



‘Kelly’s Picks’ Book List

These are books that are our family’s favorites--the ones that our children asked for again and again, the ones that we enjoyed reading as much as they enjoyed hearing--and books that have been more recently published which would have been loved just as well.

I have kept books that have gone out of print on the list because they are volumes that are well worth looking for at the library.

Happy Reading!

Kelly Farrell Hicks

Resources

Babies Need Books – Dorothy Butler

Raising A Reader – Jennie Nash

Read-Aloud Handbook – Jim Trelease

Reading Magic – Mem Fox

Read to Me: Raising kids who love to read – Bernice Cullinan

Valerie and Walter's Best Books for Children – Valerie Lewis & Walter Mayes

What to Read When: The Books and Stories to Read with Your Child—and All the Best Times to Read Them – Pam Allyn

Babybug (6 mos.-2 yrs.), Ladybug (2-6 yrs.), Spider (6-9 yrs.), and Cricket (9-14 yrs.) magazines -- 800 827-0227
www.cricketmag.com

FIRST PICTURE BOOKS

Angus and the Ducks

Angus and the Cat

Angus Lost

Marjorie Flack

He's BACK! That adorable terrier we loved as kids has found his way back into print in affordable paperback. A curious puppy in the first book, Angus grows older and longer and learns about the comfort of friendship and the value of those familiar things we hold dear in our lives as the series unfolds. The texts are brief, but the stories are enormously satisfying.

Baby Born

Anastasia Suen, illustrated by Chih-wei Chang

A simple look at the growth a baby makes in its first year. Actually many babies are pictured as the text, in verse form, describes the predictable pattern of development from cooing to sitting up to first steps against the backdrop of the changing seasons. The lively watercolors are enchanting, and all but the very first and last pages feature a flap which hides an image that further enriches the scene.

Babies on the Go

Linda Ashman, illustrated by Jane Dyer

I picked this one up off of the shelf because of the reputation of the illustrator, but what really captivated me were the words -- Ashman uses rich and marvelous language to describe the sometimes incredible ways that animal babies are toted around by their loving parents. Oh, and the pictures? They definitely lived up to expectations!

Barton series

Byron Barton

Titles in this series: Airplanes; Boats; Trains; Trucks. Bright, colorful line drawings of the titled vehicles are described with a forthright simplicity, e.g. "Here is a cement mixer mixing cement," which feels just right. This series is now available in board book form.

Each Peach, Pear, Plum

Janet and Allan Ahlberg

Nursery rhyme and storybook characters are hidden in charming watercolor illustrations. As each is found, he or she is obvious in the following two-page spread, so that after just a few readings the child is able to recognize just the small bit of the character that is exposed when hidden. In the end, all happily share a plum pie in the sun. Available in paperback.

Here Comes Henny

Charlotte Pomerantz, illustrated by Nancy Winslow Parker

This delightful tongue-twister of a tale is now available in paperback. The picky chickies want a snacky-snicky, NOT the snicky-snacky that Henny has lovingly prepared for them. What's to be done? Wise mama allows the chicks to work it out (note the watchful eye!) and everybody's happy. CLUCK!

It's My Birthday

Helen Oxenbury

In this twist on the Little Red Hen story everybody helps, and everybody gets to eat cake. A perfect gift book for a just-turning-two child, who'll want to hear it read again and again. Paperback.

Hughes series

Shirley Hughes

Titles in first series: All Shapes and Sizes; Bathwater's Hot; Colors; Noisy; Two Shoes, New Shoes; When We Went to the Park. Available at Children's Library as single volumes; available for purchase as a collection in a large volume entitled The Nursery Collection. Delightful, small volumes that speak to a toddler's world while providing first insights into such concepts as numbers, colors, opposites, etc.

Titles in second series: Bouncing; Chatting; Giving; Hiding. Same 'Nursery Collection' characters, this time gently exploring new concepts.

Love and Kisses

Sarah Wilson, illustrated by Melissa Sweet

The old adage "What goes around, comes around" was never more charmingly presented. Delightful collage illustrations detail the progress of one kiss as it travels from girl to cat to cow and beyond. By the time the kiss returns to the girl, many unlikely friendships have been forged, and in a satisfying conclusion, all these friends are united to celebrate the love that has grown among them.

Time for Bed

Mem Fox, illustrated by Jane Dyer

That Fox is an author who is passionate about language is evident in this soothing volume. Though this is available as a board book, the larger picture book format allows for more of a "fall- into-them" experience with the illustrations--treat yourself!

Brown Bear, Brown Bear – Bill Martin, illustrated by Eric Carle

The Very Busy Spider – Eric Carle

The Very Hungry Caterpillar – Eric Carle

PICTURE BOOKS (2 1/2 to 4 years)

Alfie's 1,2,3

Shirley Hughes

Not just a counting book, but a (subtle) pre-math primer built around snippets of narrative that are linguistically rich and which suggest other topics to explore (physics, family structure, the bounty of nature, etc.).

All About Alfie

Shirley Hughes

This volume contains four stories that were previously published singly: Alfie Gets in First; Alfie's Feet; Alfie Gives a Hand; An Evening at Alfie's. Shirley Hughes has a wonderful talent for writing from the child's perspective, and Alfie is a particularly irresistible character whose escapades are appealing to the child just beginning to appreciate a real story. Hughes' comfortable illustrations add to the charm of these stories.

Barn Cat

Carol P Saul, illustrated by Mary Azarian

While "looking" for something special (in that desultory way that only a cat has) a lovely, fat barn cat keeps a watchful eye on the creatures around her. On the face of it a counting book, but one that is so rich in descriptive language and full of visual detail you won't mind reading it again and again. Available in paperback.

Everywhere Babies

Susan Meyers, illustrated by Marla Frazee

A marvelous book that brings to mind a much-loved volume from my children's younger days, The Baby's Catalogue (now out of print). With illustrations that are worthy of being pored over again and again, this is a vibrant celebration of humanity that speaks to the need for understanding and appreciation of the many different ways we live our lives--all different kinds of babies, doing all different kinds of things, but all LOVED for being just as they are. Revel in the language, delight in the pictures - this one is irresistible!

First Snow

Kim Lewis

A small girl loses her teddy while helping her mother to feed the sheep during a snowstorm, but all is well when one of the dogs retrieves it for her. Softly colored images of the north of England are lovely. Available in paperback.

Good Morning, Sweetie Pie

Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Jane Dyer

WELL! A favorite author and a favorite illustrator paired in one volume - need I say more? This collaboration is a glorious success. Here is the poetry of the everyday, revealed and illustrated in such a way as to create understanding of how much we all have in common even though our appearances may be different. These engaging poems (eight in all) are varied in rhythm and cadence, providing a rich listening experience, but the overall tone as activities throughout the day are chronicled is one of total acceptance and unconditional love. Pure joy!

In the Rain with Baby Duck

Amy Hest, illustrated by Jill Barton

Baby Duck's parents are worried - who ever heard of a duck that didn't like rain? Grampa's creative solution (recycled from the days when a certain little duck, now herself a mama, was fussy about the rain) speaks to the importance of accepting our children for who they are and finding ways to make things work. It's all about finding the joy!

Pig Pig Grows Up

David McPhail

Amusing color-washed line drawings accompany the hilarious narrative of a large pig who refuses to grow up - until the day disaster looms. Pig Pig saves the day, then pushes his well-deserving mother home in his finally outgrown stroller. Available in paperback.

Small

Clara Vulliamy

A marvelously satisfying tale of a young boy's adventure on an overnight at Granny's house, where everything is perfect until bedtime when Tom realizes his favorite stuffed toy is missing. Then the adventure really begins, . . .or does it? While most adults will acknowledge the subtle nod to reality, your child will almost certainly run with the fantasy.

Splish, Splash, Spring

Jan Carr, illustrated by Dorothy Donohue

A perfect book to celebrate the season! Donohue's bright and cheerful cut-paper collage illustrations, brimming with detail, bring to life the joyous text as three friends romp on a fresh (but fickle-weathered) spring day. A charming ode to the most child-like of seasons!

Stella and Roy

Ashley Wolff

This is the story of the hare (big sister Stella) and the tortoise (little brother Roy) in a clever retelling. Look for an actual turtle making his way past a rabbit included somewhere in each of the two-page spreads that show Stella dawdling. The vibrant illustrations are linoleum block prints that have been hand-tinted with watercolors. Available in paperback.

Over and Over

Charlotte Zolotow, illustrated by Garth Williams

A three year old is just beginning to explore the concept of time. She enjoys each holiday as it marks the passing of the year, then asks, "What comes next?" On her birthday, the final special event, she wishes for it all to happen again--and of course, it does! Available in paperback.

Whose Garden Is It?

Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Jane Dyer

A simple enough question on the face of it, but one that has many answers depending on one's perspective. Hoberman's wonderful poetry provides a mind-stretching experience as all answers are considered, while Dyer's illustrations charm the reader along the way.

Wild Child

Lynn Plourde, illustrated by Greg Couch

Like a satisfying bite out of the best autumn apple, this book is SCRUMPTIOUS! Mother Earth has some difficulty getting her wild child (Autumn) settled for bed, but after a song and a snack, finding the right PJ's and the final kiss, all is well. Wonderfully evocative language and sumptuous illustrations make this a brilliant celebration of the miracle of the changing seasons.

Curious George – H.A. Rey

Harry the Dirty Dog – Gene Zion, illustrated by Margaret Graham

PICTURE BOOKS (3 1/2 to 5 years)

Big Alfie and Annie Rose Storybook

Big Alfie Out of Doors Storybook

Shirley Hughes

Here's more Alfie and Annie Rose! These large volumes contain several stories each and a few poems. The stories are slightly more involved, with more text, than others in the series, so they're suited to a slightly older listener.

Butterfly House

Eve Bunting, illustrated by Greg Shed

This quiet story not only chronicles the life cycle of a Painted Lady butterfly, but celebrates the love between a girl and her grandfather, and demonstrates the potential on an act of kindness to create a lasting legacy. The warm and rich illustrations are a perfect match to the lyrical text.

Contrary Mary

Anita Jeram

Short and sweet, but full of punch, this might be just the right book to lighten up the atmosphere at your house on a day when every parental request is met with "NO!" Mary's mother's light-hearted response to Mary's contrariness is sure to amuse, and the affirmation of their love for each other even as Mary is seeking her independence is reassuring.

Danny's Duck

June Crebbin, illustrated by Clara Vulliamy

Danny is a quiet boy with a big secret: he is keeping his eye on a female duck that has built her nest on the edge of the playground. As Danny chronicles the progress of her efforts in his drawings, his wise teacher is keeping her eye on him and on the day that Danny is distraught to discover the nest empty, she has the happy ending to his story. I like the suggestion here that children don't need to wait until they are writing to become storytellers - their pictures can be 'worth a thousand words' instead! Paperback.

Dogger

Shirley Hughes

Dave loves his favorite toy, Dogger, so much that he takes it along everywhere he goes. When Dogger can't be found one night at bedtime, Dave is desolate. Dogger turns up the following day on a rummage sale table at a school fundraiser, but before Dave can find his parents to help him retrieve Dogger, another child buys him. Only when Dave's big sister does "something *very* kind" are boy and dog reunited. Available in paperback.

Farfallina and Marcel

Holly Keller

A heartwarming story of friendship that endures growth and changes over time. Subtly rendered, the tale is beautifully structured and immensely satisfying -- this is one to read again and again!

Flicka, Ricka, Dicka/Snipp, Snapp, Snurr series

Maj Lindman

Titles in this series: Flicka, Ricka, Dicka and the Big Red Hen; ...and the Little Dog; ...and the New Dotted Dresses; ...and the Three Kittens; ...and Their New Friend; ...Bake a Cake; Snipp, Snapp, Snurr and the Buttered Bread; ...and the Gingerbread; ...and the Red Shoes; ...and the Reindeer; ...and the Yellow Sled; ...Learn to Swim. Set in Sweden, these stories chronicle the adventures of three girls and three boys respectively. These are busy, independent, and very wholesome children for whom there is always a happy ending because they have tried their best to do the right thing. Available in paperback.

Harriet, You'll Drive Me Wild!

Mem Fox, illustrated by Marla Frazee

The wonderful Mem Fox has got it right again as she captures perfectly one of those moments in one of those days that we all wish we'd never have -- when the ever-patient mother finally blows her cool. Poor Harriet doesn't mean to be a 'pesky child' and, of course, her mother doesn't mean to lose her temper, but all's well in the end with a heartfelt hug and a little hilarity. A very reassuring little book.

I Like to Be Little

Charlotte Zolotow

A thoughtful dialogue between a mother and her daughter becomes a quiet celebration of the joys of childhood, even as the wise child looks forward to the day when she can grow up to be like her mother. Available in paperback.

I Love You the Purplest

Barbara M. Joosse, illustrated by Mary Whyte

A gorgeously illustrated answer to that eternal question, "Who do you love the best?" This wise and patient Mama deftly reassures mercurial Max (her "red" boy) and thoughtful Julian (her "blue" boy) that each is loved completely in his own way. Beautifully written but not overly sentimental, this book is a real gem.

If Anything Ever Goes Wrong at the Zoo

Mary Jean Hendrick, illustrated by Jane Dyer

Leslie, who loves the zoo and wishes she could keep some of the animals she visits there as pets at home instead, gets more than she bargained for one stormy night when half the zoo shows up at her house, looking for shelter. An absurdly silly tale is made to seem perfectly plausible as illustrated by the wonderful Jane Dyer. Leslie's patient mother entertains (deadpans?) at story's end, "The next time you invite friends home, would you check with me first?"

In the Heart

Ann Turner, illustrated by Salley Mavor

The poetic text is a distillation of life down to its very essence, and the three-dimensional artwork allows for a most exuberant rendering of that heady brew. A marvelous celebration of the every day!

Jamie and Angus Stories

Anne Fine, illustrated by Penny Dale

This is a charming collection of six stories that chronicle the adventures of a boy and his (stuffed) bull. This is the stuff of growing up, the everyday give-and-take of family life making the experience all the more meaningful. The author is Britain's Children's Laureate and the quality of the prose in this volume makes it clear why. Well-written and well-conceived, these slice-of-life morsels are delicious concoctions -- feast yourselves!

Kid's Guide to Building Forts

Tom Birdseye, illustrated by Bill Klein

Perfect for rainy inside days and lazy summer days alike, this book will inspire myriad creations! There is text for older children to follow but the detailed line drawings will provide plenty of fodder all by themselves for younger creative minds. This book will enjoy a long shelf life as your family grows. Paperback.

Lion and the Little Red Bird

Elisa Kleven

An enchanting tale of friendship between a curious bird and an artistic lion. The illustrations are stunning collages, full of details to appreciate. Available in paperback.

Little Scarecrow Boy

Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by David Diaz

This story has been around since the 1940's but is now making its appearance in picture book form, with wondrous results. The bright and exuberant illustrations are a delightful match to this reassuring tale about growing up, engagingly written in Brown's own inimitable style.

Lucky Pennies and Hot Chocolate

Carol Diggory Shields, illustrated by Hiro Nakata

A boy and his grandfather spend the week-end together doing all of their favorite things. The text is straightforward but engaging and is rounded out by the delightful illustrations, but the real twist (and a big smile) comes on the last page when the narrator's voice is identified. This slim volume is charming in every way.

Mr. Carey's Garden

Jane Cutler, illustrated by G. Brian Karas

This is a simple story which suggests the importance of not only being open to considering, but eventually embracing, a viewpoint which differs from one's own. Mr. Carey's garden is full of snails, but he declines to act on his neighbors' advice on how to get rid of them, explaining that he "sees things in a different light." One magical moonlit night the reason for his quiet stance becomes clear and this small community is united in a new understanding.

Mordant's Wish

Valerie Coursen

As a series of serendipitous events unfolds, the wish of an unassuming mole called Mordant comes true. The naive style of the watercolor illustrations is a perfect foil for this simple but satisfying tale.

Mud Pies and Other Recipes

Marjorie Winslow, illustrated by Eric Blegvad

One of my favorite books when I was little, I was thrilled to be able to give this little gem to my daughter, whose copy is now slightly moisture-warped and tattered, as it should be, a testament to its many hours of enjoyable use in the garden.

Once There Were Giants

Martin Waddell, illustrated by Penny Dale

A lovely look at the cycle that takes a family from one generation to the next. Told from the perspective of one family member who makes the journey from the infant on the rug surrounded by "giants" to mother and "giant" herself, this chronicle is reassuring yet also thought-provoking.

Pig in the Pond

Martin Waddell, illustrated by Jill Barton

Nelligan's pig is one pig who's able to commit herself to action outside of "the box" . . .and then everyone's in on the act! This amusing little tale provides food for thought on the subject of risk-taking, and validates the idea of considering one's own well-being even if it means defying convention.

The Relatives Came

Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Stephen Gammell

A heartfelt yet unsentimental look at the joys of communing with the extended family. The illustrations, straightforward but with plenty of humorous detail, are in perfect accord with the down-to-earth narrative. Paperback.

Robin's Room

Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Steve Johnson and Lou Fancher

A manuscript by the inimitable Margaret Wise Brown, which lay in waiting since her death 50 years ago, is brought marvelously to life for the first time: this book's design is as fun as the story, going topsy-turvy halfway through. Here's a kid (who's something of a handful) who knows what he needs -- a little down time each afternoon. (His parents must be so relieved!) As the fantasy spins out, the fabulous setting he is allowed to create for his "quiet" time retreat has some elements that are not really so far-fetched -- is it time to update your child's room? Here's the vision!

Seven Silly Eaters

Mary Ann Hoberman, illustrated by Marla Frazee

All's well that ends well for this poor frazzled mother of seven of the pickiest eaters imaginable! Marvelous rhyming text, incredibly endearing illustrations--CHARMING!

Tough Boris

Mem Fox, illustrated by Kathryn Brown

Boris is as tough, fearless, and greedy as any pirate, but when his parrot dies, he cries. With wonderful illustrations of this scruffy band and their fearsome ship, this is a to-the-point allowance that it's okay for boys and men to cry. Available in paperback.

When the Wind Stops

Charlotte Zolotow, illustrated by Stefano Vitale

A lovely introduction to the concept that every ending is somehow really a new beginning. Vitale's straightforward illustrative style keeps the overall feeling from becoming overly sentimental. Available in paperback.

Caps For Sale – Esphyr Slobodkina

Frog and Toad series – Arnold Lobel

Little Bear series – Else Minarik, illustrated by Maurice Sendak

Make Way for Ducklings – Robert McCloskey

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel – Virginia Burton

The Story of Ferdinand – Munro Leaf

Tikki, Tikki Tembo – Arlene Mosel, illustrated by Blair Lent

PICTURE BOOKS (5 years and up)

Albert

Donna Jo Napoli, illustrated by Jim LaMarche

He's a mild-mannered fellow who's always able to find an excuse not to leave his apartment -- until the day something fantastic lands in his life. This is a story about risk-taking, about putting yourself out there in order to experience all that life has to offer.

Barefoot

Pamela Edwards, illustrated by Henry Cole

A simple, but deeply moving account of one slave's flight to a "safe house." The Heavy Boots are hot on the trail of Barefoot, but the animals in the woods help him to elude the search party and guide him along to safety. A powerful introduction to the subject of slavery that goes straight to the heart.

Bear That Heard Crying

Natalie Kinsey-Warnock and Helen Kinsey, illustrated by Ted Rand

This is the TRUE story of a small girl who was protected by a bear when she was lost in the woods for three days as the extended community banded together to search for her. Kids love this book! Available in paperback.

Blue Hill Meadows

Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Ellen Beier

This is a marvelous collection of four short, feel-good stories. The world of Blue Hill, Virginia is cosy, and slow-paced, and the Meadow family is a loving one. Nothing *much* happens, but what does happen is affirming of the goodness of life and the strength of family.

Children Just Like Me

Barnabas and Anabel Kindersley

Billed as "a unique celebration of children around the world," this over-sized book offers fascinating glimpses into the lives of children from every continent. Illustrated with captivating photographs and a few maps, the information provided ranges from what the children eat and wear, to what their homes look like, and what their school is like. There are quotes from each child that describe variously what they want to be when they grow up, why they like living where they do, or what they like to do in their free time, and these are what help to elevate this assemblage of information to storybook status from mere encyclopedia.

Comes a Wind

Linda Arms White, illustrated by Tom Curry

A hilarious tall tale that's full of still more tall tales as two brothers try to out-do one another. Next time sibling rivalry rears its ugly head at your house, try pulling out this book to lighten the moment.

Fanny's Dream

Caralyn Buehner, illustrated by Mark Buehner

A Cinderella tale with a twist -- her fairy godmother is years late in showing up, but when she finally does Fanny decides that her life has turned out pretty well in the mean time. Heber is not particularly handsome and does not exactly sweep Fanny off her feet, but he is a good man who loves her and they create a full life together. Isn't this really all we want for our daughters?

Henkes collection

Kevin Henkes

Partial list of titles: Chester's Way; Chrysanthemum; Julius, Baby of the World; Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse; Owen; Wemberly Worried. Henkes is masterful in his ability to illustrate the struggles we all face in the intertwined efforts towards self-acceptance and finding a voice for ourselves. His characters are so endearing because they are US (even if they look like mice!). Look for newly released board books with these same characters. And when your children are older (12 and up), be sure to check out his wonderful novels--they are his favorites of his books (mine too!).

The Big Milly-Molly-Mandy Storybook

Joyce Lankester Brisley, illustrated by Clarra Vulliamy

Written in 1925, these simple stories were accompanied by black-and-white line drawings from the author's pen. Here, Clara Vulliamy's sweet illustrations are faithful to the intent of the originals, even as they offer a bit more. You'll adore sweet and enthusiastic Milly-Molly-Mandy and find her adventures entertaining, and can find even more stories in the original two volumes.

The Minpins

Roald Dahl

Not for the faint-hearted, for there is a monster in this one (the Terrible Bloodsuckling Toothplucking Stonechuckling Spittler, a.k.a. the Gruncher). Little Billy evades the monster however, discovers the Minpins (tiny people who live in the trees), and with their help, carries out a heroic scheme that destroys the monster, freeing the Minpins forever. Available in paperback.

No, David

David Shannon

An author's note at the front of this book explains that David Shannon actually wrote a book similar to this one when he was a boy. It was illustrated with drawings of David doing all sorts of things he wasn't supposed to do, and the text consisted entirely of the words "no" and "David", the only words he knew how to spell at the time. Although the remake of his first effort has a somewhat more elaborate text than the original, the illustrations and overall tone of this volume definitely speak from a child's point of view. As naughty as this child is, at book's end his mother reassures him of her never-failing love with a warm hug and the words, "Yes, David, I love you."

The Pumpkin Blanket

Deborah Turney Zagwyn

When Cleo is born a blanket mystically appears, and as she grows up it becomes her most cherished object. When she has grown up enough so that she understands that making choices sometimes involves sacrifice, the beloved blanket returns to the Northern Lights. The lovely, rich watercolors are as soulful as the story. Available in paperback.

Rikki-Tikki-Tavi

Rudyard Kipling, adapted and illustrated by Jerry Pinkney

The classic tale of the brave little mongoose who finds his way into the hearts of the English family that adopt him into their home. Pinkney's lush illustrations are glorious and perfectly fitted to this deft adaptation.

Roxaboxen

Alice McLerran, illustrated by Barbara Cooney

A lively group of girls and boys use what they can find in a desert landscape to create a place of their own. There are houses, shops, even a jail. It is a magical place that none of the former Roxaboxenites will ever forget. Masterfully illustrated by Cooney, this evocative tale offers up a celebration of the power of imagination.

Ruby the Copycat

Peggy Rathman

Ruby is the new kid in class and she tries to fit in by imitating her new friend Angela. Angela soon becomes annoyed with this ploy, however, and Ruby is devastated. With the help of her understanding teacher Ruby finds the courage to be herself, and she emerges as Ruby the leader.

Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine

Evaline Ness

Young Samantha has a very active imagination and the unfortunate tendency to try to pass off her “moonshine” as real. As often as her father exhorts her to try to appreciate the difference between REAL and MOONSHINE, it takes a dramatic event that jeopardizes the lives of both a young friend and her cat to bring Sam around. Available in paperback.

Thimbleberry Stories

Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Maggie Kneen

This volume is very much in the same vein as Rylant’s Blue Hill Meadows, this time with animal characters. Again, little drama, but it’s a cosy corner of the world, where community is important, and tolerance and mutual support are exemplified.

Weslandia

Paul Fleishman

Wesley’s the kind of kid who marches to the beat of a different drummer, much to the utter delight, eventually, of those around him. This book really resonates with the 7-9 year-old crowd -- its message of daring to think differently and being true to oneself is one they long to hear.

Chapter Books for Fours and Fives

A Toad For Tuesday

Russell Erickson, illustrated by Lawrence DiFiori

A charming tale of bravery and friendship. When Warton the toad sets out on an ill-advised journey to deliver beetle brittle to his Aunt Toolia, no one ever would have imagined that he might eventually rescue an owl from certain death -- an owl who had planned on dining on toad in celebration of his Tuesday birthday. Breathless moments are translated into sheer joy by the end of this heart-warming story.

“B” is for Betsy

Carolyn Haywood

The first in a long and varied series of wonderful books written in the 1940's and 50's. Radiating sweetness and innocence, these stories treat the reader to a glimpse of a kinder, gentler time. Other titles in the series have male main characters. Available in paperback.

My Father's Dragon

Ruth Stile Gannett, illustrated by Ruth Chrisman Gannett

Another of my favorites as a child, this has been around for a while, with good reason. Elmer Elevator's ingenuity is sure to enchant your child, and when he finally outwits all of the animals on the island to free the dragon, you'll be cheering too. This one will be read and re-read.

Sophie series

Dick King-Smith, illustrated by David Parkins

Sophie may be small, but she's determined, and these books are determinedly amusing. Sophie is a spunky four year old in the first book(Sophie's Snail) and ages by one year in each of the subsequent five books, but her charm never flags. You'll read these with a smile on your face!

Teddy Robinson Storybook

Joan G. Robinson

Not truly a chapter book, but rather a collection fo 15 stories that may be read in any order. Teddy Robinson is an endearing little stuffed bear who belongs to a girl called Deborah. These well-written and amusing stories are full of detail yet remain uncomplicated. This is a perfect book for those listeners who are bridging over from picture books into chapter books.

Chapter Books for Sixes and Sevens

Cobble Street Cousins series

Cynthia Rylant, illustrated by Wendy Anderson Halperin

Six small volumes that describe the escapades of three girls -- two sisters and their cousin -- who are spending a year in the home of their young (childless) aunt. Each of the girls has a distinct personality, with dreams of her own, yet they are best friends and have a wonderful time together, encouraging each other with love and consideration. The marvelous illustrations support the text beautifully for a completely charming effect.

Lady Lollipop

Dick King-Smith, illustrated by Jill Barton

The very amusing tale of a spoiled-brat princess who is 'tamed' by her new pet pig's trainer, much to the relief of her somewhat befuddled parents. Lots of chuckles in these short chapters, delightfully illustrated with plenty of simple but effective line drawings, and a happily-ever-after ending -- absolutely charming!

Mary Poppins

P.L. Travers, illustrated by Mary Shepard

The mysterious Mary Poppins probably needs no introduction to our generation, thanks to Disney, BUT this is definitely one of those book-is-better-than-the-movie instances. Read it! Available in paperback.

Sarah, Plain and Tall

Patricia MacLachlan

Told in the voice of eight-year old Anna, this is the poignant tale of a motherless prairie family that collectively holds its breath waiting to see if the woman that comes to them from the seaside will want to stay and become mother and wife. Available in paperback.

The Stray

Dick King-Smith

The delightful story of a dear lady by the name of Henrietta Hickathrift, who "runs away" from the old age home and is "adopted" by a large cheerful family who live at the seaside. Throw a lucky lottery ticket into the mix and you've got a feel-good winner of a book!

Wolf Story

William McClerry, illustrated by Warren Chappell

An amusing story-within-a-story, wherein one hapless father with the "help" of his young son spins out an increasingly absurd yarn about one equally hapless wolf named Waldo who is determined to make a meal of Rainbow the hen. Although the melodrama is successfully drawn to a conclusion by book's end, this poor father will never truly be done with the story...

Poetry

Animal Crackers

Jane Dyer

Subtitled "A Delectable Collection of Pictures, Poems, and Lullabies for the Very Young," and it is! This book would make a wonderful First Birthday gift.

Autumn: An Alphabet Acrostic

Steven Schnur, illustrated by Leslie Evans

Solidly colorful illustrations have just the right seasonal feel for this collection of poems, one for each letter of the alphabet. The language is simple, but the images rich. From age 5.

The Circle of Days

Reeve Lindbergh, illustrated by Cathie Felstead

A poem of praise and thanksgiving, taken from St. Francis of Assisi's Canticle of the Sun. The vibrant illustrations combine watercolor and gouache in layered collages. From age 3.

Florian series

Douglas Florian

Titles include: Beast Feast; Insectlopedia; Mammabilia; On the Wing. Marvelously fun poetry that is extremely clever -- these books will be enjoyed by your children for many years to come! Age 3 and up.

Over the Hills and Far Away

Alan Marks

All of the familiar nursery rhymes, and some not-so-familiar, are illustrated in an effective combination of lively watercolors and striking black-on-white silhouettes. From age 2.

Rhymes for Annie Rose

Shirley Hughes

It's no secret that I love the work of Shirley Hughes, and this collection of poems is no exception. Once again Hughes' talent for speaking from a child's perspective shines through, and these very appealing gems provide not only a delightful introduction to poetry, but also offer room to grow on--we've returned to this book many times over the years and found a new appreciation for it at each age. From age 2.

Talking Like the Rain

X.J. Kennedy and Dorothy Kennedy, illustrated by Jane Dyer

Chock full of poems that are grouped together by theme, this is a book that will grow with your child's expanding world. From age 3.