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Classic Picture Books Chosen by the New York Public Library

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There are some works of literature and art that everyone should be familiar with. What about the combination of the two—picture books? The Office of Children's Services of the New York City Public Library has published a list of one hundred quality picture books that are too good to miss. The list includes books that focus on rhythm, with lyrics that invite children to chant along; folk tales and myths that teach life's important lessons; family chronicles; anthropomorphic tales, in which animals act like humans; concept books on numbers and colors; and visual feasts of form, shape, and color. The list also includes Caldecott Medal winners (judged to be the outstanding picture book in a given year) and artists who are less well known. Favorite authors whose popularity demands sequels are on the list. Many old books on the list have stood the test of time. Some books on the list have been published within the past decade. But all of them are loved by the children and adults who read them.

The New York Public Library's web site for children, *On-Lion for Kids*, provides access to the list, titled "100 Picture Books Every Child Should Know." The URL for the list is www.nypl.org/branch/kids/gloria.html. These classics should be introduced to prereaders and new readers, and reintroduced to middle-grade children as a way to expand their literary and artistic knowledge and appreciation. Young children may intuitively appreciate color, line, word, and rhyme, while older children may be taught how text and illustrations combine to make both better. Older children can also learn about the lives of authors and illustrators through biographies, web sites, telephone interviews, and author/illustrator school visits.

We have chosen selected titles from "100 Picture Books Every Child Should Know," arranged the books into six categories, and provided a few suggestions on how to use these books at home, in the classroom, or at the library.

Rhymes

Developmentally speaking, rhythmic books, such as *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, *The Wheels on the Bus*, *I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly*, *Jamberry*, *Lyle Lyle the Crocodile*, *Over in the Meadow*, *Pierre*, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear*, and *The Random House Book of Mother Goose* are useful resources for teaching and learning language. Like all poetry, these books demand to be read aloud. Toddlers and preschool children particularly enjoy repeating refrains as books are read and reread to them. After sharing *Jamberry* with children, tantalize their taste buds with a berry-tasting activity and encourage creative movement with a berry dance.

Folk tales

Folk tales are not only excellent resources for teaching listening skills, storytelling, and creative writing, but are also useful tools for introducing and sharing cultures. Tales from many lands, such as *Abuela* (Mexico), *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* (West Africa), *Two of Everything* (China), *John Henry* (United States), *Mufaro* (Africa), *The Bossy Gallito* (Cuba), *It Could Always be Worse* (Yiddish), *Mushroom in the Rain* (Russia) and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff* (Scandinavia), share universal values with young audiences and can be reintroduced to middle grades in multicultural studies. (For copies of an article about the author/illustrator Lily Toy Hong, who wrote *Two of Everything*, and her reaction to being included in the New York Public Library's

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list, write to Marsha Broadway, Editor, Children's Book and Play Review, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602-6887, Attention: Lillian Heil.)

Because their storylines are familiar to many young readers, folk tales are useful to second-language learners. For example, *The Bossy Gallito*, *The Three Little Pigs*, *Leo the Late Bloomer*, and *Ten, Nine, Eight* have been translated into Spanish. With both English and Spanish versions available, young students can hone their comprehension and translation skills.

Family Chronicles

The family chronicles listed in "100 Picture Books Every Child Should Know" include *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day*; *A Chair for my Mother*; *Leo the Late Bloomer*; and *Blueberries for Sal*. Any of these titles could be used to introduce creative writing, with students writing a story based on their own families. *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good Very Bad Day* is the perfect preface to encourage a first, second, or third grade class to write about their own worst day or for families and teachers to discuss everyday coping skills.

After reading *A Chair for My Mother*, you might help the class decide to do or make something for the comfort of an older person in the community, and have a project to raise money for that purpose. The person could be invited to the class to have the gift presented.

Family stories often contain considerable dialog and lend themselves to readers' theatre adaptations. Readers' theatre promotes fluency and expression in reading, and is great fun. Some readers' theatre scripts are available through the editorial office of *CBPR*. Contact Marsha D. Broadway, Editor, *Children's Book and Play Review*, Harold B. Lee Library, Brigham Young University, Provo, UT 84602-6887, Attention: Lillian Heil—Scripts.

Anthropomorphic Tales

Readers are delighted by anthropomorphic tales. Animals take on human roles in such books

as *Corduroy*, *Harry the Dirty Dog*, *Bread and Jam for Frances*, *Doctor DeSoto*, *Sylvester*, and *Swimmy*. Activities with *Corduroy* might include a project to repair broken toys. This project would especially lend itself to a family activity. Parents could work with children to make the old toys look like new, and then donate them to a homeless shelter. Parents and teachers might use the situation in the book to teach children what to do if they become separated from family or class in a public place.

Dr. DeSoto offers readers an opportunity to compare human teeth with animal teeth, specifically fox teeth, which play a large role in the tale of the mouse dentist and his greedy fox patient. Parents could use the humorous *Dr. DeSoto* with youngsters who have some trepidation about a dentist visit.

With *Swimmy*, a simple aquarium can be constructed from two paper plates. Replace the center of the top plate with clear plastic wrap or Mylar, and draw the undersea life on the bottom plate. When stapled together, a child's view of *Swimmy's* world is there for all to enjoy.

Concept Books

Concept books such as *Over in the Meadow* make counting fun. *Little Blue and Little Yellow*, *Mouse Paint*, and *Is it Red, Is it Yellow?* offer an opportunity to explore the science of color. If adults are willing to deal with spills, young people could be given water colored with food coloring to mix. Or, for a less messy approach children could layer sheets of colored plastic. Cut old plastic report covers in red, yellow, and blue into 3" x 5" pieces, and give each child a set to mix their own colors.

The use of colors and shapes in *Freight Train* and *Round Trip* to create a visual feast for readers. Children in primary and intermediate grades could study Eric Carle's collages, then cut out geometric shapes, and arrange them color on color, shape on shape, until objects, people, and animals come to life.

Caldecott Medal Winners

Caldecott Medal Winners have included *Make Way for Ducklings* (1942), *Sylvester* (1970), *Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People's Ears* (1976), *The Polar Express* (1986), *Grandfather's Journey* (1994), and *Rapunzel* (1998). Children in middle and upper grades could focus on their styles and compare them to each other. Try comparing the Picasso-like line drawings of Glen Rounds in *I Know An Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly* to the more realistic style of Steptoe in *Mufaro's Beautiful Daughters*. Or the changes in Steptoe's style could be traced from his earliest books to *Mufaro*, the last book published before his death. Children can learn how artists use diagonal lines, shapes, and bright colors to show excitement or calm and peace. Informational books could be used as an extension to books like *Make Way for Ducklings*. For example, Scholastic has a book called *How Ducklings Grow* by Diane Molleson published in 1993 (ISBN 0-590-45201-0), and Sybille Kalas has done a related book entitled *The Goose Family Book* (1986, Picture Book Studio USA, ISBN 0-88708-019-7).

For a further extension activity, look at the sequels of well-done children's books. *Corduroy* is followed by *A Pocket for Corduroy*. Numeroff's *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie* was followed by the amusing *If You Give a Moose a Muffin* and *If You Give a Pig a Pancake*. Don't forget the many books about authors and illustrators such as *Margaret Wise Brown Awakened by the Moon* (by Leonard S. Maraus, 1999 now in paperback, William Morrow ISBN 0-688-17188-5) or *Talking with Artists*, edited by Pat Cummings (1992, Bradbury Press, Macmillan Publishing Company, ISBN 0-02-724245-5). Cummings' book features thirteen artists, including Leo and Diane Dillon and David Wiesner, whose books are on the New York Public Library's list of one hundred.

Make lists as a class or as individuals. Create other activities for the books. Encourage children to devise ways to invite readers to enjoy these timeless classics as you celebrate good picture books and the people who created them.