

A Brief Guide

Charlotte Huck's

Children's Literature Fourth Edition















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Children's Literature



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CHARLOTTE HUCK'S CHILDREN'S LITERATURE: A BRIEF GUIDE, FOURTH EDITION

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In Memoriam



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Charlotte S. Huck 1923-2005

Born in Evanston, Illinois, Charlotte Huck attended Wellesley College in Massachusetts, then graduated from Northwestern University, where she earned master's and doctoral degrees. After teaching in elementary schools in Missouri and Illinois, followed by a teaching position at Northwestern, Dr. Huck joined the faculty of The Ohio State University (OSU) in 1955, where she created and led the first-ever graduate program in children's literature for thirty years. She believed that stories are what motivate children to want to read, and she encouraged teachers to use children's literature in reading lessons, emphasizing her concept of "web-

bing," in which every subject taught to a child is supported by reading.

Charlotte Huck established an annual OSU children's literature conference that attracted thousands of teachers, librarians, and book enthusiasts from 1982 to 2004. After she retired and moved to California, she started a similar conference at the University of Redlands. She continued to write professionally and remained active in community and school-based literacy programs.

Besides authoring the classic *Children's Literature in the Elementary School* (originally published in 1961), she also wrote books for children. With Anita Lobel, she published *Princess Furball* (1994), *Toads and Diamonds* (1995), and *The Black Bull of Norroway* (2001). These and her other books, *Secret Places* (1993) and *A Creepy Countdown* (1999), were published by Greenwillow Books.

Dr. Huck served on both the Newbery and Caldecott Medal committees and was a president of the National Council of Teachers of English. The numerous awards and honors she received included OSU's Distinguished Teaching Award, the Landau Award for Distinguished Service in Teaching Children's Literature, and the Arbuthnot Award, given annually by the International Reading Association to an outstanding professor of children's literature. In 1997, she was presented with the Outstanding Educator in the English Language Arts Award by the National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) Elementary Section.

Charlotte Huck was honored in 1987 with the NCTE Distinguished Service Award for her service to the English teaching profession and to NCTE. The 1988 NCTE President Julie Jensen made the award presentation, commending Huck for her service:

[Thank you for your service] to The Ohio State University, to the state of Ohio, and most of all, to language learners and teachers everywhere. They are the beneficiaries of her knowledge and enthusiasm for the literature of childhood, and of her unyielding conviction that readers are made by those who have themselves discovered the joys of reading.

Charlotte Huck was considered one of the foremost experts on children's literature and its uses. In 1996, OSU established in her name the first endowed professorship in children's literature in the United States. In her career at OSU, she mentored doctorate students, teachers, and library media specialists who continue her beliefs and enthusiasm as new programs in children's literature are launched across the country.



In Memoriam





About the Authors

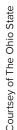
Courtsey of The Ohio State University.



Barbara Z. Kiefer

Barbara Kiefer, PhD, is Faculty Emeritus in the Department of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University, having served as the Charlotte S. Huck Professor of Children's Literature. She was formerly the Robinson Professor of Children's Literature at Teachers College, Columbia University. Originally trained in art education, she taught grades one, two, four, and five in several regions of the United States and in overseas schools. She served as the elected chair of the year 2000 Caldecott Award Committee of the American Library Association and was a member of the 1988 Caldecott Award Committee. She has also served as chair of the Elementary Section Committee of the National Council of Teachers

of English (NCTE) and as a member of the NCTE Executive Board. Dr. Kiefer served as a coeditor of *Language Arts*, a journal of the NCTE, and was a board member of NCTE's Children's Literature Assembly. She has published numerous articles and book chapters about reading and children's literature and is author of *The Potential of Picturebooks: From Visual Literacy to Aesthetic Understanding*, and the coauthor of *An Integrated Language Perspective in the Elementary School: Theory into Action*, 4th edition, with Christine Pappas and Linda Levstik.



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Cynthia A. Tyson

Cynthia A. Tyson, PhD, MSW, LSW, is a professor in the School of Teaching and Learning at The Ohio State University, where she teaches courses in Multicultural and Equity Studies in Education, Early Childhood Social Studies, and Literature for Children and Young Adults. Her research interests include inquiry into the social, historical, cultural, and global intersections of theory and practice related to educational diversity, equity, inclusion, and justice. She has written and presented numerous research papers at national and international meetings and conferences, publishing articles in *Educational Researcher, Theory and Research in Social Education, International Journal of Qualitative Research*

in Education, Journal of Literacy Research, Language Arts, and other books and journals. She is also the coauthor of two books: Handbook of Social Studies Research and the American Educational Research Association volume, Studying Diversity in Teacher Education. Dr. Tyson is also a licensed medical social worker where she provides interdisciplinary holistic patient-centered care, working to improve the physical, psychosocial, and spiritual well-being for people navigating their hospice end-of-life journey. As a self-identified bookworm, she agrees with Mary McLeod Bethune who stated, "The whole world opened to me when I learned to read."



vi About the Authors



Courtesy of Rachel B Cobb.

Bettie Parsons Barger

Bettie Parsons Barger, PhD, is an associate professor in the Richard W. Riley College of Education at Winthrop University, where she teaches courses in children's literature and serves as the Director of the Rex Institute for Educational Renewal and Partnerships. She completed her doctorate in Literature for Children and Young Adults at The Ohio State University. Prior to completing her doctorate, she taught second and third grades and worked as an academic technology integrator, helping teachers enhance the curriculum by utilizing technology. Her dissertation, *The eBook Hook*, explored teacher and student perceptions of integrating eBooks into Language Arts and Science curricula. Dr. Barger has

published in Science & Children, Reading Matters, Perspectives and Provocations, PDS Partners, and Creating Books for the Young in the New South Africa. She has published reviews in Bookbird and Language Arts. She is active in NCTE, Children's Literature Assembly, and the United States Board of Books for Young People (USBBY). Dr. Barger served on NCTE's Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction for Children, from 2017 to 2019, co-chairing the committee for two years. Currently, she is serving as the chair of USBBY's Outstanding International Books Committee, and has been on the committee since 2019. Dr. Barger avidly reads children's literature and has traveled, nationally and internationally, in pursuit of incredible works and the authors and illustrators who create them.



Lisa Patrick

Lisa Patrick, PhD, is the Marie Clay Endowed Chair in Reading Recovery and Early Literacy at The Ohio State University, where she completed her doctorate in Literature for Children and Young Adults She wrote a chapter on Interactive Read Aloud for *Responsive Literacy: A Comprehensive Framework*, edited by Patricia L. Scharer. Dr. Patrick has published in *Literacy Research: Theory, Method, and Practice, Language Arts, School Library Journal*, and the *New England Reading Association Journal*. Her research interests reside at the intersection of early literacy and children's literature. She studies how instructional practices impact the development of transactional relationships between readers and texts.

Dr. Patrick is active in USBBY, NCTE, and the Reading Recovery Council of North America (RRCNA). She served on USBBY's 2018 Hans Christian Andersen Award Jury, as well as NCTE's Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children Committee. She currently serves on the Children's Literature Assembly Board and the Bring Me a Book Children's Literature Committee. She presents on a range of literacy topics at international, national, and state conferences. Dr. Patrick is an avid reader and can usually be found putting books in the hands of children and teachers.



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Erin Reilly-Sanders

Erin Reilly-Sanders, PhD, AIA, is an independent scholar of children's literature. She completed her doctorate at The Ohio State University through the Literature for Children and Young Adults program in the School of Teaching and Learning. Her background includes six years of youth service at Columbus Metropolitan Library. Also a registered architect, Dr. Reilly-Sanders's research often focuses on the visual aspects of literature such as in her dissertation, "Drawing Outside the Bounds: Tradition and Innovation in Depictions of the House in Children's Picturebooks," advised by Dr. Kiefer. She has published in *The ALAN Review, Children and Libraries*, International Reading Association's *Reading Today Online*,

Chalice Magazine, and Creating Books for the Young in the New South Africa, edited by Barbara A. Lehman et al. She has been a member of YALSA's Journal of Research on Libraries and Young Adults Advisory Board and the Kent State University's Marantz Picturebook Research Symposium Advisory Board. She served on the Association for Library Service to Children's 2013 Mildred L. Batchelder Award Committee and the 2011 Jo Osborne Award for Humor in Children's Literature Selection Committee. Over the years, Dr. Reilly-Sanders has been active in the American Library Association, National Council of Teachers of English, and the Children's Literature Association. She can often be found on panels at local speculative fiction conventions or leading intergenerational young adult literature discussion groups, in addition to sharing hundreds of books with her child.







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About the Illustrator



Rafael López

The work of Rafael López is a fusion of strong graphic style and magical symbolism. López grew up in Mexico City, where he was immersed in the city's rich cultural heritage and in the native color of its street life. Influenced by Mexican surrealism, *dichos* (proverbs), and myths, he developed a style with roots in these traditions.

His many clients include Amnesty International, Apple, Chicago Tribune, the United States Library of Congress, IBM, Intel, *Los Angeles Times*, the Grammy Awards, and World Wildlife Fund. His work has been selected into multiple juried shows and his children's books have won two Americas Awards, three Pura Belpré Medals, and a Pura Belpré Honor.

His most recent Pura Belpré Medal was for *Dancing Hands: How Teresa Carreño Played the Piano for President Lincoln* (2020) by Margarita Engle. His 2008 poster "Voz Unida" was selected by the Obama/Biden campaign as an official poster at Artists for Obama. The Latino dance stamp he created for the United States Postal Services (U.S.P.S) was featured on the cover of the commemorative stamp yearbook in 2006 and at a special exhibition at the Smithsonian entitled "Trendsetters." His 2007 U.S.P.S. stamp celebrated *Mendez vs. Westminster*, an important legal case in equality of education, and led to commissions for five more stamps to honor Latinx music legends in 2011.

López envisioned and led the Urban Art Trail Project that transformed San Diego's East Village with colorful murals, sculptures, and art installations that serves as a model of urban renewal that has been implemented in cities around the nation.

He divides his time between his studios in the colonial town of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, and a loft in downtown San Diego, where he works and lives with his wife and son.











To my dear family members—my immediate family and my academic family.

—Barbara Z. Kiefer

I dedicate this book to Tahlia Imani—my forever library play date.
—Cynthia A. Tyson

To Becky, Ann, and Barbara for igniting and fueling my love of children's literature.

—Bettie Parsons Barger

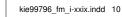
To my mom, who gave me the place where I became a reader, and to my dad, who carried my books there.

-Lisa Patrick

To Elora and other children who will have access to the best books and the adult guides who introduce them to each other.

—Erin Reilly-Sanders







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Preface

Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature continues to be the classic, comprehensive text for those involved in all aspects of the evaluation, selection, and enjoyment of children's literature for PreK through middle-school readers. Like no other book, it not only provides the classroom teacher, librarian, administrator, caregiver, and parent with a thorough understanding of children's literature, but it also-like no other book-reflects the passion for children's literature that resonated with Charlotte Huck. A true pioneer in the field, it was apparent that in 1961 Charlotte's goal was not for readers to simply learn the history, concepts, and evaluation criteria necessary to understand and select children's literaturebut to jump headfirst into the joy and excitement that the literature of childhood can bring, and in turn to share this enthusiasm with children. As we continue with the tenets originated by Charlotte, who passed away in 2005, we keep that goal of passion and enthusiasm at the forefront of our writing.

Approach of This Text

This briefer version of the original text provides an introduction to the field of children's literature that that addresses the needs of all adults who might read with children, but particularly those of preserivce teachers:

- By focusing on the core definitions, key examples, and essential evaluation guidelines, Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature: A Brief Guide, Fourth Edition provides a launching point for further exploration of actual children's books during the course setting.
- This text not only serves as a valuable resource
 by providing current book recommendations,
 but it also emphasizes the critical skills needed
 to search for and select literature—researching,
 evaluating, and implementing quality books for
 PreK-8 readers—to give professionals the tools
 they need to evaluate books, create curriculum,
 and share the love of literature.

- Beyond the key understandings in children's literature, we also include timely issues that readers encounter in the twenty-first century. The conversations offered here, many of which explore the use of diverse literature, invite the reader's reflection. The perspectives reviewed may assist in the process of evaluating children's literature through social themes and issues that often find their way into daily life. These discussions encourage higher levels of examination and will help facilitate critical-thinking skills in both adults and children.
- We contend that the literature and accomplishments of all groups should be part of every subject taught. Thus, diverse literature—broadly defined—is infused throughout the entire text and in each genre and format.
- We are mindful about using inclusive language. We use gender-specific pronouns only when we know the preference of the subject we discuss, defaulting to the generally accepted non-binary pronouns them/their/theirs. When describing the race of people, we elected to use the capitalized terms such as Black, Indigeneous, and White, as we believe that racial and ethnic designators should all be proper nouns. Unfortunately, at this time, the publication guidelines for McGraw Hill will not permit capitalizing White and Indigeneous. Our hope is that their continued reevaluation of their policies will result in a change in the near future. For Indigenous people, we use the name of specific nations when known. LGBTQIA+ is used to represent the inclusive breadth of sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expressions. Our language choices reflect this moment in time and will continue to evolve.

Organization

The three-part organization of *Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature: A Brief Guide* emphasizes the triple focus of the text: the reader, the books, and the experience of literature. Part One focuses

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on the values and criteria for choosing and using literature with children at various stages in their development. Part Two provides an in-depth look at the various genres and formats of children's literature and establishes evaluative criteria. Each of these chapters has been written with children at the center and includes references and resources for involving children in exploring books, both at home and across the school curriculum. Part Three explores ways to extend and expand experiences with literature, important awards and book lists that can help guide book selection, and some of our favorite books to read aloud.

Features

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As touched on previously, this text not only provides the core material necessary to understand children's literature, but it also provides a number of unique features and presentations:

- Full-color throughout: In order to truly show the visual impact of children's literature, the entire text is full-color, with approximately one hundred images of covers and illustrations from children's books presented throughout the chapters.
- The art of Rafael López: We are very fortunate to have Rafael López involved in this text. The multitalented and award-winning illustrator created a vibrant and exciting look for the book, developing unique artwork for the cover and interior features.
- Thoroughly integrated diverse literature and topics: Examples of diverse literature are provided throughout the entire text, ensuring that adults will have the skills to choose challenging and inspiring literature for all readers. Diverse titles are printed in blue in the children's literature lists at the end of each chapter. Own Voices authors and illustrators are indicated in bold blue.
- Beyond the Book: Each chapter has at least one Beyond the Book: Inviting Conversations section designed to create a space to think about, reflect on, and discuss specific topics that are current and relevant to children's literature.
- Teaching Features and Extras to Explore: Resource boxes throughout the text highlight historical relevance (Teaching Features) and examples of children's literature for each genre or topic. (Extras to Explore). The description of each title

- included in Extras to Explore is created using the six-word memoir¹ format.
- Evaluating children's literature: Guidelines boxes provide specific criteria and questions to consider when evaluating children's literature. Expanded forms are available within Connect. These forms can be used as course activities or in practice when evaluating specific books.
- Applications to standards: A Curriculum Connections feature at the end of each genre or format chapter gives examples of how to use children's literature to address national educational standards in a variety of content areas.
- Children's literature selections: Comprehensive, up-to-date lists of children's literature are provided at the end of each chapter.
- Practical appendixes: The book's appendixes— Book Awards, Book Lists, and Books to Read Aloud—provide current resources to aid in text selection.

New to This Edition

General/Structural

- The audience has been widened from preservice teachers to include all who would wish to learn about children's literature, with references to "readers" throughout the text.
- Genre and format chapters have been reorganized into a consistent format: Introducing . . . ,
 Evaluating . . . , and Exploring . . .
- Lengthy Teaching Feature charts have been replaced with brief suggestions of Extras to Explore integrated into the text where appropriate. We use six-word memoirs to briefly introduce each title.
- Challenging Perspectives sections at the end of each chapter have been replaced with integrated Beyond the Book: Inviting Conversations sections on timely topics, encouraging readers to consider multiple viewpoints.
- Parts Two and Three have been renamed to better reflect their content. We added "and Formats" to Part Two and changed Part Three from The Literature Program Across the Curriculum to Experiencing Literature.

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¹Smith, Larry. Six-Word Memoirs. Retrieved from https://www.sixwordmemoirs.com/



Chapters

- Incorporating the newest research and perspectives on development, Chapter 2: Reading Responses at Different Ages has been rewritten in order to better focus on the development of children alongside relevant types of literature. This increased accessibility of the content and allowed us to devote more space to types of books and experiences for young readers: board books, early readers, first chapter books, and read alouds.
- To reflect the popularity of the medium, the Graphica section within Chapter 3: Picturebooks has been expanded to an entire chapter on graphica (Chapter 4), including an opening vignette, a full assessment of elements of design of the medium, specific evaluation criteria, notable topics within children's graphica, and a rich curriculum connection.
- Chapter 6: Fantasy has been reenvisioned as Speculative Fiction to widen the world of speculation to better include both fantasy and science fiction, incorporating more diverse subgenres that may not have been included as fantasy.
- The previous poetry chapter moved to become Chapter 11 at the end of Part Two: Genres and Formats to reflect its unique position as a form that spans genres and formats.
- The previous final chapter, Planning the Literature Program, has been streamlined and refocused on the experiences around literature (as Chapter 12: Extending Experiences with Literature) since many ideas for classroom activities are available online. A succinct chapter provides an opportunity for instructors to explore in more detail an additional topic of personal interest in tandem with this content.

Content

- Numerous outdated and out of print titles have been replaced in all chapters by titles that better reflect the current trends in children's literature.
- Images have been updated with more recent titles of diverse authors, illustrators, and subjects. When appropriate, we selected more interior images to demonstrate visual techniques.
- More diverse titles (highlighted in blue in the bibliographies) have been added to all chapters to better reflect the variety of children's experiences.

- In literature lists, Own Voices have been recognized in bold blue text for the titles of diverse literature written by authors who are writing about diverse experiences similar to their own.
- Brief history sections have been added or highlighted in Chapters 4 and 5.
- Titles and activities have been updated within the Curriculum Connections of Chapters 3, 7, and 9. Social Studies standards have been updated to the C3 Framework in Chapters 5, 6, 8, 10, and 11.
- Several new sample poems have been added to Chapter 11.
- Appendix A: Book Awards and Appendix B: Book Lists have been trimmed down to simplified charts, as up-to-date award lists and selection aids are readily available online.
- Books to Read Aloud have been moved from the endpages to Appendix C.

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- Chapter outlines, summaries, and learning objectives
- Annotated web links of useful resources
- Expanded evaluation guides
- · Complete lists of major book awards

xx Preface



Acknowledgments

We want to personally thank and acknowledge the contributions of those educators who participated in course surveys and chapter reviews during development of the first four editions and provided excellent suggestions for revisions:

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Many thanks to the librarians of Columbus Metropolitan, Bexley, Charlotte, and Worthington public libraries for supplying us with hundreds upon hundreds of exciting new books. Behind every author is at least one librarian.

Special thanks also to Marissa McNeace of Winthrop University for her invaluable assistance with children's literature references.

Finally, we hope that readers of this book will see it as a first step to understanding and appreciating the richness of offerings in children's literature and the complexity of its readership. Our desire is that as you gain insights into children's developmental needs and interests, the information provided here will simultaneously better prepare you to appropriately incorporate considerations from cultural points of view and the social contexts in which the deepest responses to literature can occur.

Barbara Z. Kiefer Cynthia A. Tyson Bettie Parsons Barger Lisa Patrick Erin Reilly-Sanders

Preface xxi



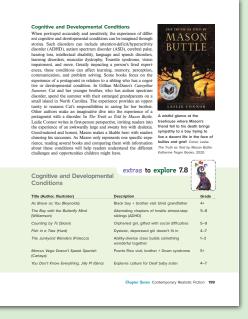
Take a look inside ...

Welcome to *Charlotte Huck's Children's Literature: A Brief Guide, Fourth Edition*. This text has been designed to launch your exploration of children's literature and to prepare you to evaluate and select books that will instill an interest and passion for literature.

Approximately one hundred full-color images of covers and illustrations from children's books show the visual impact of children's literature.

(





 Teaching Feature resource boxes throughout the text highlight historical context or other useful information.

xxii Take a look inside . . .



Diverse literature is thoroughly integrated throughout, as well as printed in blue in the children's literature lists.



Stories must accurately reflect the spirit and values of the time. Historical fiction cannot

Stories must accurately reflect the spirit and values of the time. Historical fiction cannot be made to neoriform to budy; some enlightened point or view concerning medical larend edge, women's rights, or evil rights. George Washington cannot be swed with a shot of penicillin. Although in Carol Ryrie Brink's Caddle Wooddome, Caddie's father allows her to be a tomboy while she is growing up in the Wisconsin backwoods, it is highly unlikely that girls raised in the Victorian era could refuse to assume the persons of "proper lady" in adulthood. Many African Americans may have suffered the indignity of racism in selence as the family in William Armstrong's Sounder did. But there were also people of the story of the proper land of the proper land of the proper land to the proper land to

Beyond the Book: Inviting Conversations About Conflicting

Beyond the Book: Inviting Conversations About Conflicting Perceptions
In the 1930s, Laura Ingalis Wilder wrote the belowed Little House In the Parties resist. These books were loosely based on her life experiences as a pioneer in what is now the central United Enteron States from 1870 to 1884. Her work hooked so many children into reading in such a way that the American Library Association gave her all fiftime achievement award in 1934 and named it in her honor. The award was renamed in 2018 to the Children's Invited and the Children's Invited Children's Invited Children's Invited States of Inclusivements and Indeads in Invited States of Inclusivements, integrity and respect, and responsiveness." When should contemporary values and ideals imposed upon the past?

Linda Sue Park grew up reading and loving Wilder's work, somuch so that she can still recite passages by heart 50 years later. The series inspired her to write Partie Lotus featuring a half-Chines prince gift. While there are obvious parallels to Walder's books enoses in the portrayal and perspectives of Native Americans. As child, Park recognized there were issues with the sterostypes in Wilder's writing. In the author's note, she writes:

[Lauris'] Ma hated Native American. While I could not have articulated it at the time, I harbored a deeply personal sense of many contractions. 2000.

[Laura's] Ma hated Native American. While I could not have articulated it at the time, I harbored a deeply personal sense of

Books, 2020.

Chapter Eight Historical Fiction 219

Each chapter presents at least one Beyond the **Book: Inviting** Conversations section designed to spark thinking, reflection, and conversation on current and relevant topics in children's

literature.



extras to explore 10.5 Activists

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Activists. Activists champion scenes. Ighting for change in society. Wangari Masthat, the Nobel Peace Prize. She founded the Green Belt Movement, which plants trees across Kenya to combat deforestation. Mantain had a profound impact on the women and ecology of her country, Readers can explore her story in Claire Nivola's Planting the Deep Service. The Sorry of Wingari Mantain. Eachel Service interviewed young the Paras of Kenya. The Sorry of Wingari Mantain. Eachel Service interviewed young for Bern Service. Service with Service of Service Serv

Extras to Explore provide additional recommended titles and suggested grades, described in brief but witty six-word memoirs.



Guidelines boxes provide specific criteria and questions to

consider when evaluating children's literature.

Take a look inside . . . xxiii



Curriculum Connections at the end of each genre and format chapter give examples of how to use children's literature to fulfill educational standards in a variety of content areas.



Children's Literature

Titles in blue = diverse titles

When published or set outside the United States the country or culture of origin follows each citation in parentheses. Dates in square brackets are original publication dates.

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Illustrated by Daniel Myares. Candlewick, 2020.

— Flying Paintings: The Zhou Brothers: A Story of Revolution and Art. Illustrated by ShanZuo Zhou and DaHuang Zhou. Candlewick, 2020.

gueña. Illustrated by Angela Domínguez. Translated by Adriana Domínguez. Lee & Low, 2018. Atkins, Jeannine. Grasping Mysteries: Girls Who

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Wise Brown. Illustrated by Sarah Jacoby. Balzer + Bray, 2019. Barton, Chris. What Do You Do with a Voice Like That? The Story of Estrandinary Congress.

That?: The Story of Extraordinary Congresswoman Barbara Jordan. Illustrated by Ekua Holmes. Beach Lane, 2018. Becker. Helaine. Counting on Katherine: How

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On Winas of Words: The Extraordinary L

of Emily Dickinson. Illustrated by Becca Stadtlander. Chronicle, 2020.

Bertagna, Julie. Wildheart: The Daring Adventures of John Muir. Illustrated by William Goldsmith. Yosemite Conservancy, 2019. (Scotland/Britain) Biden, Jili, and Kathleen Krull. Joey: The Story of Joe Biden. Illustrated by Amy June Bates. Simon & Schuster 2020.

Scrusser, 2020.

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ana Dominguez. Lee & Low, 2020.

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Bryant, Jen. Above the Rim: How Elgin Baylor Changed Basketball. Illustrated by Frank Morrison. Abrams, 2020.

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 A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace

A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin. Illustrated by Melissa Sweet. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2013.

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York Times. Finish the Fight: The Brave Revolutionary Women Who Fought for the Right to Vote. HMH, 2020. Cline-Ransome, Lesa. Before She Was Harriet.

Illustrated by James E. Ransome. Holiday, 2017.

— Game Changers: The Story of Venus and Serena Williams. Illustrated by James E. Ransome. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

some. Simon & Schuster, 2018.

The Power of Her Pen: The Story of
Groundbreaking Journalist Ethel L. Payne.

Chapter Ten Biography 297

Comprehensive, up-to-date lists of children's literature are provided at the end of each chapter, with diverse titles printed in blue and Own Voices titles printed in bold blue.

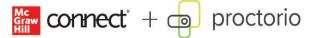






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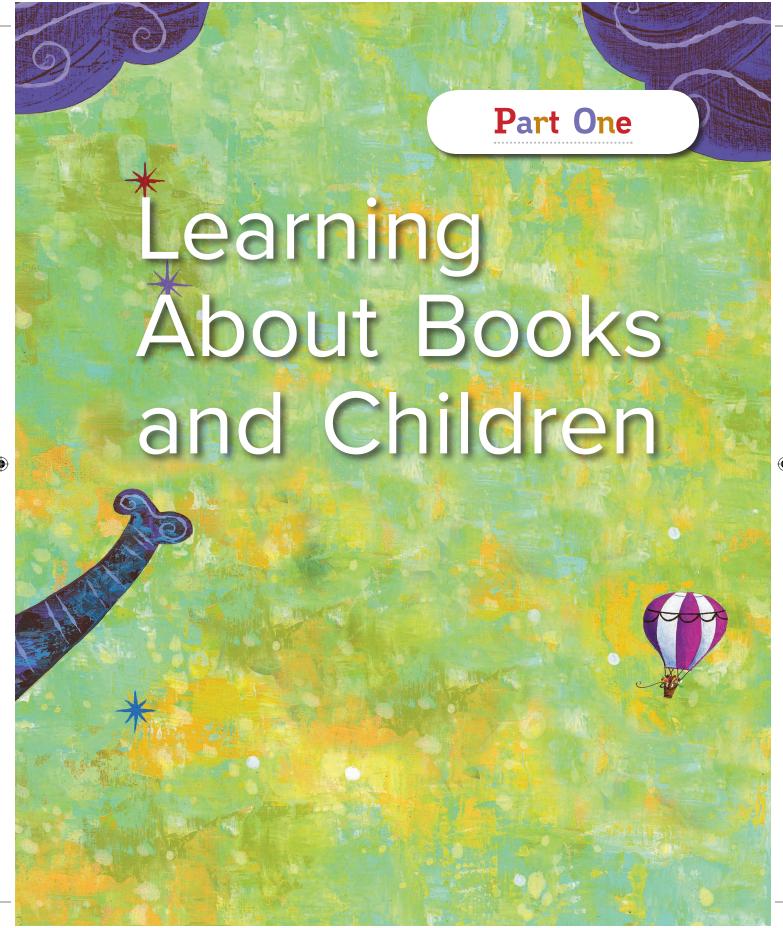




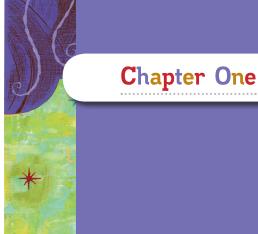












Knowing Children's Literature

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Children's Literature 21

When children are invited into the world of children's literature, they fall in love with books. A typical refrain for toddlers is "read it again!" A

3-year-old carries a copy of Leslie
Patricelli's *Higher! Higher!* for a week,
hugging it as tightly and lovingly as a
stuffed bear. Seven-year-old twins close
the cover of Aaron Blabey's *The Bad Guys* saying proudly, "We read the whole

book." Ten-yearolds joyfully
page through
Meg Medina's
Merci Suárez
Changes Gears
looking for clues
and connections
in the
intertwining
stories.



Sara Dashner Photography, Gahanna, Ohio.

4



A 12-year-old holds up a copy of Kwame Alexander's *The Crossover* and states emphatically, "This is the best book I've ever read." All of these children have had some deep and intensely personal response to a work of children's literature. Surely, it is such experiences that may lead them to become lifelong lovers of literature.



Children's Literature Defined

There are many ways of defining children's literature. Our ideas about what should be included have changed over time, and definitions vary a bit from culture to culture, critic to critic, and reader to reader. In this book, we think of literature as the imaginative shaping of life and thought into the forms and structures of language. We consider fiction as well as nonfiction, pictures as well as text, and ask how different formats and genres work to produce an aesthetic experience. How do they help the reader perceive patterns, relationships, and feelings that produce an inner experience of art? This aesthetic experience might be a vivid reconstruction of past experience, an extension of a recent experience, or the creation of a new experience.

We all have memories of certain books that changed us in some way—by affirming some emotion we knew but could never shape into words, by challenging us with new ideas, or by revealing to us something about human nature. The province of literature is the human condition and it encompasses all such feelings and experiences. Perhaps our memories of books are strong because they help illuminate life by shaping our insights.

What Is Children's Literature?

The experience of literature always involves both the book and the reader. Try as we might to set objective criteria, judgments about the quality of literature must always be tempered by an awareness of its audience. The audience we address in this text is the group of children from birth to 14. Therefore, we will want to ask if and how children's literature is different from literature for adults. We could say that a child's book is a book a child is reading, and an adult book is a book occupying the attention of an adult. Before the nineteenth century, only a few books were written specifically for the enjoyment of children. Children used to read books written for adults, taking from them what they could understand. Today, children continue to read some books intended for adults, such as the works of Stephen King and Jodi Piccoult. And yet some books first written for children—such as Margery Williams's *The Velveteen Rabbit*, A.A. Milne's *Winnie the Pooh*, and J.R.R. Tolkien's *The Hobbit*—have been claimed as their own by adults.

Books about children might not necessarily be for them. Khaled Hosseini's adult classic *The Kite Runner* reflects on the traumatic experiences of the narrator's child-hood in Kabul. In Harper Lee's novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*, also written for adults, 8-year-old Scout Finch reveals a more finely developed conscience than is common in the small Southern town in which she is raised. The presence of a child

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Chapter One Knowing Children's Literature 5



protagonist, then, does not assure that the book is definitively for children. Obviously, the line between children's literature and adult literature is blurry.

Children today appear to be more sophisticated and knowledgeable about certain life experiences than children of any previous generation. They spend a great deal of time with electronic devices providing them instant access to actual images of war. They have witnessed acts of terror, abuse, and starvation. Though most modern children are separated from first-hand knowledge of birth, death, and senility, mass media brings the daily experiences of crime, poverty, war, death, and depravity into homes. In addition, today's children are exposed to violence in the name of entertainment. Such exposure has forced adults to reconsider what seems appropriate for children's literature. Today it is difficult to believe that Madeleine L'Engle's *Meet the Austins* was rejected by several publishers because it began with a death or that some reviewers were shocked by a mild "damn" in *Harriet the Spy* by Louise Fitzhugh. Such publishing taboos have long since disappeared. Contemporary children's literature reflects the problems of today: the ones children read about in the news, see on television and in the movies, and experience at home or in their communities.

There are some limits to the content of children's literature, however. These limits are set by children's experience and understanding. Certain emotional and psychological responses seem outside the realm of childhood and are, therefore, unlikely in children's literature. For example, nostalgia is an adult emotion that is foreign to most children. They seldom look back on their childhood but instead look forward. Also, stories that portray children as "sweet" or that romanticize childhood, like the *Precious Moments* books that go with cards and gift products, often have more appeal for adults than for children. The late Dr. Seuss (Theodor S. Geisel) also took an adult perspective in his later books such as *Oh*, the *Places You'll Go*. His enduring place in children's literature rests on earlier titles such as *Horton Hears a Who!* and *The Cat in the Hat*, books that are filled with childlike imagination and joyful exuberance.



Even luminous illustrations can depict the sadness from grieving the loss of a loved one, a beautiful and unfortunate part of life, balanced by the joy expressed in other images. Ringtved, Glenn. *Cry, Heart, But Never Break*. Translated by Robert Moulthrop. Illustrated by Charlotte Pardi. Enchanted Lion, 2016. (Denmark)

Cynicism and despair are typical emotions for children and should not figure prominently in a child's book. Even though children are quick to pick up a veneer of sophistication, of disillusionment with adults and authority, they still expect good things to happen in life. And although many children do live in desperate circumstances, their resilience avoids true despair. They may have endured pain, sorrow, or horror; they may be in what we would consider hopeless situations; but they are not without hope. In Glenn Ringtveld's Batchelder Award-winning Cry, Heart, But Never Break, when children try to prevent Death from taking their beloved grandmother, they come to accept that grief and joy are both a part of life. This demonstrates that not all stories for children must have happy endings; many today do not. It is only to say that when you close the door on hope, you have left the realm of childhood.

The only limitation on literature for children, then, is that it must appropriately reflect the emotions and experiences of children today. Children's books are those books that have the child's eye at the center.

6 Part 1 Learning About Books and Children



Writing for Children

The uniqueness of children's literature, then, lies in the audience that it addresses. Authors of children's books are circumscribed only by the experiences of childhood, but these are vast and complex. Children think and feel; they wonder and they dream. Much is known, but little is explained in these memorable books. Editor William Zinsser says:

No kind of writing lodges itself so deeply in our memory, echoing there for the rest of our lives, as the books that we met in our childhood. . . . To enter and hold the mind of a child or a young person is one of the hardest of all writers' tasks. 1

The skilled author does not write differently or less carefully for children just because she thinks they will not be aware of style or language. E.B. White asserts:

Anyone who writes down to children is simply wasting his time. You have to write up, not down. . . . Some writers for children deliberately avoid using words they think a child doesn't know. This emasculates the prose and . . . bores the reader. . . . Children love words that give them a hard time, provided they are in a context that absorbs their attention.²

Authors of children's literature and those who write for adults should receive equal admiration. C.S. Lewis maintained that he wrote a children's story because a children's story was the best art form for what he had to say.³ Lewis wrote for both adults and children, as have Madeleine L'Engle, Nnedi Okorafor, E.B. White, Neil Gaiman, Alexander McCall Smith, and many other well-known authors.

Children are curious about life and adult activities. They live in the midst of tensions—balances of joy and sadness within the family and the neighborhood. The author who can bring imagination and insight into these experiences, give them literary shape and structure, and communicate them to children is writing children's literature.

Valuing Literature for Children

Because children naturally take such delight in books, we sometimes need to remind ourselves that books do more for children than entertain them. Values inherent in sharing literature with children include personal qualities, as well as qualities that result in important educational understandings.

Personal Values

Literature should be valued in our homes and schools because it enriches children's personal lives, as well as for its proven educational contributions. We will explore these affective values of literature before we discuss the more obvious educational ones.

Enjoyment First and foremost, literature provides delight and enjoyment. Children need to discover delight in books before they are asked to master the skills of reading. Then learning to read makes as much sense as learning to ride a bike; they know joys that await them. Four- and 5-year-olds who have laughed out loud at Jules Feiffer's *Bark, George* can hardly wait to read it themselves. Five- and 7-year-olds giggle at the silly antics in Mo Willems's *Elephant and Piggie* books. Many older children revel in tales of mystery and suspense such as Jewel Parker Rhodes's *Ghost Boys*. Sad books also impart a bitter-sweet delight as the children who have read *Bridge to Terabithia* by Katherine Paterson

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Chapter One Knowing Children's Literature 7



or *Pax* by Sara Pennypacker will tell you. The list of books that children enjoy goes on and on. There are so many fine ones—and so many that children will not find unless teachers, librarians, and caregivers share them with children. A love of reading and a taste for literature are two of the finest gifts we can give to our children, for we will have started them on the path of a lifetime to pleasure with books.

Imagination Literature develops the imagination of children and helps them consider people, experiences, or ideas in new ways. Books such as David Ezra Stein's *Interrupting Chicken*, Raul Colón's *Imagine!* and Chad Sell's *The Cardboard Kingdom* celebrate characters who see the world differently and make the most of their imagination. Nonfiction books such as *Grow: Secrets of Our DNA* by Nicola Davies and *How We Got to the Moon: The People, Technology, and Daring Feats of Science Behind Humanity's Greatest Adventure* by John Rocco can spark children's scientific imagination.

Today, visual and digital technologies have made everything so explicit that children do not always have the opportunity to develop their power to visualize. Sometimes, readers need to practice using their inner eye to create a picture of what they are reading. Writing like that of Mollie Hunter, author of *A Stranger Came Ashore*, has the power to create visual images in the mind of the reader and to stretch the imagination. She says that the whole reward of reading is:

to have one's imagination carried soaring on the wings of another's imagination, to be made more aware of the possibilities of one's mind . . .; to be thrilled, amazed, amused, awed, enchanted in worlds unknown until discovered through the medium of language, and to find in those worlds one's own petty horizons growing ever wider, ever higher.⁴



The excitement of a diverse group of children involved in imaginative play cannot be contained by this serially-formatted graphic novel. Sell, Chad. *The Cardboard Kingdom*. Knopf Books for Young Readers, 2018.

Vicarious Experience Children's experiences with literature give them new perspectives on the world. Good writing can transport readers to other places and times, broadening their horizons. Readers feel connected to the lives of others as they enter an imagined situation with their emotions tuned to those of the story. One 10-year-old boy said, "You know, I've always secretly felt I could do it myself," sharing his love of Jean Craighead George's survival story, My Side of the Mountain. This boy had vicariously shared Sam Gribley's adventure of "living off the land" in his tree home in the Catskill Mountains. Sam's experiment in self-sufficiency had strengthened the conviction of a 10-year-old that he, too, could take care of himself.

Insight into Human Behavior Literature reflects life, yet no book can contain all of living. By its very organizing properties, literature has the power to shape and give coherence to human experience. It might focus on one aspect of life or one period of time in an individual's life, and so enable readers to see and understand relationships that they have never considered. In *Full Cicada Moon* by Marilyn Hilton, Mimi's family moves to Vermont where she stands out as half-Black, half-Japanese. Pursuing her dream of becoming an astronaut by entering the science fair and attempting to take shop class, expectations of gender and race in 1969 work

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against her, echoing issues of today. Readers also gain deep insight into human behavior through the eyes of Caitlin, a girl with Autism Spectrum Disorder, in Kathryn Erskine's *Mockingbird*. Caitlin navigates the loss of her older brother, who was the key to helping her unlock the mysteries of the world. As she seeks to find closure, her relationship with her grieving father takes on complex and emotional nuances.

So much of what we teach in school is concerned with facts. Literature is concerned with feelings and the quality of life. It can educate the heart as well as the mind. As children gain increased awareness of the lives of others and vicariously try out other roles, they may develop a better understanding of themselves and those around them.

Universality of Experience Literature continues to ask universal questions about the meaning of life and our relationships with the world and other people. Every book provides a point of comparison for our own lives. Are we as courageous as an aging gorilla who tenderly tries to find a better life for the baby elephant in Katherine Applegate's *The One and Only Ivan*, or as Ada, when she escapes with her brother from an abusive mother in Kimberly Brubaker Bradley's *The War that Saved my Life*? Would we have the tenacity and resilience of August Pullman in R.J. Palacio's *Wonder* or Kalia's Hmong grandmother in *The Most Beautiful Thing* by Koa Kalia Yang?

We also learn to understand the common bonds of humanity by comparing one story with another. The story of Max leaving home to go to the island in Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are follows the ancient pattern of Homer's Iliad and Odyssey. This pattern is repeated again and again in myth and legend and seen in such widely divergent stories as Kwame Mbalia's Tristan Strong Punches a Hole in the Sky and Kathi Appelt's The Underneath. These are all universal stories of a journey through trials and hardship and the eventual return home.

Books can also highlight human compassion in the midst of inhumanity. *Number the Stars* by Lois Lowry and *The Day the World Stopped Turning* by Michael Morpurgo both tell of the uncommon bravery of common people to do what they can to right a wrong. *Harbor Me* by Jaqcueline Woodson shows the bonds that people can form when thrown together, their vulnerability paving the way to create a safe harbor for each other. Literature illuminates all of life; it casts its light on all that is good, while spotlighting the trials and tragedies of the human experience. Literature enables us to live many lives and to begin to see the universality of human experience.

Educational Values

The intrinsic values of literature should be sufficient to make it an important part of education. Happily, there is research to show that literature plays a significant role in developing oral language, reading, and writing abilities and should play a central part in the school curriculum. Books such as *LMNO Peas* by Keith Baker engage young children in language play that can help them develop the phonological understanding so necessary to learning letter-sound relationships. In Jim Averbeck's *One Word from Sophia*, Sophia uses too many words when one word will do. The playful text draws attention to complex vocabulary. Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee's *Bink and Gollie* books intrigue young children with multisyllable words. Older children will find inspiration for writing in the wordplay of Ann M. Martin's *Rain Reign* and in Jen Bryant's *The Right Word: Roget and His Thesaurus*. They make personal connections to the environment in Carole Lindstrom's *We Are Water Protectors* or discover mathematical concepts in *The*







Miscalculations of Lightning Girl by Stacy McAnulty. Teaching Feature 1.1: Books at the Center highlights classic research studies that support using literature across the curriculum.

Reviews of research found in such books as *Handbook of Early Literacy Research, On Reading Books to Children: Parents and Teachers, and Handbook of Research on Children's and Young Adult Literature,* summarize research conducted over the past 50 years that supports the importance of literary experiences both before and after children come to school.⁵

teaching feature 1.1



Books at the Center

In the Home

the Curriculum

Phonological Development	Toddlers who were read to at home produced more sounds and vocalized more often than those who were not read to. ⁶
Syntactic Development	Three- to 4-year-olds who interact with adults around book readings have more complex sentence structure. ⁷
Lexical Development	Reading to young children supports their acquisition of vocabulary. ⁸
Interactional Patterns	Children learn discourse patterns, like dialogue, in the context of picturebook reading. ⁹
Text Patterns	Children who are read to form understandings of how stories and characters work. ¹⁰
Correlated with Early Reading	Access to books and being read to were significant factors in children's learning to read before they came to school. ¹¹

Correlated with Early Reading	Access to books and being read to were significant factors in children's learning to read before they came to school. ¹¹
In the School	
Correlated with Successful Reading	Reading aloud in the home was strongly associated with later reading comprehension test scores. ¹²
Knowledge of Textual Characteristics	Children acquired understandings of text patterns and characteristics of fiction and nonfiction when books were shared regularly. ¹³
Correlated with Attitude	Sixth graders with positive attitudes toward reading had been read to as children. ¹⁴
Recreational Reading	Reading outside of school was related to improved comprehension, vocabulary, and fluency scores. ¹⁵
Literature Across	Literature positively affected understanding of written language ¹⁶ and science and

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social studies learning.¹⁷



Evaluating Children's Literature

What makes a good children's book? Who will read it? Why? Whose purposes will it serve? All of these are important considerations to be taken up in this section of this chapter and throughout the book. The primary concern of evaluation, however, is a book's literary and aesthetic qualities. Children show what they think of books through their responses, but they are not born critics in the conventional sense. Adults need to value children's interests, interpretations, and judgments. At the same time, they need to help children discover what practiced readers look for in a well-written book. All books need to be evaluated for their respectful representation of diversity. Each format and genre (picturebooks, graphica, traditional literature, speculative fiction, contemporary realistic fiction, historical fiction, nonfiction, biography, and poetry) has evaluation criteria that we explore in Chapters 3 through 11. For example, it is important that the written text and illustrations in picturebooks act harmoniously; nonfiction books should be accurate and unbiased; poetry should delight the ear as well as the mind. It is important for readers to identify the kind of book they are reading in order to apply the appropriate criteria for evaluation.

In general, the traditional categories of literary elements can be applied to all genres of children's literature. For example, authors of both fiction and nonfiction can involve us in a compelling narrative or plot, establish a vivid setting, bring characters to life, and engage us with important themes. They can write with poetic style, and their point of view can link us more intimately with the subject matter and place us as active observers of events.

Plot

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Of prime importance in any work of fiction for children is the plot. Children ask first, "What happens? Is it a good story?" The plot is the plan of action; it tells what the characters do and what happens to them. Louis Sachar's Newbery Award-winning Holes weaves together three loosely connected suspenseful plot lines. The first takes place in the present, when Stanley Yelnats is sentenced to Camp Green Lake detention center for a crime he did not commit. Another plot line involves a curse that has followed his family for generations because Stanley's no-good-dirty-rotten-pig-stealing-great-greatgrandfather failed to carry Madame Zeroni up a mountain. The third plot line follows Kissin' Kate Barlow, a schoolteacher turned outlaw after the Warden's ancestor murders her love. In the end, all the plot lines intersect in a thrilling conclusion. This actionpacked, engaging narrative hooks readers, presenting a complex puzzle to piece together. In Blizzard of Glass, the thrilling nonfiction story of the explosion in Halifax Harbor in 1917, author Sally M. Walker builds suspense by relating minute-by-minute accounts of what real people were experiencing on the days leading up to the blast. These plots are the threads that hold the fabric of the narrative together and make the reader want to continue reading.

A well-constructed plot is organic and interrelated. It grows logically and naturally from the action and the decisions of the characters in given situations. The plot should be credible and ring true, rather than depend on coincidence and contrivance. It should be original and fresh rather than trite, tired, and predictable. In books that have substance, the obstacles are not easily overcome and choices are not always clear-cut. In Lauren Wolk's *Wolf Hollow*, Annabelle is reticent to divulge information about her gentle



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but peculiar friend Toby, a distressed World War I veteran, when a bully goes missing. In addition to being a compelling read, the plot is complicated by the ethical choices Annabelle must make.

Setting

The structure of a story includes both the construction of the plot and its setting. The setting may be in the past, the present, or the future. The story may take place in a specific locale, or the setting may be deliberately vague to convey the universal feeling of all suburbs, all large cities, or all rural communities.

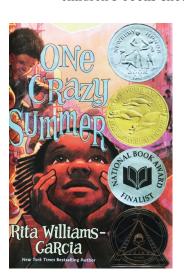
The setting for Karen Hesse's *Out of the Dust* is so well developed that readers can almost feel the grit of dirt between their teeth. Hesse's use of free verse conveys the essence of Billie Jo's terrible experiences during the 1930s Oklahoma Dust Bowl.

On Sunday,/ winds came,/ bringing a red dust/ like prairie fire,/ hot and peppery,/ searing the inside of my nose,/ and the whites of my eyes/ Roaring dust,/ turning the day from sunlight to midnight.

Hesse forgoes flowery rhetoric, focusing on words and rhythms that reveal the depths of human courage and the heart of human love.

Characterization

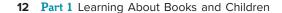
True characterization is another hallmark of fine writing. The people portrayed in children's books should be as convincingly real and lifelike as our next-door neighbors.



The summer of 1968 is both thoughtful and joyous as Delphine gets to know her mother and herself in California. Williams-Garcia, Rita. One Crazy Summer. Quill Tree Books, 2010.

The credibility of characters depends on the author's ability to show their true natures, their strengths, and their weaknesses. Delphine, the serious narrator of Rita Williams-Garcia's *One Crazy Summer*, becomes a vivid and dynamic character, eventually letting loose and having fun. The scene of her joyous ride downhill on a go-cart is one that readers will not soon forget.

Just as it takes time to know a new friend in all their various dimensions, so too does an author try to present the many facets of a character bit by bit. In revealing character, an author might tell about the person through narration, record the character's conversation with others, describe the thoughts of the character, show the thinking of others about the character, or show the character in action. Doreen Rappaport pairs quotes by Wilma Mankiller, the first female Cherokee chief, with the narrative of her life in her biography, Wilma's Way Home: The Life of Wilma Mankiller, bringing the character to life. A character who is revealed in only one way is apt to lack depth. If a single dimension of character is presented, or one trait is overemphasized, the result is likely to be stereotyped and wooden. One-dimensional characters are the norm in folk and fairy tales, where witches are archetypes of evil and youngest children are deserving and good. However, modern fiction requires multidimensional characters whose actions and feelings grow out of the circumstances of the story.





Theme

A fourth point in the evaluation of any story is its overarching theme or themes, the larger meanings that lie beneath the story's surface. Most well-written books can be read for several layers of meaning—plot, theme, or metaphor. On one level, the story of *Charlotte's Web* by E.B. White is an absurd but amusing tale of how a spider saves the life of a pig; on another level, it reveals the meaning of loneliness and the obligations of friend-ship. A third layer of significance can be seen in the acceptance of death as a natural part of the cycle of life. Finally, E.B. White himself wrote that it was "an appreciative story. . . . It celebrates life, the seasons, the goodness of the barn, the beauty of the world, the glory of everything." ¹⁸

The theme of a book reveals something of the author's purpose in writing the story and provides a dimension to the story that goes beyond the events of the plot. A book's theme might be accepting oneself or others, growing up, or the overcoming of fear or prejudice. The theme should be worth imparting to young people and be based on justice and integrity. Moral and ethical principles should prevail. However, one danger in writing books for children is that the theme will override the plot. Authors might be so intent on conveying a message that they neglect story or characterization. Didacticism, the attempt by an author to preach a moral lesson, is still alive and well in the twenty-first century. However, the best books do not *teach* children, they *reach* children. Or, as Roger Sutton emphasized, "If you want to convince children of the power of books don't tell them stories are good, tell them good stories."

Style

An author's style of writing is essentially the selection and arrangement of words in presenting the story. Good writing style is appropriate to the plot, theme, and characters, both creating and reflecting the mood of the story. Most children do not enjoy a story that is overly descriptive, but they can appreciate figurative language, especially when the comparisons are within their background knowledge. Padma Venkatraman's vivid writing in *The Bridge Home* brings to life the characters and settings. In describing her abusive father, Viji says, "The best I could do was think of him as a not-yet-all-the-way-rotten fruit. A plump mango with just a few ugly bruises."

There is no one style or set of language patterns that is more appropriate than others for a children's book. Yet children's tastes do place some demands on the writer. Because young readers tend to prefer action over description or introspection, those elements must be handled with special skill. Children crave dialogue, like readers of all ages. Sara Pennypacker and Lenore Look are masters of writing dialogue that sounds natural and amusing, as seen in the *Clementine* series and *Alvin Ho* series, respectively. Writing the dialogue for a book of contemporary realistic fiction is particularly difficult because slang and popular expressions become dated quickly. The conversations in *Ghost* by Jason Reynolds feel modern with casual phrases like, "Lemme guess, one dollar."

One of the best tests of an author's style is reading it aloud. Does the story read smoothly? Does the conversation flow naturally? Does the author provide variety in sentence patterns, vocabulary, and use of stylistic devices?



Point of View

The term *point of view* is often used to indicate the author's choice of narrator(s) and the way the narrator reveals the story. Whose story is it? Who tells it? A storyteller's voice is often used by authors to report the comings and goings, conversations, and feelings of all the characters, both villains as well as heroes. Such stories have an omniscient, or all-knowing, narrator.

Many children's books use a more restricted third-person point of view. This limited-omniscient, or concealed, narrator view provides closer identification with a single character. The author chooses to stand behind one character, so to speak, and tell the story from over their shoulder. The story is then limited to what that character can see, hear, think, feel, and understand. Katherine Paterson tells the story *The Great Gilly Hopkins* from this perspective.

The more direct narrative voice of the first person is quite common today. In contemporary realism, it is almost the norm. The advantage of using first-person narrative is that it can make for easy reading. In *Milo: Sticky Notes & Brain Freeze* by Alan Silverberg, Milo's internal dialogue endears him to the reader as he skirts his vulnerabilities, "The way I see it, surviving this year is all I have to do. Start to finish in one whole piece and then I win. Of course, being me, winning doesn't come easy. . ." The first-person perspective works well with the informal and self-deprecating tone. It welcomes the reader by taking a stance that says, "Look—we speak the same language."

At times, authors counter the limitations of a single point of view by alternating the presentation of several views within the same story or changing points of view. Erin Entrada Kelly's multiple narrators in *Hello, Universe* add great richness to the textual tapestry. John David Anderson's three characters in *Ms. Bixby's Last Day* have very different personalities (and quirks) that are reflected in each retelling of their sixthgrade year.



The golden glow of sun shines on a poetic car trip across Cuba reflecting the author's love for the land where she grew up. Engle, Margarita. *All the Way to Havana*. Illustrated by Mike Curato. Henry Holt and Co., 2017.

The author's own personal and cultural experience is reflected in more subtle ways in every book's point of view. For example, Deborah Wiles tells a moving story of life in the Jim Crow South based in part on her own experiences as a white girl in *Revolution*. Mildred Taylor's *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry* is based on her own history as an African American, and Margarita Engle's *All the Way to Havana* is based on her own family experiences in 1950s Cuba. These books show how the lived experiences of an author present a unique opportunity to illuminate nuances of their culture.

Presentation

The books we think of as truly excellent have significant content and, if illustrated, fine illustrations. Their total design, from the front cover to the final endpaper, creates a unified look that harmonizes with the content and invites the reader's engagement. Today, we have many beautifully illustrated books across a variety of genres; any attempt to evaluate this children's



literature should consider the role of illustration, format, and other physical characteristics of the book. We will discuss these criteria in greater depth in subsequent chapters.

In general, we should consider the format of a book—its size, shape, page design, typography, paper quality, and binding. Frequently, some small aspect of the format, such as the book jacket, will be an important factor in a child's decision to read a story. All varieties of books—novels, picturebooks, graphica, poetry, biography, nonfiction—should be well designed and well made. The typeface/font should be large enough for easy reading by children at the age level for which the book is intended. At the same time, if the type is too large, children might see the book as "babyish." Space between the lines should be sufficient to make the text clear. The paper should be of high quality, heavy enough to prevent any penetration of ink; in longer works written for older children, this means off-white with a dull finish to prevent glare. The binding should be durable and practical, able to withstand hard use.

Cultural Implications

In addition, we should consider evaluating the many aspects of cultural authenticity and cultural consciousness in children's books. It is important that children's books show people from diverse groups playing and working together, solving problems, and overcoming obstacles. Diverse children's literature helps readers understand that despite our many differences, people share common as well as unique perspectives.²⁰

In recent years, we have seen an increase in the number of books for children that highlight or include diverse perspectives. However, this does not mean that all diverse books are created equal. Some ways of recognizing respectful depictions include considering accuracy of representation, authors' qualifications, the dangers of a single story, how books act as windows and mirrors, and the story being told.

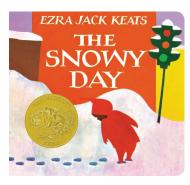
Accuracy of Representation Reading diverse books benefits children as they grow in their understanding and appreciation of people and the world, but only if the representation is accurate, authentic, and respectful. When readers see themselves in books, they should feel validated and affirmed by the well-rounded characters who share their experiences. When readers encounter characters unlike themselves, they learn about the customs, practices, and cultural roots of others. Books portraying diverse people can either perpetuate or disrupt typical patterns of privilege simply by whom they portray and how. Adults play an important role in vetting books for children so that they are more likely to contain respectful representations of individuals and groups. Oftentimes professional reviews of children's literature can provide insights on the accuracy of representation and note any stereotypes that are present. These could include stereotypical characters, behaviors, or situations. While such stereotypes may be present in beloved books, it is important to be aware of the conscious or subconscious choices authors make and the messages they send to readers.

Author's Qualifications An author's qualifications for writing diverse children's literature should be considered when evaluating books. One of the most debated questions is whether or not the author needs to be a cultural insider to tell a story.









Looking down at his footprints, Peter makes his way into the snow as the bright colors and bold shapes bring the textures of the urban environment to life. Keats, Ezra Jack. *The Snowy Day*. Viking Press. 1962.

In 1962, Peter made his first appearance in *The Snowy Day*. Ezra Jack Keats, a white, Jewish author/illustrator decided that Peter would be Black because all of the picturebooks he read as a child depicted only white characters.²¹ Additionally, his illustrations showed children living in a city, when all other portrayals of homelife were in neighborhoods of houses with yards. His intention was to increase the representation of diverse characters. Eventually, he founded the Ezra Jack Keats Award to encourage early-career authors and illustrators to "create extraordinary books that reflect our diverse population, the universal experience of childhood and the strength of family."22 So, how was Keats connected to the culture represented in The Snowy Day? Some would say that as a white author, Keats is not the best-suited person to portray Black characters. Others would say that his lived experiences as a child growing up in a city helped qualify him to do so respectfully. Considering these questions is important, as the author's cultural background, lived experiences, and sensitive research impacts cultural authenticity. This debate is explored further in Chapter 7.

Single Stories and Complicating Experience Each character and storyline can only speak for themselves. Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie says: "The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story." Without multiple characters, plots and books, readers are left with a single point of data to describe entire cultures. We can work against this tendency by including different characters from the same culture. For example, My Family for the War by Anne Voorhoeve explores several ways of being Jewish while chronicling the story of a Christian girl of Jewish heritage transported out of Berlin. Conflicts and solutions should also be complex when representing people and events realistically. Real life is rarely the simple story of homogenized groups set in opposition to each other. Cynthia Kadohata's A Place to Belong troubles the traditional narrative of American heroism in World War II by telling the story of a Japanese American family renouncing their citizenship after 4 years of imprisonment in internment camps.

Windows and Mirrors As children read and respond to books, we ask them to make connections to their lived experiences. If the books are not carefully selected, it may be impossible for some students to do so. Rudine Sims Bishop stated:

Books are sometimes windows, offering views of worlds that may be real or imagined, familiar or strange. These windows are also sliding glass doors, and readers have only to walk through in imagination to become part of whatever world has been created or recreated by the author. When lighting conditions are just right, however, a window can also be a mirror. Literature transforms human experience and reflects it back to us, and in that reflection we can see our own lives and experiences as part of the larger human experience. Reading, then, becomes a means of self-affirmation, and readers often seek their mirrors in books.²⁴



If readers are going to look into the "windows," walk through the "sliding glass doors," and see themselves in the "mirrors" of children's books, it is very important that the evaluation and selection of books with diverse themes be thoughtfully conducted.

Guidelines: Evaluating Children's Fiction lists criteria by which we have traditionally evaluated a work of literature. These criteria relate to elements such as plot, setting, theme, characterization, style, point of view, and format. Together, they form a foundation on which to examine each of the genres described in subsequent chapters.

Beyond the Book: Inviting Conversations About Children's Literature

Many times, we try our best to be caring and respectful in our words and actions but find out that we have come up short. In this book, we show our love for all children by being sensitive to their differences and trying to use language that will best support and nurture them. We know that some of our choices will be good ones, but we will keep listening for ways to improve. As Maya Angelou said, "You did in your twenties what you knew how to do, and when you knew better you did better."25 What are some recent examples where you have seen people change to do better?

In each chapter, we created space for thinking about specific topics. We selected these, as they feel current and relevant to children's literature: representation, metaphors of light and dark, censoring visual media, traditional literature and lived experiences, cultural appropriation, offensive behavior of authors, sexual abuse, historical racism, authentic language, competence with intense subjects, context in biography, and the power of poetry. What other topics might you want to consider holding space for thinking about? How will you recognize new issues when they arise in the future?

Hoping to invite readers to engage in conversations with us and with one another, we call these thinking spaces "Beyond the Book." Within each, we present information some background, a bit of research, sometimes examples—and related questions, orchestrating a journey through the topic. The questions hopefully allow space for multiple and competing ideas. These open conversations are ways of "approaching texts, images, and practices to convey different and more socially just and equitable messages and ways of being that have real-life effects and real-world impact." How can conversations like these improve our world?

These topics and questions can also engage children. We practice these conversations as adults so that they are present in both our casual interactions and deliberate discussions with children. Exploring challenging topics with children develops a comprehensive, more nuanced understanding of the world in which they live. How is this an important part of helping them become critical, reflective thinkers?

Oftentimes, children's literature presents authentic topics that connect to readers' lives. This provides an opportunity for readers to analyze, reflect, and comprehend more deeply, especially when they have connected emotionally with a text. Opening these conversations provides a space to learn about a variety of perspectives and expand knowledge. How might these experiences contribute to discussions of children's literature in meaningful ways?





Evaluating Children's Fiction

Gvidelines



Consider the following questions when evaluating children's fiction:

 Does the story transcend the setting and have universal implications?

General

- · What kind of book is this?
- Before reading, what does the reader anticipate from the title?
- Dust jacket illustration? Size of print? Illustrations? Chapter headings? Opening page?
- How does the book compare with other books on the same subject?
- How does the book compare with other books written by the same author?
- How have other reviewers evaluated this book?
- What age range would most appreciate this story? Does it match with the intended age range?

Plot

- · Does the book tell a good story?
- · Will children enjoy it? Is there action?
- · Does the story move?
- · Is the plot original and fresh?
- · Is it plausible and credible?
- Is there preparation for the events?
- Is there a logical series of happenings?
- Is there a basis of cause and effect in the happenings?
- Is there an identifiable climax? How do events build to a climax?
- · Is the plot well constructed?
- Does the book model respect for the cultural groups presented?

Setting

- · Where does the story take place?
- · How does the author indicate the time?
- How does the setting interact with the action, characters, or theme?

Characterization

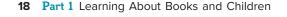
- How does the author reveal characters?
 Through narration? In conversation? In the thoughts of others?
- · Are the characters convincing and credible?
- Do we see their strengths and their weaknesses?
- Does the author avoid stereotyping? Bias?
- Is the behavior of the characters consistent with their ages and background?
- Is there any character development or growth?
- Has the author shown the causes of character behavior or development?
- How does the author present diverse groups of people?

Theme

- · Does the story have a theme?
- · Is the theme worth imparting to children?
- Does the theme emerge naturally from the story, or is it stated too obviously?
- · Does the theme overpower the story?
- · Does it avoid moralizing?
- How does the author use motifs or symbols to intensify meaning?
- Does the story have pluralistic themes to foster value in cultural diversity?

Style

- Is the style of writing appropriate to the subject?
- · Is the style straightforward or figurative?
- Is the dialogue natural and suited to the characters?
- How did the author create a mood? Is the overall impression one of mystery? Gloom? Evil? Joy? Security?





Gvidelines



 Are there derogatory overtones to the words used to describe the characters and culture?

Point of View

- Is the point of view from which the story is told appropriate to the purpose of the book?
 Does the point of view change?
- Does the point of view limit the reader's horizon, or enlarge it?
- Why did the author choose this particular point of view?
- Are diverse cultural perspectives highlighted in multiple points of view?

Presentation

- Do the illustrations enhance or extend the story?
- · Are the pictures aesthetically satisfying?
- · How well designed is the book?
- Is the format of the book related to the text?

 What is the quality of the paper? How sturdy is the binding?

Cultural Implications

- Is there anything in the story that would embarrass or offend a person whose culture is being portrayed?
- Who is represented? Do these representations perpetuate or disrupt typical patterns of privilege? Who does this representation benefit?
- How stereotypical are characters, behaviors, and situations?
- Is the book explicit and precise about the cultural roots of the group being depicted?
- How does the author's cultural background, lived experiences, and research increase cultural accuracy?
- Does the story reflect diverse ways of being within a culture so as to avoid presenting a single story?
- Are the conflicts and solutions complex?

Resources for Selecting Books

There are many professional resources to help adults as they go about choosing books for children. Book review journals such as *School Library Journal*, *The Horn Book Magazine*, *Kirkus*, *Publishers Weekly*, and *Booklist Magazine*, as well as reviews in other professional journals such as *Language Arts* and *The Reading Teacher* provide guidance and often single out titles with exceptional strengths.

Two of the oldest awards for children's literature in the United States are the Newbery and Caldecott Awards. Winners are chosen annually by committees of the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC), a division of the American Library Association (ALA). The Newbery Medal is awarded to the author of the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children, while the Caldecott Medal is awarded to the artist of the most distinguished picturebook for children. Awards that recognize diversity in children's literature, such as the Coretta Scott King awards, expand representation of characters and creators. See the inside of the back cover for a list of prominent awards.

General literature awards, such as The National Book Award, often have categories for children. The Young People's Literature award is given annually by the National Book



Foundation to recognize outstanding literary work. The Eisner Awards, given by Comic-Con International, have categories for children's graphica.

In addition to national literature awards, every state hosts at least one book award for children's literature. Author Cynthia Leitich Smith maintains a comprehensive list on her website. Some state awards, such as Ohio's Buckeye Children's Book Award, are chosen by child readers themselves. The national Children's Choice Book Awards, organized by The Children's Book Council, are also selected by children.

Book lists are also a helpful resource to aid in book selection. They address a number of curriculum and interest areas. Content area lists of notable books include social studies, science, language arts, and poetry. Lists addressing particular interests include Hot Off the Press, Diverse Kids, and the Amelia Bloomer List, which features books with significant feminist content.

No one but the most interested follower of children's literature would want to remember all the awards and lists that recognize children's books. And certainly no one should assume that the selections are the only children's books worth reading. Like the coveted Oscars of the motion picture industry and the Emmys of television, the awards in children's literature focus attention not only on the winners of the year but also on the entire field. They recognize and honor excellence and also point the way to outstanding writing, illustration, and production of worthwhile and appealing books for children.

Go to Connect® to access key teaching and learning supplementary materials.

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Titles in blue = diverse titles
Titles in bold = Own Voices

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Reading Responses at Different Ages

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The following story, written by a second grader, clearly shows the influence of literature on his literacy development.

The Lonesome Egg

Once there lived a Lonesome Egg. [The Golden Egg Book (Brown)]

And nobody liked him because he was ugly. And there was an ugly duck too, but they didn't like each other. [The Ugly Duckling (Andersen)]

One day while the Lonesome Egg was walking, he met the Ugly Duck. And the Egg said to the Duck, "Will you be my friend?" [Do You Want to Be My Friend? (Carle)]

"Well, O.K."

"Oh, thank you."









"Now let's go to your house, Duck."

"No let's go to your house."

"No we'll go to your house first and my house too."

"O.K." [Dialogue from the Frog and Toad series (Lobel)]

And then while they were walking, they met a baby Panda Bear and they picked it up and took it to Duck's house.

And then the baby Panda Bear said, "I'm tired of walking." So they rested.

And soon came a tiger. And the tiger ate them up, except for Duck. [The

Fat Cat (Kent)]

And right as he saw that, he ran as fast as he could until he saw a woodcutter and he told the woodcutter to come very quickly. [The Gingerbread Boy (Galdone)]

And when they got there, the tiger was asleep. So, the woodcutter cut open the tiger [Little Red Riding Hood (traditional)]

And out came Egg and baby Panda Bear.

And they ate the tiger and lived happily ever after.¹

This child's story shows how books influence children's intellectual and emotional lives. As adults, we hope to connect children with books that deeply engage their intellect and emotions—books that will help them to decide to become lifelong readers. Most readers acknowledge that the experience of the book goes beyond the content of the pages. Readers respond to literature in important ways that make the reading experience engaging.

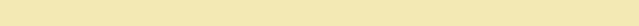
Theoretically, response refers to any outward sign of inner activity, something said or done that reveals a reader's thoughts and feelings about literature. A 6-year-old's drawing of a favorite character and a book review in *The New York Times* are both responses in this sense. When people predict that a book will evoke "a good response," they use the term in a different way. In this case they are hoping that children will find a book appealing and will be eager to read it, talk about it, and transform it through writing and other art forms. In order to choose books that will please individual readers and to plan for rich responses to literature, both at home and in classrooms,





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adults may gain insight through reading educational research. Some pertinent topics include children's reading interests and preferences, research into how children's responses to literature change throughout the years, and the importance of sharing literature with children through reading aloud.

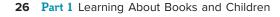
Reading Interests and Preferences

In this age of electronic devices, children's desire to read can be a concern. Happily, the 2019 Kids & Family Reading Report indicated that there is still great enthusiasm for reading for enjoyment, although the percentage of children who read for pleasure tends to drop as children get older.² Teachers, librarians, parents, caregivers, publishers, booksellers, and other adults who select children's books can make informed choices by knowing which books are likely to have immediate appeal for many children.

Studies of reading interests over the years have consistently identified certain topics and content that have wide appeal, like animals and humor.³ Other elements that are frequently recognized for reader appeal are action, suspense, and surprise. Children like books that make them laugh and those that allow them to explore places they have never been before. They also prefer to read about "smart, brave, and kind" characters who overcome challenges set before them.⁴ Variations in interests among different groups of children may be linked to age, gender, book characteristics, surrounding environment, social influences, and culture.

The most obvious change in children's interest patterns occurs with age, as children take on more complex material and new concerns. Good book choices for first and sixth graders seldom overlap, even when the general topic is the same. Chris Raschka's picturebook A Ball for Daisy is a favorite animal story among 4- and 5-year-olds; 12-year-olds prefer their animal characters to be part of something more sophisticated, as in Michelle Kadarusman's Music for Tigers. Seven-year-olds laugh at Peggy Parish's Amelia Bedelia and her literal interpretation of instructions such as "draw the drapes" and "dress the chicken." Eleven-year-olds like funny books, too, but prefer a different brand of humor, such as the comic situations in Jaclyn Moriarty's The Extremely Inconvenient Adventures of Bronte Mettlestone or the deadpan humor of Louis Sachar's Holes.

The influence of gender on reading interests is not entirely clear, as it is hard to determine if gender differences in children's choices reflect a natural interest or conformity to cultural expectations. Regardless, research has documented a number of differences. Studies have reported that girls tended to be more motivated to read than boys. Both genders preferred reading books that target their identified gender or those that are gender-neutral. Books that appealed to all children included adventure, comedy, realistic stories, and fantasy. One study noted girls showed an earlier interest in romantic fiction than boys, whereas boys tended to prefer nonfiction from an early age. Even though we can identify commonly chosen topics and story features that have wide general appeal, it is still impossible to concoct a formula for books that would have unfailing popularity



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with all children. Adults need to be aware of and sensitive to children's individual tastes, which are unique and particular.

Reading across gender boundaries has its own advantages. We can assume that in school and home settings where traditional gender and sexual stereotypes are downplayed, boys and girls share enthusiasm for many common favorites. It is important to give children many options for book choice so that children have a chance to explore each other's perspectives. It is just as unfortunate for girls to miss the excellent nonfiction being published today, like *Above the Rim: How Elgin Baylor Changed Basketball* by Jen Bryant, as it is for boys to turn away from fiction that offers insight into human relationships, like *Amina's Voice* by Hena Kahn.

Book characteristics, such as illustrations, color, format, length, and type of print, can influence children's choices. For example, Brian Selznick's lengthy illustrated novels, like *Wonderstruck*, might turn some readers away because it is over 600 pages or the illustrations are in black-and-white. Others may be drawn in by his captivating ability to seamlessly tell two stories using different styles—one in words and the other only in images. It would be unwise to oversimplify the effect of these factors on children's book choices, especially because so much of the research has been done outside the context of children's typical book selection and reading. When children choose and use books, their reactions are more complex than controlled experiments or surveys can reveal.

Although interests do not vary greatly according to geographical location, the impact of the child's environment can be very strong. Some children have heard many stories read aloud. Through access to many books, they have been introduced to a variety of authors and genres. These children are likely to have different tastes and preferences when compared with those of children who have had less exposure to books. Children in homes and classrooms where books are regularly discussed, enjoyed, and highly valued tend to show livelier interest in a wider range of literature. It is difficult to determine how much of this effect is due to contact with books and how much is social.

Social influences do impact children's choice of books. Teachers' favorite books are often mentioned by children as their own favorites, perhaps because these are closest at hand or a positive association with the teacher. In the culture of the classroom, a title, author, or topic may rise to celebrity status for a time. Younger children studying bears might point out "bear stories" to each other long after the unit is over. Children might make their own sign-up sheets to read the classroom's only copy of the latest book from the *Invention Hunters* series by Korwin Briggs. Janae Mark's *From the Desk of Zoe Washington* might be "the book" to read in one group of fourth graders. Peer recommendations influence children at all ages, as they are likely to enjoy the same kinds of stories because they share many developmental characteristics or interests. Regardless, as children grow and learn, their levels of understanding change, and so do their favorites in literature.

Cultural factors also affect children's book choices and reading interests. One of the arguments for providing culturally authentic picturebooks and novels representing diverse children is that readers from a particular culture may find material drawn from their own culture more interesting. The relationship between interests and culture is complex, and calls for more research.

We must be careful not to oversimplify the reasons for children's book choices. Even so, it is important not to underestimate the usefulness of a developmental perspective that takes into account both experience and growth. This is a powerful

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