Readermakers: More Than Anything Else— A Selection of New Children's Books

Leon Archibald
"More than anything else, I want to learn to read."

That is what Booker T. Washington said. He was nine years old, and he was working dawn to dusk in the saltworks, shoveling salt into barrels. The year was 1865.

In a beautifully illustrated new picture book, entitled More Than Anything Else, Marie Bradby tells the story of Booker T. Washington’s young life, focusing on his immense desire to read.

In light of the surprising amount of illiteracy in our time, and with the literate sometimes taking reading for granted, this story becomes a poignant reminder of the value of reading.

This selection of titles is presented, then, as a celebration of the book.

Christmas Books


Reverent, and lovingly illustrated, this simple telling of the birth of Christ uses passages from the King James Bible with connecting text. Nonny Hogrogian won the 1972 Caldecott Medal for One Fine Day.


A companion to her volume Angels and Other Strangers, these stories were created to be read aloud on Christmas Eve by her husband, Reverend John Paterson. As in her first set of Christmas tales, this unusual collection forces its characters to find their own Christianity in very trying and, ultimately, very tender circumstances.
12 Brigham Young University


How did a simple woodsman become Santa? This is the story of Claus, the forester, who puts some elves to work at toymaking, moves to the North Pole for more room, and is surprised by some magical reindeer. The paintings are exceptional.


Clever adaptation of Tolkien’s charming letters in the pull-out style of The Jolly Postman and Griffin & Sabine.

Picture Books


Mentioned above. The dramatic paintings for this picture book, lantern-lit, make vivid the metaphor of the darkness of illiteracy, and the joy of making one’s way into the light.


Wow! What if your mind were stuck in MATH? What if all your classes turned into math class—even English (does tunafish plus tunafish equal fournafish)? You’ve got the math curse! Brought to you by the duo that created The Story of the Three Little Pigs and The Stinky Cheese Man.


Something was going wrong in the quiet western town of Riverbend. There was a mysterious substance on the stagecoach and horses. What strange force was altering their very existence? Sheriff Ned Hardy was determined to do something about it.

Van Allsburg’s fabulous drawings and quirky humor combine in a delightful picture book. Van Allsburg is twice winner of the Caldecott Award.

Fairy Tales and Folktales


"Once in, never out—once out, never back!" chants the odd little man named Hooks as he enters Tooley’s house, against the better judgment of
Tooley's cat. Tooley is down on his luck and is sure that help from the Friendly Folk could turn his fortune about. It is the cat who finally comes to the rescue as Tooley's lot remains misfortune.

Wonderfully pragmatic tale in brilliant Alexandrian guise.


Tales of legendary heroes, Perseus, St. George, and Siegfried appear beside such comic tales as Kenneth Grahame's "The Reluctant Dragon" and E. Nesbit's "The Dragon Tamers." Here too are J.R.R. Tolkien, C.S. Lewis, and Italo Calvino. Michael Hague is wonderfully suited as illustrator to this book. His publisher said it well, "Michael Hague's art has never breathed more fire."


Sumptuously illustrated by the artist of *The Enchanted Wood,* this delightful fairy tale is part "Puss in Boots" and part "Cinderella" with a satisfying twist on "happily ever after."

Poetry


Full of sly wit, these thirty-three verses about nature and animals will definitely tickle some funny bones. Stick with it though—the first few verses are not the best.

Informational


McCurdy's black-and-white scratchboard illustrations reminded me of Matthew Arnold's photographs of the Civil War. They extend the power of Lincoln's famous speech at Gettysburg, imbuing it with an immediacy and relevance for readers today. With a foreword by American historian Garry Wills, and an afterward by McCurdy about his great-grandfather who fought at Gettysburg. McCurdy also illustrated *Giants in the Land.*

Fiction for Young Readers

Prepared with great care and skill by the author for his series of public readings. Affords an excellent introduction to this great autobiographical novel for a younger reader.


The Newbery-award-winning author tells the tender story of a logging family who unknowingly falls in love with a spotted owlet. Her publisher tells us that Jean Craighead George is particularly qualified to write this novel as she has had an owl in her own shower. Is anyone surprised?