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## A Primer on Finding New Books

by Nancy Livingston

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Every librarian, teacher, or parent enjoys sharing favorite old books with his or her young charges, but it is important to keep abreast of the new books written for young people. With more than 5,000 new titles appearing every year, this task may seem overwhelming. Most librarians know how to locate lists of new, recommended books, but teachers and parents often appreciate help in finding high quality books. The purpose of this article is to acquaint teachers and parents with selected print sources that recommend and annotate new books.

The information age has produced an increasing number of sources to explore. Journals publish book lists, many of which are annotated. Several organizations also produce annual recommended book lists; some chosen by children, some by adults. The National Council for Social Studies and National Association of Science Education issue annual best books lists. Television news shows and book reviews in newspapers are other sources of help in finding good new books. Finally, ask children what they are reading. After a brief animated discussion, one of this article's authors came away from a school lunch line with twenty kid-popular titles.

### Review Sources

Several journals regularly publish book reviews and/or annotated book lists. These sources make finding high quality recommended books easy, even for the novice. In becoming familiar with review sources and book lists, the reader must be aware that a review is simply one person's opinion and that book lists may be compiled by professional organizations, librarians, teachers, and young people.

*Horn Book Magazine* is published bi-monthly and features trusted, critical reviews of

recommended books. Because it is costly (\$53.00 per year for institutions, \$43.00 for individuals), it is likely to be found in larger public libraries and university libraries.

*Booklist* is one of the most comprehensive sources, listing many books published in the United States and some foreign titles. Reviews do not rate the books but do offer critical comments. The annual subscription cost is \$69.50 per year, and, again, it is likely to be found in larger public libraries and university libraries.

*School Library Journal (SLJ)* reviews more children's books than any other review source. *SLJ* is published monthly, and the December issue features *SLJ*'s annual "Best Books" list. Most school, public, and academic libraries will subscribe to *SLJ*. The annual subscription cost is \$97.50.

*Book Links* is a bi-monthly publication of the American Library Association that focuses on curriculum applications and book lists arranged by subject or teaching unit. The books are both old and new, and the bibliographies are annotated. The subscription cost is \$29.95. Most school libraries will have this periodical in their collections, but it is also an excellent resource for teachers to purchase.

*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* is published monthly except in August by the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The book lists are ranked according to recommended, not recommended, and good additions for your collection. The subscription cost is \$60.00 and may be found in most mid-size to large public libraries and many university libraries.

*Children's Book and Play Review* is a collaborative effort of the Harold B. Lee Library, the Department of Teacher Education, and the

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Department of Theatre and Media Arts at Brigham Young University. Issues appear every two months from September to May. Each issue contains 50-55 books and 15 play reviews that are ranked as to quality and assigned grade level recommendations. Unique to this publication is the moral stance from which reviews are written. If the consequences of bad choices (e.g. sexual promiscuity, drug use, dishonesty) are not shown, reviewers will note these problems even if the quality of the writing is excellent. With subscription rates of \$15.00 for the print journal and \$5.00 for the web site, this journal is affordable for teachers and parents.

**Book Lists**

Since 1975, the International Reading Association (IRA) and the Children's Book Council have sponsored ongoing project to identify books that children enjoy. Books are selected by publishers and sent to review teams who use them with children throughout the year. Children vote on their favorite books in the spring and the top choices are announced in May at the annual Conference of the IRA. An annotated "Children's Choice" list, with curriculum applications and approximate reading levels, is published the following November in *The Reading Teacher*, the journal of the IRA. Reprints are available from the IRA Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139.

Since 1989, the IRA Teachers' Choices program identifies quality trade books for young people. Two hundred to 500 newly published books, submitted by U.S. publishers, are sent to seven regional teams throughout the United States. Books are circulated among teachers and librarians, who use them with students. The adults select their favorites based on established criteria, and "Teachers' Choices" are published, along with "Children's Choices" in each November issue of *The Reading Teacher*. Reprints are available from the IRA Order Department. See above paragraph for address.

The Children's Book Council and the National Council for the Studies of Social Studies

sponsor the annual "Notable Children's Trade Books in the Field of Social Studies." This annotated bibliography is published in each April/May issue of *Social Education*. Single reprints are available at no charge from the Children's Book Council, 568 Broadway, New York, NY 10012. Include a \$.77 (3 oz.) postage paid, self-addressed, 6"x 9" envelope.

The Children's Book Council and the National Society of Science Education sponsor the annual "Outstanding Science Trade Books for Children." Thirty five to forty books appear on the annotated bibliography, which includes grade levels, interest levels, and curriculum applications. The bibliographies are generally divided into the following categories: biography, environment and ecology, life science, and science related careers. A brief list of recommended Spanish science books is included. The list appears in the March issue of *Science and Children*. Single reprints are available from the Children's Book Council. See above paragraph for address and other requirements.

Many states sponsor children's book awards, and most of these awards are selected by children from a nomination list compiled by adults, who are generally teachers, librarians, and parents. In 1980, The Children's Literature Association of Utah (CLAU) began its Utah Children's Book Award. Over the years, CLAU has added three additional awards: Utah Young Adult's Book Award, Utah Children's Informational Book Award, and Utah Children's Picture Book Award. Like many other state organizations, CLAU maintains a web site of currently nominated books and past winners. The web site URL is <http://xmission.com~lmosback>.

For decades the Children's Services Division of the New York Public Library has published an annual annotated bibliography of the 100 best new books for children. This bibliography is divided by genre and includes grade levels. To order it, send \$3.00 to:

New York Public Library  
Children's Division Branch  
455 Fifth Avenue  
New York, NY 10016

For more information, call Susan Pine (212)621-0636.

### **Other Sources**

The Children's Book Council (CBC), a nonprofit organization, issues two newsletters annually, with articles by authors, illustrators, publishers, teachers, librarians, academics, and other specialists. CBC sponsors Children's Book Week each November and recently began sponsoring Poetry Week each April. CBC produces a catalog of book and reading promotion items, including posters, bookmarks, T-shirts and more. A lifetime membership is \$60.00. For more information, contact CBC at the address listed previously in this article or use the web site at [www.cbcbooks.org](http://www.cbcbooks.org).

Morning and noon new programs, both national and local, feature reports on children's books, particularly during summer vacation and the holiday season, and interviews with children's authors. "Good Morning America" reporter Valerie Lewis discusses children's books once every two weeks. Another unexpected source information about books for young people are local newspapers, with children's book reviews written by local librarians, book sellers, or children's literature professors.

Children's and school librarians are excellent sources. They read children's literature and use the review sources cited above regularly. They are familiar with the library collections they manage and can quickly suggest sources that would be helpful in the classroom or at home.

### **Happy Ending**

Hopefully, the sources identified above will help teachers and parents discover many excellent new books for children (and for themselves). Happy reading! Remember, you don't need to read every day—just on the days you eat.