Williams (HarperCollins, 1952).

Parents need to know that a major character dies, peacefully but alone. All children (and most adults) will cry, but especially sensitive children may be disturbed. Families who read this book could discuss the various concepts of friendship presented here. Charlotte obviously gives a lot in this relationship — what does she get in return? How should one treat one's friends? What should one expect from them? 184 pages. Newbery Honor Award.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 6-10, Read Aloud: 5+, Read Alone: 7+. Common Sense Media

The Hundred Dresses

by Eleanor Estes, illustrated by Louis Slobodkin (Harcourt, Brace & World, 1970).

Is it ever too early to teach compassion? That's what this astounding and beautiful picture book aspires to do. When schoolchildren make fun of Wanda Petronski, both for her name and for the fact that she wears the same dress to school every day, Wanda begins to tell the tall tale that she has "one hundred dresses" at home. When the children learn the truth, they are given the chance for self-reflection. The lessons learned here will last your child a lifetime. 96 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

I Wish That I Had Duck Feet

by Theo. LeSieg (Dr. Seuss), illustrated by B. Tobey (Random House Books for Young Readers, 1965).

From the moment my mom ripped out the mail-in coupon from Highlights magazine, I loved receiving my monthly mailing from the "Dr. Seuss Beginning Readers" book club. Of all the books I received, *I Wish That I Had Duck Feet* was my favorite.

Written by Theo. LeSieg (Geisel backwards — a charming pen name Dr. Seuss used when he did not illustrate a title), this funny book is a charmer. Now I grin from ear to ear when my first-grader reads it to me. 72 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

The Little House

by Virginia Lee Burton (Houghton Mifflin, 1978).

First, let me say that Virginia Lee Burton is one of my all-time favorites. *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel* is just one of the many fantastic books she has given us which feature themes such as how to treat each other and believe in yourself. *The Little House* is modestly told and illustrated. What happens when the world changes around you? An early commentary on urbanization and a heartwarming read. Winner of the prestigious Caldecott Medal in 1943. 40 pages.
Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

The Little Prince

written and illustrated by Antoine de Saint-Exupery (Harcourt Brace and Co., 1943).

This most beautiful and thoughtful of children's classics really isn't for children. Though it looks like a picture book, with its size, brevity, and the author's delicate watercolors, its thoughtfulness and nostalgia for childhood appeals more to teens and adults. Nevertheless, curled up with the right adult — who can read it aloud and take time to discuss it throughout — kids with the patience for a slow and gentle tale can find their introduction to its kindly philosophy one of their most vivid moments in childhood. 96 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: All Ages, Read Aloud: 6+, Read Alone: 8+. Common Sense Media

Mr. Popper's Penguins

by Richard and Florence Atwater, illustrated by Robert Lawson (Little, Brown & Co., 2007).

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. 139 pages. 1939 Newbery Honor.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 9-12, Read Aloud: 5-8, Read Alone: 7-12. Common Sense Media

The Stories Julian Tells by Ann Cameron (Random House, 1989).

Julian loves to make up tall tales and make his little brother, Huey, believe them. Each chapter in this wonderful early-reader's chapter book is an individual story and makes for a great introduction to the concept of short stories in general. The tales are imaginative, fun and a great depiction of a loving family in everyday situations. The bite-size length of the

chapters keeps the book from feeling overwhelming for a young reader. 80 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Fantasy Books

Fairytale News

by Colin and Jacqui Hawkins. (Candlewick Press, 2004).

Revisit favorite fairy tales and nursery rhymes as Jack delivers newspapers to memorable characters including the fearsome giant who lives atop the beanstalk.

Don't miss the most recent edition of the Fairytale News tucked into the back of the book. Children's Choices



Fin M'Coul, The Giant of Knockmany Hill

by Tomie De Paola (Holiday House, 1981).

This Irish folktale of Fin M'Coul, his lovely wife Oonagh and his nemesis, the pugilistic giant Cucullin, is a perfect read-aloud. Fin is busy building a causeway to Scotland (still called the Giant's Causeway today) when he hears that the bully Cucullin is beating up all the other giants and is on his way to add Fin to his list of victims. Oonagh comes to the rescue and with the help of a fairy charm she tricks Cucullin into deciding that Fin is one giant better left alone. De Paola's wonderful artwork, sprinkled with pictures of Irish metalwork, gives plenty of personality to the main characters and both charm and Celtic blarney to the tale. Dr. Jan LaBonty

Flotsam

by David Wiesner (Houghton Mifflin, 2006).

Dead center in the fish-eye lens on the cover of this fantastic visual voyage floats another lens centered in the face of an old-fashioned brownie-style box camera. Nary a word is needed to tell the story of a young boy's trip to the beach; the discovery of a camera washed up by a rogue wave; a trip to the one-hour film developers; a set of mysterious underwater images and a final photograph showing a child who is holding a picture of a child who is holding a picture of a child who is holding a picture of a child and so on ... an intriguing metaphor for looking at history through a progressive series of lenses. ... An intriguing treat from beginning to end. 40 pages. © Parents' Choice

The Flower

by John Light, illustrated by Lisa Evans (Child's Play International, 2007).

Brigg lives in a city of the future where the landscape is all cement, kept clean by giant vacuum systems so that even a mug-full of dust is hard to collect. One day he discovers an image in a book that speaks to his heart: "It showed pictures of the most beautiful shapes and colors, and called them flowers." He searches the city for traces of this beauty and discovers a

pack of seeds at a junk shop. The Flower has a subtlety that intrigues both older and younger children who totally get it. I've had wonderful responses — joyful and vigorous affirmations of how they love, love, love flowers. And they draw lots of them after reading this book, so have some paper and crayons handy! 32 pages. Kepler's Books

The Girl in the Castle Inside the Museum

by Kate Bernheimer, illustrated by Nicoletta Ceccoli (Schwartz & Wade, 2008).

This is a layered story that weaves in and out, up and down, to form a fascinating fantasy. The haunting scene of a wispy, wistful girl peering into the glass case on the cover starts the journey. Inside the case, the girl in the castle, lonely in her turret, appears to be lost in a dreamlike trance. Yet as the story unfolds, the reader learns that the girl in the castle misses the children when they leave the museum and dreams of their return. She even dreams of the reader, who is, in the end, invited to leave his/her picture above the girl's bed inside the castle, inside the glass case, inside the museum, inside the book that the reader is holding. Much like the Escher-like stairways of the illustrations, the three worlds intersect and blend into an unexpected story. And, with characters that look like dolls, dolls that look like porcelain figures from a Dali painting, strange toys, and hazy dream-like colors sparked here and there with a magical light, Bernheimer and Ceccoli have created a mesmerizing fantasy world that is both uniquely surreal, yet comfotingly real and loving. 40 pages.

Read Aloud: Age 4. Read Alone: Age 7.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Common Sense Media

Goldilocks and the Three Martians

by Stu Smith, illustrated by Michael Garland (Dutton Children's Books/Penguin Young Readers Group, 2004).

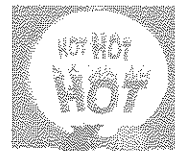
This fractured tale is about a girl who does not like the rules at home and decides to move to another planet. Children relate to the story line of things not always being pleasant and the occasional desire to escape. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Hot Hot Hot

by Neaf Layton, illustrated by the author (Candlewick Press, 2004).

Two woolly mammoths are having trouble adjusting to the warmth, until they come upon the perfect solution, starting a new fashion trend — short hair.

Youngsters will enjoy the whimsical illustrations and learning about the one whose hair doesn't grow back — the caveman. 32 pages. Children's Choices



How the Elephant Got Its Trunk

Retelling of a Rudyard Kipling tale by Jean Richards, illustrated by Norman Gorbaty (Henry Holt, 2003).

Little Elephant is so curious she just has to know what the crocodile eats for dinner. None of her relatives will tell her, so she takes the Koikolo bird's advice to go directly to the great, gray-green Limpopo River to ask the reptile in person. A tug of war stretches her snub-nose into a useful trunk that all elephants have to this day, or so the story goes. Richards' lively tale is a wonderful introduction to classic literature. Dr. Jan LaBonty



How I Became a Pirate

by Melinda Long, illustrated by David Shannon (Harcourt Children's Books, 2003). Image courtesy of Harcourt, Inc.

Are you looking for a sea adventure? If your child dreams of treasure and wonders what a pirate's life might be like then sail away with Jeremy Jacobs and you'll find out. At first life seems great for Jeremy when he joins Braid Beard and his rambunctious crew. No manners, no bedtime and no nagging to brush your teeth make life on board ship very appealing. But soon Jeremy begins to miss the comforts of home and realizes that a pirate's life may not be exactly what he wants. Jennifer Thompson



Let's Play in the Forest While the Wolf Is Not Around

by Claudia Rueda (Scholastic, 2006).

This picture book is created from the author's fond childhood memory of a Spanish play song, and makes a fun game out of getting dressed. The animals in the forest gather and chant "Let's play in the forest while the wolf is not around" on the left side of the page-spreads, while the wolf is getting himself ready for the morning on the right side. The wolf gets bigger with each piece of clothing he puts on. The animals do play in the forest all the way through the book. When the wolf is finally dressed, his face fills the page and he proclaims, "I am very hungry!" Instead of eating the animals, he eats pancakes his mother made and then goes on his way to school. Rueda includes notes explaining the origins of the song (traditional French and Spanish), as well as the musical notation. 32 pages. Pauline Harris

Mind Your Manners, B.B. Wolf

by Judy Sierra, illustrated by J. Otto Seibold (Knopf, 2007).

For years, the Big Bad Wolf (B.B. Wolf) has been living at Villain Villa Senior Center in comfort, receiving nothing in the mail but bills. One day, he gets an invitation to the Annual Storybook Tea at the library. B.B. Wolf, who until this point has never thought out his actions, is at a loss about what to do. Should he go to the tea, or not? After consulting with his good friend Crocodile, he decides to go, but not without taking the necessary precautions. Combining Judy Sierra's clever

storytelling abilities and Seibold's hilarious and stylized illustrations, *Mind Your Manners B.B. Wolf* is a sure hit with children and parents alike. The lesson in manners is so subtle, kids won't realize they are getting one. Make sure to pay attention to the pictures, as they are chock full of silliness! 40 pages. Kepler's Books

My Lucky Day!

by Keiko Kasza (G. P. Putnam, 2003).

When you're a chubby, delicious-looking, but lazy piggy, it takes wiles to get baths, massages, dinner and dessert from predators that had planned to eat you. As Fox waits on the porker paw and foot, and the pig plans his next stop at Bear's house, the reader discovers whose lucky day it really is. Dr. Jan LaBonty



Prancing, Dancing Lily

by Marsha Diane Arnold, illustrated by John Manders (Dial Books for Young Readers/Penguin Young Readers Group, 2004).

Lily's passion for dance jeopardizes her future as the bell cow. She leaves Mamoō (and the herd, too) to hoof it as a square dancer, Rockette, and ballerina, always sending messages home. A drum and a conga line solve Lily's leadership quandary. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Tuesday

by David Wiesner (Clarion Books; 1997). This is an early work by Wiesner, 2007's Caldecott winning Flotsam author/illustrator. Frogs. Lots of them. It all starts around 8 p.m., on a Tuesday. Almost totally wordless. *Tuesday* takes us into a magical, funny and flighty experience. The frogs start their flights of fancy in a three-panel page that shows them sleeping. Then one is surprised by his floating-into-the-air-lily pad, while the rest watch him in delight. A turtle on a log notices something above him. Turn the page, and the frogs are calmly flying by on their magic lily pad carpets! Look for startled fish and harassed birds! The expressions on the frogs' faces are priceless, and the artwork is bounding with energy. *Tuesday* won the 1992 Caldecott Medal and was named as an ALA Notable Children's Book. 32 pages. Pauline Harris

When the Library Lights Go Out

by Megan McDonald, illustrated by Katherine Tilotson (Atheneum/Richard Jackson Books, 2005).

Have you ever wondered what happens when everyone goes home and the library lights go out? Come join the adventure of Lion and Rabbit when they realize their friend, Hermit Crab, is missing. Could he have been taken by a mighty giant? Will a map of the library help the friends find Hermit Crab? Come along with Lion and Rabbit to find out for yourself! Jennifer Thompson

Mysteries

Aunt Eater Loves a Mystery

by Doug Cushman (Harper Trophy, 1987).

This is a great introduction to the world of mysteries for a proficient beginning reader. In each of these four chapters, Aunt Eater delights in solving mysteries for her friends. Fun illustrations throughout help provide the clues. 64 pages.
Krisha Roach

Minnie and Moo and the Case of the Missing Jelly Donut

by Denys Cazet (Harper Trophy, 2005).

In this installment of the popular Minnie and Moo cow series, a jelly donut is missing and all that's left behind is a blue feather. Well, the only things around on the farm with feathers are chickens! And so it goes that Minnie and Moo disguise themselves as chickens to get that jelly donut back. 48 pages.
Krisha Roach

Private I. Guana: The Case of the Missing Chameleon

by Nina Laden (Chronicle Books, 1999).

Leon the chameleon didn't come home for dinner last night and his wife is worried! Private I. Guana is on the case. After searching high and low, talking to lizards and salamanders, there's only one place left to look — the wild and crazy Lizard Lounge. Could that chameleon in the dress on stage be Leon? 32 pages. Krisha Roach

Young Cam Jansen & The Lost Tooth

by David Adler (Viking, 1997).

The Young Cam Jansen Series is another excellent beginning book series. This series features Cam, a young detective whose real name is Jennifer. She gets her nickname, Cam, because she has a photographic memory, like a camera. In this story, Cam's friend has lost a tooth in art class and to her dismay the tooth disappears. Will Cam be able to use her photographic memory to help solve this mystery?
Jennifer Thompson



Historical Fiction

Almost to Freedom

by Vaunda Neison, illustrated by Colin Bootman (Lerner Publishing Group, 2004).

This is a moving story set on a plantation in antebellum Virginia. The book deals directly with many of the hardships endured by enslaved African American people in the pre-Civil War South, from verbal and physical abuse by the owners and overseers of the plantation to the terrors of time spent on the dangerous Underground Railway. For children old enough to comprehend some aspects of the historical setting and political situation in the story, this is an emotionally rewarding and

ultimately optimistic story. 40 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 6-10, Read Aloud: 6+, Read Alone: 7+. Common Sense Media

Why Don't You Get a Horse, Sam Adams?

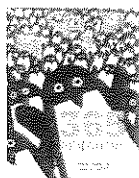
by Jean Fritz, illustrated by Trina Hyman (Penguin Putnam, 1974).

This is a fun story about quirky Sam Adams's quest for an independent America (his dog's antics almost steal the spotlight); both writing and artwork have humorous moments. 48 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 9-12, Read Aloud: 6-8, Read Alone: 9+. Common Sense Media

Seasonal Stories



365 Penguins

by Jean Luc Fromental (Abrams, 2006).

On January 1st, a family is surprised by a delivery: a single penguin from a mysterious sender. What's more, the delivery continues with one penguin for each day until, by the end of the year, their

house is so stuffed with penguins that the family has to celebrate a cold New Year's Eve out on their front lawn. This picture book is fantastic in more ways than one — the story is imaginative and even includes counting concepts for some educational appeal — and the illustrations really put it over the top; they're bold and simple with a retro appeal. You could read this book a dozen times and still find a penguin hiding where you'd least expect it. 48 pages. Click here to buy the book on Powells.com.

Sheila Ashdown and the Kids' Team at Powells.com



The Extremely Wintery Winter Activity Kit (Charlie and Lola)

by Lauren Child (Dial, 2008).

This Charlie and Lola combo pack includes a puzzle game, snowflake stencils, and a copy of *Snow Is My Favorite* and *My Best*.

Lola loves snow so much (it is her favorite and her best, after all) that she wants it to never melt. But her big brother Charlie (possibly the most patient big brother in the world) helps her see why snow — just like a birthday — is made even more special by the fact that you can't have it everyday. Click here to buy the book on Powells.com.

Sheila Ashdown and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Stella, Queen of the Snow



by Marie Louise Gay (Groundwood, 2000). It's young Sam's first snowfall, and he has plenty of questions. Luckily for him, his big sister Stella has a seemingly endless supply of imaginative answers. For instance, when Sam wonders what has happened to the pond near their house, Stella explains that it's frozen "like a giant silver popsicle." And when breath turns into fog when it's cold out? Well, according to Stella, that's because your words freeze and "every word has a different fog shape." With her quirky outlook and boundless imagination, Stella offers young readers a fun and unconventional take on winter. 32 pages. Click here to buy the book on [Powells.com](#). Sheila Ashdown and the Kids' Team at [Powells.com](#)

Silliness and Humor

Diary of a Worm

by Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Harry Bliss (Joanna Cotler Books, 2003).

No child can resist the young baseball cap wearing worm whose diary chronicles his everyday adventures — whether it's playing with his friend spider, teasing his sister, or doing the first part of the Hokey Pokey with his classmates. Hilarious text and cartoon illustrations make readers, of any age, ask, "Is there another book just like this?" Dr. Jan LaBonty



Frankie Stein

by Lola M. Schaefer, illustrated by Kevan Atteberry (Marshall Cavendish Children's Books, 2007).

Frankie Stein is a cute baby, but his parents fear he will never be as scary as they are — until they learn to see him for the unique Stein that he is in this humorous story. 32 pages. Children's Choices

George Washington's Cows

by David Small (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997).

Coddled cows upstairs, pigs running the household and lecturing sheep — is it any wonder that George Washington fled home to brave frosty Delaware? Told in rollicking verse and virtuoso watercolors, Small's book is a model of economy of line and narrative moving so fast you don't have time to wonder or stop chuckling. 40 pages. © Parents' Choice

The Giant Hug

by Sandra Horning, illustrated by Valeri Gorbachev (Random House Children's Books, 2005).

Owen sends Granny a hug. He hugs Mr. Nevin at the Post Office, who hugs Mrs. Porter, who hugs someone else ... all the way to Granny. The humor associated with each hug passing appeals immensely to children. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Hil Fly Guy

by Tedd Arnold (Scholastic, 2006).

Buzz meets a fly that can say his name and decides it should be his pet. Trying to convince his parents and the judges at a pet contest is another story. 32 pages. Children's Choices

I Lost My Bear

by Jules Feiffer (HarperCollins,1998).

Comic-style pictures and uproarious text keep kids interested. Is it possible for a few words and squiggles to convey both humor and emotion? Presto, chango! Jules Feiffer does the impossible! 37 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: Ages 4-8, Read Aloud: 2-6, Read Alone: 6-8. Common Sense Media

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse

by Kevin Henkes (Greenwillow, 1996).

Lilly's pride in her new purse overrides her patience and brings her into conflict with her teacher, whom she loves. Ambivalent emotions, perfectly depicted. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

Oops!

by Alan Katz, illustrated by Edward Koren (Margaret K. McElderry, 2008).

If you have a fan of humorous verse in the vein of Jack Prelutsky or Shel Silverstein, crack open *Oops!* by Alan Katz. He writes poetry based on the wild antics of his four children. Topics such as leaving fingerprints, fighting with siblings, waiting for the school bus and more fill the pages. *Oops!* features 100 of his hilarious poems with rhymes that will tickle your kid's funny bone all summer long. 176 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Sally and the Some-Thing

by George O'Connor (Roaring Brook Press, 2006).

One boring morning, Sally decides to go fishing and meets a slimy, slithery "some-thing." Sally is thrilled, and together they do things like make mud pies and have burping contests. Unexpected and beautifully illustrated, this book is a sure delight. 32 pages.Children's Choices

Smash! Mash! Crash! There Goes the Trash!

by Barbara Odanaka, illustrated by Will Hillenbrand (Simon & Schuster, 2006).

This book opens simply enough, with two piglets waking up to the pre-dawn sounds of the garbage men making their rounds. The emphasis in these early pages is on the noises made by the trucks, rumbling and roaring like "dragons snoring." But then the focus turns to the actual garbage — rotten eggs, apple cores, diapers, and so on. Odanaka isn't afraid to be realistic;

her smiley garbage men wear "Greasy gloves . . . sticky boots . . . stains a-plenty on their suits," and there are flies "a-buzzin' by the dozen." Will Hillenbrand's vivid ink and egg tempera illustrations bring all these stinky details to life — including the truck itself, which gobbles up everything with gusto. There's a definite gross-out element to the book, but Odanaka's rhyming text and enthusiastic look at an important job make this entirely suitable for small children. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

So, What's It Like to Be a Cat?

by Karla Kuskin, illustrated by Betsy Lewin (Atheneum Books for Young Readers, 2005).

The private lives of cats are explored in this question-and-answer exchange between a precocious young boy and an extremely smart cat. Young readers will be attracted to the rhythmic language and realistic illustrations from the cat's viewpoint. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Tacky and the Winter Games

by Helen Lester and Lynn Munsinger (Houghton Mifflin, 2007). Everyone is penguin-crazy these days. Who can resist these lovable winter birds? Tacky and his friends have been around since 1990 and, in this newest volume, form Team Nice Icy Land to compete in the Winter Games. Tacky learns that being on a team takes hard work and dedication. The challenge here is to keep from laughing out loud with your child at the silly antics of Tacky and his friends. Hilarious and raucous fun. 32 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Fly Guy

by Tedd Arnold (Cartwheel Books, 2007).

Here's a creative spin on the classic tale of the old woman who swallowed a fly. It's highly recommended by first-graders; the pictures help students decode words they otherwise may not know, thereby building their reading confidence. 32 pages. Children's Choices

Washday on Noah's Ark

by Glen Rounds (Holiday House, 1985).

Glen Rounds takes the flood story, bends it completely out of shape, and stretches it into a ridiculous, very funny tall tale. Mrs. Noah goes into a snit when a bunch of wild animals lumber aboard and overcrowd the newly finished ark. Nor is her mood improved by the fact that she is unable to wash while it rains. By the 41st day, she is thoroughly disgruntled, and her family is thoroughly dirty. On that first sunny morning, she is determined to let nothing stand in her way — most certainly not a minor detail like the lack of a clothesline. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

Worm Gets a Job

by Kathy Capie (Candlewick Press, 2004).

The cartoon-strip organization of the book guides young readers through the text. They enjoyed following the word bubbles to find out what job the young worm would take on. Children giggled at the results of the worm's search for employment.

Children's Choices



Sports

Ballerina Girl (My First Reader Series)

by Kirsten Hall, illustrated by Anne Kennedy (Children's Press, 2004).

This book will appeal to the child who dreams of becoming a ballet star. The illustrated verses, repeated sentence structures, and controlled vocabulary make this lively story accessible to beginning readers. PBS Bookfinder

Out of the Ballpark

written by Alex Rodriguez, illustrated by Frank Morrison (HarperCollins, 2007).

The first page of this book reads: "Baseball. Alex lived for it." This is the perfect read for those kids who are crazy about the sport of baseball and "live for it." New York Yankees' superstar Alex Rodriguez (A-Rod) tells a fictionalized story about a boy named Alex, who plays in the playoffs and a championship game at the age of 6. The emphasis is on hard work, the spirit of determination and joy in the game. The incidents described in the book are based on experiences from A-Rod's childhood, and actual photos from his early life are featured at the end of the book. 32 pages.

Reading grade level: 2, Interest grade level: K-3 Ellen Phillips

Nonfiction

The Arts

M is for Music

by Kathleen Krull, illustrated by Stacey Innerst (Harcourt Brace, 2003).

Don't be fooled by the alphabet book format. For older children who love music this book will be a treat. 56 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Read Aloud: 4+, Read Alone: 7+. Common Sense Media

Museum ABC

by Metropolitan Museum of Art (Little, Brown, 2002).

For each letter of the alphabet, four paintings from the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York have been selected to illustrate a word starting with the letter. The paintings come from ancient to



modern times, demonstrating the universality of some subjects, such as apples, cats, games, and light. PBS Bookfinder

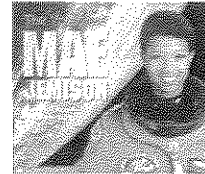
The Shape Game

by Anthony Browne (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2003).
With an undercurrent of family humor, the author describes how a family trip to an art museum inspired him to pursue art. The book will challenge children to look for the story and details in paintings they see. Maybe they, too, can play the shape game in an art museum. PBS Bookfinder

Biographies

Mae Jemison

by Nancy Polette (Scholastic, 2003).
This is part of the Rookie Biographies Series and includes books about Benjamin Franklin, Neil Armstrong and Amelia Earhart. Rookie Biographies is an excellent series for stronger first-grade readers. The books utilize lyrical language and challenging vocabulary words, but also offer guidance with pronunciation keys and word definitions at the end of each book. The Dr. Mae Jemison biography is one of my favorites because not only was she the first African-American woman to travel into space, but she is an accomplished chemical engineer and jet pilot, making her a truly exciting role model for girls and boys alike. Krisha Roach



Picasso and Minou

by P.I. Maitbie, illustrated by Pau Estrada (Charlesbridge Publishing, 2005).
Using beautiful pen and watercolor illustrations that bring the story to life, this book provides information about Pablo Picasso's life in a way that children will understand. The special friendship and loyalty of Minou, the cat, is heartwarming. 28 pages. Children's Choices

Teammates

by Peter Golenbock, illustrated by Paul Bacon (Voyager Books, 1992).
When Jackie Robinson became the first African-American to play baseball in the major league, racial discrimination and segregation were rampant. Despite the protests and prejudice, one teammate named Pee Wee Reese stood up for Jackie. This story about a legendary time in history is important to share with children. PBS Bookfinder

Health

A Cool Drink of Water

by Barbara Kerley (National Geographic Children's Books, 2002).

Lyrical text and thought-provoking photographs of children and their families around the world reveal their relationships to our most basic need: water. The book also includes some simple conservation tips. 32 pages. Krisha Roach

Looking After Myself

by Sarah LeVete (Copper Beech, 1998).

This book discusses issues children may face around safety, nutrition and emotions. Read this book with your child as a way to talk about bullying, saying "No" to when something doesn't feel right, and staying healthy through good nutrition and exercise. PBS Bookfinder



History

Aliens Are Coming! The True Account of the 1938 War of the Worlds Radio Broadcast

by Meghan McCarthy (Alfred A. Knopf, 2006).

On one level this picture book seems to be a science fiction story of aliens from Mars landing on Earth. It is actually the story of Orson Welles' famous 1938 live radio broadcast of H.G. Wells' *The War of the Worlds*, which caused panic and hysteria across the country despite broadcast disclaimers that it was only a play. The book begins with a radio announcer explaining the important role that radio played in the lives of Americans during the '30s, which will probably be surprising to many young readers. McCarthy uses the illustrations to distinguish fact from fiction by presenting real-life scenes in black and white and the fictional radio play in color. The amusing illustrations add to the book's appeal, with the humans' buggy eyes looking strangely similar to the buggy eyes of the Martian aliens. 34 pages.

Interest level: Grades 1-3. Ellen Phillips

Castle: Medieval Days and Knights

by Kyle Olmon, illustrated by Tracy Sabin (Scholastic, 2006).

There's lots of info packed into this appealing pop-up. Parents need to know that this pop-up book is so chock-full of historical information that kids won't be able to take it all in on the first round. A bloodless joust is illustrated, and readers learn about armor and battles. Families can talk about what it must have been like to live during medieval times. They can compare our romantic ideal of castle life with the more stark reality presented in this pop-up. 6 pages.

Read the complete review on the Common Sense Media Web site.

Publisher's Recommended Reading Level: 9 -12, Read Aloud: 7+, Read Alone: 10+. Common Sense Media

G is for Golden: A California Alphabet

by David Domeniconi (Sleeping Bear Press, 2002).

This rhyming alphabet book provides young readers with facts

about every facet of the state of California - its natural history, famous people and interesting landmarks. From Alcatraz to Yosemite to the 21 California missions, children are introduced to many unique features of the Golden State. This book is part of the Discover America State by State series, including E is for Evergreen (Washington), M is for Mayflower (Massachusetts), S is for Sunshine (Florida), and so on, one for each of the 50 states. These books would be a wonderful read before a vacation, a visit to relatives or a move to a new home. 40 pages.

Reading grade level: 3, Interest grade level: K-3. Ellen Phillips

The Pilgrim's First Thanksgiving

by Ann McGovern and illustrated by Elroy Freem (Scholastic, 1993).

Ann McGovern's simple text is an excellent way to introduce children to the struggles that the Pilgrims faced during their first year at Plymouth. This book works best as a read-aloud for first-graders because of its third-grade reading level. Curious readers will be mesmerized by the vivid details of life aboard the Mayflower and the building of the colony. The idea of making friends with an Indian named Squanto proves to be even more intriguing. McGovern paints a realistic picture of the hardships the colonists faced and the relationships that were forged with the Indians. Perhaps what is most stunning for young readers is learning about the strict rules and discipline children had to endure in 1623. 32 pages. Jennifer Thompson

Thanksgiving Is For Giving Thanks

by Margaret Sutherland and Sonja Lamut (Grosset & Dunlap, 2000).

Thanksgiving is the time of year when we think about what we are truly thankful for. This adorable picture book lends itself well to conversations with your child about the things we should be thankful for. This book is a heartwarming reminder of the true meaning of Thanksgiving: a time to give thanks for friends and family. 32 pages. Jennifer Thompson

Science and Nature

The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle: A Story About Recycling

by Alison Inches, illustrated by Pete Whitehead (Little Simon, 2009).

The Adventures of a Plastic Bottle is narrated by the bottle in question as it goes on a journey from a refinery plant to a manufacturing line to a store shelf to a garbage can and finally to a recycling plant, before reemerging, through the wonders of plastic recycling, as a fleece jacket. Readers share the daily experiences and inner thoughts contained in the bottle's diary entries. The book is entertaining and at the same time eye-opening, pointing out the ecological significance behind consumer products and the resources used to make them. 24 pages. Danielle Marshall

The Beetle Alphabet Book

by Jerry Pallotta, illustrated by David Biedrzycki.
(Charlesbridge Publishing, 2004).

An informative and fun way for the reader to learn what a beetle is and isn't. Illustrations help the reader see the unique aspects of the featured beetles. Upper and lowercase letters are included on each page, and there's subtle humor throughout. Children's Choices

Carolina's Story: Sea Turtles Get Sick Too!

by Donna Rathmell, photography by Barbara J. Bergwerf
(Sylvan Dell Publishing, 2005).

This photo essay chronicles the rescue, treatment and ultimate release back to the ocean of a critically ill loggerhead sea turtle at the South Carolina Aquarium. Although the author goes beyond describing the turtle's observable behavior by attributing human emotions to the creature, this book might be comforting to kids going through difficult medical treatment and would certainly be of interest to any young animal lovers. The large print and simple vocabulary format should be accessible for beginning readers. 32 pages.

Interest level: Grades 2-4. Ellen Phillips

Chameleon, Chameleon

by Joy Cowley, photographs by Nic Bishop (Scholastic Press, 2005).

Readers follow a colorful Madagascar panther chameleon on his travels through his forest home. Nic Bishop's extraordinary close-up full-color photographs allow readers to appreciate the unusual physical appearance and behavior of this animal, including a stop-action shot of the chameleon snaring a caterpillar with its long tongue. The simple text of the book is supplemented by an additional notes section at the end of the book. 32 pages.

Interest level: Grades K-1. Ellen Phillips

The Icky Bug Counting Book

by Jerry Pallotta, illustrated by Raiph Masiello (Trumpet, 1992).

OK, let's be technical, not all these creepy crawlies are exactly insects; some are arachnids, diplopods, or crustaceans. But they are definitely pretty icky bugs. Pallotta has selected 26 "bugs" in his concept book including eight Stinkbugs, 11 Pillbugs, and 24 Periodical Cicadas. Not only will you learn that Blister Beetles are used for medicine and that Honey Pot Ants are delicious to snack on, the discerning reader will notice that this book is also an ABC book in reverse, beginning with one Zebra Swallowtail Butterfly and concluding with 26 Army Ants. Bold-faced numbers and number names jump out of pages filled with colorful detail and bits of scientific information. Dr. Jan LaBonty

The Nature Treasury: A First Look at the Natural World

by Lizann Flatt (Maple Tree Press, 2005).

This is a beautifully produced first reference book for young children. Answering your child's questions about plants, animals, air, water and just about anything else having to do with nature is easy with this book in hand. Broken up into 22 sections, the book covers topics like "How Animals Grow", "Soil Up Close" and "What Animals Eat." With double-page-spreads depicting ecosystems ranging from savanna to tundra, this book will have kids searching the panoramas for the animals that live in those parts of the world. Large labeled ovals with the animals superimposed on them act as guides, so children can scan the scenes to find where the sea stars are hiding in the coral reef, or the sidewinder in the desert. Children will be enchanted with the realistic, lush illustrations. 48 pages.
Pauline Harris

The Polar Bears' Home: A Story About Global Warming

by Lara Bergen, illustrated by Vincent Nguyen (Little Simon, 2008).

Made with recycled paper, this book shows how global warming affects two polar bear cubs and their family. Part of the new, eco-friendly Little Green Books line from Little Simon, *The Polar Bears' Home* includes tips for kids on what they can do to help slow down global warming, without scaring them. An upbeat, educational and topical picture book. 24 pages.
Danielle Marshall

Reptiles

written by Simon Holland, edited by Mary Ling (DK Publishing, 2002).

Reptiles are endlessly fascinating to kids, so this book should be appealing to young non-fiction lovers. The book is also packed with fun, interesting facts that kids will love, for example, "A chameleon's tongue is as long as the rest of its body." The colorful, eye-catching photos on each page feature these scaly creatures up-close and personal in their natural habitats. Published by Dorling Kinderstey, publisher of the wildly popular Eyewitness Series, this series is aimed at a younger group of readers with simpler vocabulary and less text on each page. The meanings of new words are clearly explained in context. If this book is a hit with your child, there are seven more in the Eye Wonder series: Big Cats, Birds, Bugs, Explorer, Mammals, Ocean, Rain Forest, Rivers and Lakes, Space. 48 pages.

Reading grade level: 3, Interest level: grade K-3. Ellen Phillips

The Three R's: Reuse, Reduce, Recycle

by Nuria Roca, illustrated by Rosa M. Curto (Barron's Educational Series, 2007).

The Three R's teaches kids the many ways they can reduce pollution and waste and be environmentally conscious. Full of fun illustrations, this book includes four pages of activities followed by a two-page section for parents, explaining the subject in more detail. 36 pages. Danielle Marshall

Uneversaurus

by Aidan Potts (David Fickling Books, 2007).

Of all the dinosaur books that have crossed my desk, *Uneversaurus* (a fun play on a dinosaur's name: "you never saw us") never fails to capture attention. The best way to encourage your child to read is to cater to their interests with the books you choose. And what first-grader is not fascinated by dinosaurs? Impressively illustrated and comically written, this book inspires children to draw some of their own scientific conclusions by showing how paleontologists have pieced together facts about dinosaurs over the years. Perfect for a long car or plane ride, *Uneversaurus* will be a summer favorite. 48 pages.

Danielle Marshall and the Kids' Team at Powells.com

Water Boy

by David McPhail (Harry N. Abrams, 2007).

The words "You are mostly made of water" start a young boy on a mysterious exploration of that very substance. He passes from questions ("Would he dissolve in the rain?") through fears ("If his cat scratched him, would all the water leak out...?") to kinship ("When he stood on the cliffs, the waves sang to him.") and finally to control ("...he was able to toss water from a glass and have it come snapping back, like a yo-yo.") ... The lack of a name (he is always called "the boy") and the deliberate cadences of the sentences give this a feeling of universality and great solemnity while the luminous images — lit by a strange interior light — lend a dreamlike quality to every scene. This is a book that will appeal to the quiet, inquiring, and introspective child who sees — or seeks — mystery and magic in the everyday world. 32 pages. © Parents' Choice

Why? The Best Ever Question and Answer Book About Nature, Science and the World Around You

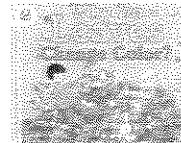
by Catherine Ripley, illustrated by Scot Ritchie (Maple Tree Press, 2004).

This book is an excellent resource for any classroom, school or home library! Colorful illustrations accompany the fun and informative text. It's broken into bite size categories, such as "Bath-time Questions" (e.g., Why is soap so slippery?) and "Kitchen Questions" (e.g., Why do onions make you cry?). Krisha Roach

***Why Do Leaves Change Color?***

by Betsy Maestro, illustrated by Loretta Krupinski (HarperTrophy, 1994).

Fall brings colder temperatures and leaves turn magnificent colors. But how and why do they change colors? This question is answered in Maestro's enjoyable picture book. If you are looking for activities and places to explore autumn leaves with your child, this is the book for you. 32 pages.



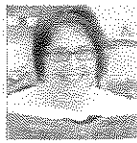
Jennifer Thompson

Meet Our Experts

Pauline Harris is a children's librarian with the San Francisco Public Library, and the mother of three daughters, all under the age of 6.

Darlene Kenny is the librarian at San Francisco's Clarendon Elementary School, a California Distinguished School. Darlene has been Clarendon's librarian for 20 years, during which time both her son and her nephew graduated from the school.

Dr. Jan LaBonty is a professor in the School of Education at the University of Montana.



Danielle Marshall is a former longtime bookseller, most notably for Powell's Books in Portland, Oregon. She continues her love of all things book related by now working as the marketing manager for Beyond Words Publishing, best known as the publisher of *The Secret*. When not working or reading, you can find Danielle with a saucepan or an iPod in her hands.

Ellen Phillips holds a master's degree in library and information management and has been a librarian in the Saddleback Valley Unified School District in California for 22 years. She has worked in both elementary and secondary libraries, created recommended book lists for K-12 teachers and managed motivational reading programs for both elementary and secondary school students. Ellen is the mother of two grown daughters, both avid readers.

Krishna Ashley Roach is an early education administrator. As a former book seller for over 16 years she created reading lists for K-12 teachers. Krishna is the mother of three boys, ages 13, 10 and 2.

Jennifer Thompson is a Reading Specialist for the Manassas City Public Schools in Virginia. She was recently awarded the Washington Post's Agnes Meyer Outstanding Teacher of the Year Award. Jennifer has 18 years of teaching experience, a Master's Degree in Curriculum and Instruction, and a Reading Specialist License for K-12.

Children's Choices, a project of the International Reading Association and The Children's Book Council, is an annual list of favorite books chosen by children.



Common Sense Media is a nonprofit organization dedicated to helping parents

make informed media and entertainment choices for their families.

Kepler's Books, a half-century old, full-service general bookstore in Menlo Park, California. Antonia Squire is the buyer and manager of the children's department there. Squire believes that a reluctant reader is one who has not yet found the right book, and takes great pleasure in putting the right book in the hands of the right child.



The Parents' Choice Foundation is an independent, not-for-profit evaluator of children's books, videos, toys, audios, computer software, television and magazines. Its mission is to "search out and recommend products that help kids grow - imaginatively, physically, morally and mentally ..."

PBS Parents On PBS Parents, a section of the PBS Web site, you'll find a feature called Bookfinder, where you can discover books geared to the age of your child.



From a storefront in 1971 in Portland, Oregon, Powell's Books, an independent family-owned bookstore, has grown into a mecca for book lovers with six locations in the Portland area and an award-winning Web site.

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