

L.G.'s Awesome Book List: Chapter Books

I'm a writer, and I homeschool, thus I collect children's books. After sending a bunch of book recommendations to a friend, I realized I ought to turn the list into a blog post. I've read all these books unless I've noted otherwise. I preferred fantasy, adventure, and historical fiction as a kid, so those flavors are pretty prominent. I admit I may not be the best judge of reading level, so know your child's ability! The list is alphabetical by title, and series are listed under the first book in the series.

My philosophy of children's literature

I expect literature to widen a child's world, help them work through difficult topics in the safety of their imagination, and expand their vocabulary and language skills such as rhyme, alliteration, similes, and metaphors. But ultimately, I expect books to teach truth and beauty along with sin and its consequences. I don't believe depressing or nihilistic endings make sense from a Christian worldview, but saccharin-sweetness is equally problematic. I'm not afraid of scary books as long as the hero or heroine triumphs.

I have placed a blue heart next to books I think are more boy-oriented or pink next to girl-oriented. I could easily label them all purple since I grew up loving Jack London, Rudyard Kipling, and other books often recommended for boys. Still, I do think some books are more boyish or girly than others and deserve those labels. You know your kids best, so use or ignore the colors at your discretion.



I highly recommend searching out your local used bookstore for these titles, especially if you're looking for some of the vintage ones. I don't get any money for this list, so I'm not going to give you links or suggestions other than you should buy books as cheap as you can! I also believe in having extra copies of particularly good books so they can be loved into retirement and replaced.

Happy reading!

Chapter Books

A Bear Called Paddington by Michael Bond

If you haven't already read this, what even are you doing with your life? The Browns find a bear at Paddington Station in London, and around his neck is a card that reads, "Please take care of this bear. Thank you." And they do.

The Borrowers series by Mary Norton

Ever wonder where all your bobby pins, buttons, and other tiny objects disappear to? Borrowers.

Call It Courage by Armstrong Sperry ♥

Newberry award winner! This book may be the reason I asked my mom if I could cook bananas and honey ham lunchmeat together on the stove because I was so curious how a spit-roasted pig stuffed with plantains would taste. (Also, don't do that. Bad idea.)

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator* by Roald Dahl

I don't love the other books most people mention when Roald Dahl's name comes up, but these two are fun. Be warned that Dahl likes gross-out humor, although these two books have significantly less than his other works.

Charlotte's Web by E.B. White

'Tis a classic for a reason.

A Cricket in Times Square by George Selden

Chester Cricket accidentally falls asleep in a picnic basket in Connecticut and wakes up to find himself in the subway below Times Square. One of my favorite books of all time.

The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie Savage Carlson

An old homeless man discovers some little children hiding under a bridge, waiting for their mother to return from work and ends up taking care of them on the streets of Paris. Homelessness is a heavy topic, but Carlson handles it beautifully.

The Green Ember Series by S.D. Smith ♥

My husband and our oldest child listened to the entire series on audiobook on our last big road trip and loved it.

Heidi by Johanna Spyri ♥

This story made me want to learn to milk a goat and sleep on a bed of hay covered in wool. Spyri made it sound so fun!

Hank the Cowdog series by

Get the audio versions of these books. The author makes already funny stories so hilarious that my dad had to pull the car over on a road trip because he was laughing too hard to drive. Our family's favorites include *The Case of the Double Bumblebee Sting*, *It's a Dog's Life*, *Let Sleeping Dogs Lie*, and *The Case of the Vampire Vacuum Sweeper*.

The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes ♥

This book hit me hard as a kid. It's a really good book about poverty, bullying, and compassion. It's short easy reading that will make an impression.

In Grandma's Attic by Arleta Richardson ♥

Gentle adventures told by a grandmother looking back on her childhood on a farm. Get the treasury! The face mask involving beeswax made quite the impression on me as a tween worried about acne.

The Green Book by Jill Patton Walsh

Probably the first true sci-fi novel I ever read. There are some darker themes toward the end, so exercise caution with sensitive kids. I wasn't phased by it as a kid, b

The Jungle Book I and II by Rudyard Kipling ♥

Kipling can be a bit dark, and this is a series that parents should use to spark discussion. I loved the stories about Rikki Tikki Tavi, the cobra-killing mongoose.

King of the Wind: The Story of the Godolphin Arabian by Marguerite Henry

This is from the same author as *Misty of Chincoteague*, but it is my personal favorite. A horse story girls and boys would both love.

The Little Lame Prince by Dinah Mulock Craik

Very sad but sweet fantasy story. A prince, lamed at birth by a careless servant, is locked in a tower by his evil uncle, and his fairy godmother helps him.

Mary Poppins, Mary Poppins Comes Back, Mary Poppins Opens the Door, and Mary Poppins in the Park by P.L. Travers

Put the movie out of your mind because the books are nothing like the movies. They are weird. They are a little creepy in places. There's a character who breaks her fingers off and gives them to Jane and Michael as candy. Mary is so vain that it is off-putting. But they are also hilarious and perfect for reading aloud. Just don't expect Julie Andrews and animated penguins!

The Moffats series: The Moffats, The Middle Moffat, Rufus M., and The Moffat Museum by Eleanor Estes

I love these four books. We're still reading through them. They're about four kids and their widowed seamstress mother. Charming and hilarious.

Mr. Popper's Penguins by Richard Atwater

Mr. Popper dreams of exploring the South Pole and meeting a penguin, but he never expects the famous explorer Admiral Bird to send him a live penguin for a pet! It starts with a penguin in the icebox and gets sillier from there.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH by Robert C. O'Brien

I just read this book for the first time as an adult, but my childhood best friend was obsessed. It's brilliantly written with memorable characters and an instantly intriguing plot.

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Magic, Hello, Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle, and Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's Farm by Betty McDonald

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle knows how to cure all the problems of childhood, be it the Slow-Eater-Tiny-Bite-Taker plate set or Whisper-Sticks for gossipy girls. Parents should read these just to laugh at the ridiculous names of the characters. **I do not endorse the revamped Missy Piggle-Wiggle series.** Stick with the old ones.

My Side of the Mountain by Jean Craighead George ♥

A boy runs away and lives in the woods in a hollow tree, hunting, fishing, and foraging for his food. He even trains a falcon!

Number the Stars by Lois Lowry

Historical fiction about WWII. A girl and her family hide her Jewish friend from the Nazis. It has heavy material, but it's beautifully written and not explicit or violent.

Olga da Polga, Olga Carries On, Olga Moves House, Olga Meets Her Match, by Michael Bond

We had a guinea pig growing up, so I have a soft spot for guinea pigs in general. Olga da Polga is the funniest storytelling guinea pig of all time.

The Phantom Tollbooth by Norton Juster

This book is the punniest book ever written. Audible has a version narrated by Rainn Wilson, aka Dwight from *The Office*. I sincerely look forward to introducing my children to Milo, King Azaz the Unabridged, the Mathemagician, the Humbug, and a host of other memorable characters.

Pippi Longstocking, *Pippi Goes on Board*, and *Pippi in the South Seas* by Astrid Lindgren

Honestly, anything by Astrid Lindgren is probably good. I've read a lot of her other work, and it is all whimsical and fun. Pippi is the strongest girl in the world (she can carry her horse!), and she lives all by herself in her mess of a house, Villa Villekulla. I envied her not having a bedtime.

Redwall series by Brian Jacques ♥

Medieval adventure stories, but with mice, rats, and other animals. There's even a cookbook!

The Sea Fairies by L. Frank Baum

Same writer as *The Wonderful Wizard of Oz*, but it's about mermaids! Girls will love it, but I suspect boys would enjoy it, too.

Sensible Kate by Doris Gates

This is a gentle story about a young orphan girl named Kate. She longs to be cute or pretty, but she settles for being sensible. Even though she has freckles and red hair, Kate is definitely not a copy of Anne of Green Gables! This one might be hard to find, but it's worth it!

The Story of Doctor Dolittle by Hugh Lofting

Dr. Dolittle is a doctor for people, but after his pet parrot teaches him to talk to animals, he starts treating animals instead.

What's the Big Idea, Ben Franklin? And Then What Happened, Paul Revere?, Where Was Patrick Henry on the 29th of May?, Why Don't You Get A Horse, Sam Adams?, Shh! We're Writing the Constitution, Can't You Make Them Behave, King George?, Will You Sign Here, John Hancock? by Jean Fritz

If your child likes history, these stories are so much fun. I personally love *Will You Sign Here, John Hancock*, because I didn't realize what a quirky man was behind the most famous signature in the world. All these books will teach your kids something while making them giggle.

The Wingfeather Saga by Andrew Peterson

So many things I could say about this series because it's a rich, funny, and captivating story told by an incredible writer and singer/songwriter. But mostly, I love that my kids run around yelling, "Not my potatoes!" Keep an eye out for the animated movie of the first book!

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz and *The Land of Oz* by L. Frank Baum

The Oz series is surprisingly long, and I've read many of them. These are the only two I recommend. Warning: A girl transformed into a boy and back into a girl is a significant plot point in *The Land of Oz*, and in our current culture, that may be very confusing for some children.