

L.G.'s Awesome Book List: Picture 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!

Pictures Books for Preschool and Early Elementary

Alexander and the Terrible Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day and *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday* by Judith Viorst

Whenever I have a particularly difficult day, I announce loudly to no one in particular that I am moving to Australia with Alexander.

Are You My Mother? By P.D. Eastman

My sisters and I regularly quote a line from this hilarious book: "You are not my mother. You are a Snort!"

Baby Wren and the Great Gift by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Every creature praises God in their own way, and Baby Wren discovers hers in this gorgeously illustrated picture book.

Bedtime for Frances, Bread and Jam for Frances, Best Friends for Frances, A Baby Sister for Frances, A Bargain for Frances, and A Birthday for Frances by Russell Hoban

"What I am is tired of jam." Our family quotes these books regularly. Frances the badger is smart, funny, and a little naughty. And she's very fond of bread and jam.

Corduroy and *Corduroy's Pocket* by Don Freeman

My kids all love Corduroy. I think I have both books half-memorized by now.

Finding Winnie: the True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear by Lindsay Mattick

If you love Winnie the Pooh, this is the story of where that story got its start.

George Washington's Teeth by Deborah Chandra

Our first president had terrible teeth. This fun picture book tells the tale of his dental woes over the years.

Harry the Dirty Dog, Harry by the Sea, Harry and the Lady Next Door, and No Roses for Harry by Gene Zion

Harry is a white dog with black spots who is continually getting into and out of trouble. I particularly love his unique way of dealing with an annoying next-door neighbor.

A House is a House for Me by Mary Ann Hoberman

Every living thing has a house of some sort, and this book takes you on a tour of the domiciles of various creatures.

How a Book Is Made by Aliko

An old book, but I have a feeling it's still pretty accurate. Writing a book is a long process!

How to Train a Train by Jason Carter Eaton

If you have a child who likes trains, you need this book.

"I Can't," Said the Ant by Polly Cameron

A rhyming tale about a broken teapot and the efforts of various kitchen items to help her.

Imogene's Antlers by David Small

Imogene wakes up feeling a bit different, and her family doesn't quite know what to do about it.

The Ink Garden of Brother Theophane

A beautifully illustrated rhyming story about a monk who makes ink for illuminated manuscripts. I seek out historical fiction illustrated in the style of the story's time period, and this book is a great example.

Journey, Quest, and Return by Aaron Becker

These beautiful picture books have no words, but each takes you on a beautiful and exciting adventure. Have your kids narrate as you turn the pages. I guarantee it will be entertaining.

Kites Sail High, Merry-Go-Round, Many Luscious Lollipops, and A Cache of Jewels by Ruth Heller

I use these bright fun picture books to help my kids practice parts of speech. They don't even notice they're learning!

Nanette's Baguette by Mo Willems

An awful lot of words rhyme with "baguette."

Madeline, Madeline's Rescue, Madeline and the Bad Hat, by Ludwig Bemelmans

Adorable classic French series with beautiful illustrations.

Make Way for Ducklings and Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey

McCloskey does gentle, funny stories so well. These are on every reading list known to man for good reason.

Many Moons by James Thurber

Princess Lenore is sick, and she claims that the only way she will get well is if someone will get her the moon. Her father sets about to grant her wish, and the most unlikely person finds a solution.

Marguerite Makes a Book by Bruce Robertson

Gorgeous pictures for a story about illuminated manuscripts in the middle ages. The art reflects the era of the story, which is a great way to familiarize kids with art history!

Meanwhile Back at the Ranch by Trinka Hakes Noble

If you've lived in Texas or near Texas, this book is even funnier because you can hear the accents. Rancher Hicks spends the day in the town of Sleepy Gulch while his wife Elna has a not-so-boring day back at their ranch. This will make your kids laugh out loud!

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel, and The Little House by Virginia Lee Burton

Most kids will not recognize the technology in these stories. I say that's all the more reason to introduce them.

Moomin and the Moonlight Adventure by Tove Jansson

My sister brought this back from a trip to Sweden, and my kids love it. Moomin is a popular series there, and I can see why!

My Friend Maggie, Bernice Gets Carried Away, Extraordinary Jane, and Friends Stick

Together by Hannah E. Harrison

These books are so bright and colorful! Harrison is an incredible illustrator, and her stories are adorable. We love Bernice best, but all her characters are memorable.

No Jumping on the Bed! by Tedd Arnold

Jumping on the bed has consequences in an apartment building!

Pandamonia by Chris Owen

This book is a long hilarious rhyming warning of why you absolutely positively *should not wake the panda* on your visit to the zoo!

Paul Bunyan, Mike Fink, and Pecos Bill by Steven Kellogg

America's mythology! These stories are wonderful hyperbolic fun.

Poor Doreen: A Fishy Tale by Sally Lloyd-Jones

Miss Doreen Randolph-Potts isn't the brightest fish in the stream. Lots of alliteration makes this book a fun read-aloud.

The Relatives Came by Cynthia Rylant

My husband and I both have large extended families, so the antics in this book are familiar and funny.

Sarah Morton's Day, Tapenum's Day, Samuel Eaton's Day, and Giving Thanks: The 1621 Harvest Feast by Kate Waters

I keep these books in a special box for Thanksgiving. The pictures are of real children reenacting people who lived in or near Plymouth Plantation. We pull them out every year and read them aloud. I have such good memories of the pictures bringing history to life for me as a child, and I'm so glad my mom let me have them for my kids to enjoy.

Thomas Jefferson Builds a Library by Barb Rosenstock

Thomas Jefferson collected books. I think he and I would have been fast friends. This was a fun story to read as part of our American history lessons.

The Three Little Javelinas by Susan Lowell

In this Southwest version of the Three Little Pigs, the javelinas pursued by a coyote. A must-have if you live anywhere near the southwest or western United States.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs by A. Wolf

You only think you know the story of that horrible wolf eating innocent pigs! This version of the story is my favorite, and the quirky illustrations make it that much funnier.

The Wishes of the Fish King by Douglas McKelvey

A meditative fantastical poem.

Where's Our Mama? by Diane Goode

Mama loses her hat, and when she takes too long getting it back, her kids get anxious and ask a policeman for help. What follows is a sweet view of a mother through her children's eyes that might make you cry.