

100 Books to Inspire Your Kids

A teddy bear's search for his lost button. A wimpy kid's misadventures in middle school. Whatever the plot, the first book you adored stays with you forever. *Parents* asked beloved authors for the title that opened their eyes (or their children's) to the joy of reading. The gems on this remarkable list will turn your kids into readers too.

by CATHERINE HONG / photographs by JOHNNY MILLER

Stories Children Will See Themselves In

1 “A picture book about two brown boys trying to negotiate a new way to have a family, **Stevie**, by **John Steptoe** (ages 4 to 8), grabbed me and held me. I knew this was what I'd always look for in books: captivating, realistic stories about people who were at once familiar and not familiar to me.”

—Jacqueline Woodson, author of *Brown Girl Dreaming*



2 “When my sixth-grade teacher read **Miracle's Boys**, by **Jacqueline Woodson** (ages 10+), out loud, I was so moved, not only because I was completely enthralled by the story of three Black boys growing up in Washington Heights, but also because I saw that all my classmates were just as riveted. It awakened me to the power of storytelling for a group.”

—Elizabeth Acevedo, author of *The Poet X*

3 “I related to **Corduroy**, by **Don Freeman** (ages 2 to 5), especially Lisa wanting to take home a new bear. This was probably one of my first experiences seeing loneliness in a book.”

—Brandy Colbert, author of *The Only Black Girls in Town*

4 “Learning how to read was hard for me. **Bread and Jam for Frances**, by **Russell Hoban** (ages 4 to 8), changed everything. Frances was stubborn and anxious, like me. She inspired me to dig in and crack the code of literacy.”

—Laurie Halse Anderson, author of *Shout*

5 “My teacher knew I was dyslexic, and she pulled out **The Snowy Day**, by **Ezra Jack Keats** (ages 2+), for me. What child doesn't get excited to play in the snow? Seeing Peter—a brown child—so beautifully drawn and dressed, made me happy because it allowed me to believe that I was not invisible.”

—Vanessa Brantley-Newton, author of *Just Like Me*

6 “**Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry**, by **Mildred D. Taylor** (ages 11+), was the book for me as a kid. I realized that I could be the hero of the narrative.”

—Angie Thomas, author of *The Hate U Give*

7 “When I read **Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl** (ages 10+) in my teens, I felt that she and I had much in common: We were both Jewish; we both had bushy eyebrows and dark hair; we both had complicated relationships with our mother; we both had yearnings beyond our reach. I was spellbound, and her words transported me to a world outside my own.”

—Lesléa Newman, author of *Heather Has Two Mommies*

8 “My mother bought **The Cricket in Times Square**, by **George Selden** (ages 6 to 10), for me, and I carried it with me everywhere for a while. Chester the cricket singing his heart out and someone hearing him—it moved me so.

It gave me the idea that being small didn't mean that you had to be silent, or that you wouldn't be heard.”

—Kate DiCamillo, author of *The Tale of Despereaux*

9 “My first time delving into a book where a kid my age was respected for his smarts and what he had to offer

the world was when I read the **Encyclopedia Brown series**, by **Donald J. Sobol** (ages 8 to 12). Since I was precocious and detail-oriented, like Leroy, I found the books empowering.”

—Nic Stone, author of *Clean Getaway*

10 “In fifth grade, I fell in love with hip-hop music. Mrs. Shelby, my teacher, likened LL Cool J and Run-DMC to poets from the Harlem Renaissance. She gave me **Before the Mayflower**,

by **Lerone Bennett Jr.** (ages 10+), to learn about Claude McKay and Langston Hughes. That started my thirst for consuming Black history.”

—Derrick Barnes, author of *I Am Every Good Thing*

11 “**The Day-Glo Brothers**, by **Chris Barton** (ages 7 to 10), tells the true story of how the Switzer brothers combined science and art to invent a set of colors. When my son was in kindergarten, he slept with the book. Now he's a 16-year-old STEM nerd and artist.”

—Gene Luen Yang, author of *American Born Chinese*

12 “Reading **The Arabian Nights** (ages 7+) as a child in a dictatorship, this was liberating news:

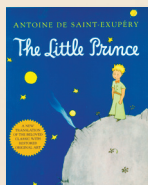
A girl—a brown girl, not a pale princess—could be a storyteller! Her tales could change the world.”

—Julia Alvarez, author of *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents*

Books That Will Grab Their Heart

13 “*Frederick*, by Leo Lionni (ages 3 to 7), feels proper for our current times. A colony of mice hibernate in a hole for the winter, but it is Frederick the mouse who keeps everyone warm with his stories. It’s the ability to find the beauty in something so simple that reveals its relevance.”
—Dan Santat, author of *The Adventures of Beekle*

14 “The book that made me a reader? *The Kid Who Only Hit Homers*, by Matt Christopher (ages 8 to 12), a story about a talented Little League player. It met me on my level and took me somewhere new.”
—Actor B. J. Novak, author of *The Book With No Pictures*



15 “*The Little Prince*, by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry (ages 10+), is one of those books where the meaning changes and deepens every time you read it. As a kid, I saw an adventure story. As an adult, I see a philosophical meditation on what’s really important in life.”
—Nicola Yoon, author of *The Sun Is Also a Star*

16 “I was fascinated with the tiny illustrated details in *The Little House*, by Virginia Lee Burton (ages 3 to 7): boys playing with toy boats in a brook, a dog running after a girl on a bicycle, and much to my envy as a little girl with a tumultuous home life,

happy families. In its message of finding joy in simpler things, that book stole my heart.”
—Sherri Duskey Rinker, author of *Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site*

17 “My first love was poetry. My mother read me ‘My Bed Is a Boat,’ from *A Child’s Garden of Verses*, by Robert Louis Stevenson (ages 4 to 8), when I was about 4. The image of my bed floating on water is one I dreamed about for years.”
—Francine Pascal, author of the *Sweet Valley High* series

18 “*Chrysanthemum*, by Kevin Henkes (ages 4 to 8), made my daughter a reader. She loved reading about that little mouse girl who felt on the outside of things.”
—Meg Medina, author of *Merci Suárez Changes Gears*

19 “During World War II, my mom, my brother, and I lived in Virginia while my dad was a foreign correspondent. We went to the library, and *The Story of Ferdinand*, by Munro Leaf (ages 3 to 5), about a bull who refused to fight in the bull rings, was one of the books I always picked. I am 81 now, and I still recall how the book helped me get through the three years before my father came home.”
—Jane Yolen, author of *Owl Moon* and 385 other books

20 “I remember how much I loved hearing my mother read *The House at Pooh Corner*, by A. A. Milne (ages 8 to 12), to my sister and me. The illustrations were inspiring. The line drawings looked like something I could do myself with a pencil, and yet they are masterly.”
—Emily Arnold McCully, author of *Mirette on the High Wire*

Epic Fantasies to Transport Them

21 “My parents read to me almost every night, usually something Roald Dahl-y, brimming with wit and adventure, but along came *Bridge to Terabithia*, by Katherine Paterson (ages 9+). This intimate story involved a budding friendship between two kids and the make-believe world they create in the forest. The unexpected turn it takes took my breath away.”
—Actor Neil Patrick Harris, author of *The Magic Misfits: The Fourth Suit*

22 “I liked the *Chocolate Factory* a lot, but in *Charlie and the Great Glass Elevator*, by Roald Dahl (ages 8 to 12), Charlie and Willy Wonka go to space, where they fight aliens who have infested a giant luxury cruise spaceship. It blew my mind how far out Dahl was going with his imagination, and it showed me that you could dig deeper into a story’s world.”
—Nathan Hale, author of the *Nathan Hale’s Hazardous Tales* series

23 “*Island of the Aunts*, by Eva Ibbotson (ages 8 to 12), about a trio of elderly women who kidnap children to help them run an island of mythical creatures, was all my childhood dreams—and nightmares—in one plot.”
—Actor Chris Colfer, author of the *Land of Stories* series and the forthcoming *A Tale of Witchcraft...*



24 “I remember exactly where I was when I read *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll (ages 8 to 11). I was 10, reclined beneath a mimosa tree covered in pink blossoms. The world I experienced down the rabbit hole was pure

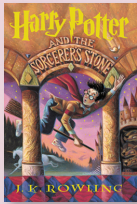
magic. That day I became a reader and possibly a writer.”
—Sue Monk Kidd, author of *The Book of Longings*

25 “I loved escaping into the world of *The Borrowers*, by Mary Norton (ages 8 to 12), just as much as I loved the way in which their world escaped into mine, making everything around me look adventurous. Puddles became lakes, shoes became boats, and I could lose an afternoon imagining how I would scale the fearsome obstacle course of toys if I were only as tall as a water glass.”
—Susan Choi, author of *Camp Tiger*

26 “*My Father’s Dragon*, by Ruth Stiles Gannett (ages 6 to 9), was the first book my 6-year-old read on his own and loved. He finished the sequel, and when I handed him the third book, *The Dragons of Blueand*, he let out a little ‘Yes!’ of excitement.”
—Jeffrey Brown, author of *Darth Vader and Son*

27 “My uncle passed his copy of *The Boys King Arthur*, by Sidney Lanier (ages 9+), to me when I was 9. The stories were heroic and full of the flaws of being human. N. C. Wyeth’s illustrations—sunlight and shadows on armor, mist on magic water—almost became characters themselves.”
—David Shannon, author of *No, David!*

28 “When I was 12, I started reading my older brother’s copy of **The Fellowship of the Ring**, by J. R. R. Tolkien (ages 12+). It was like a brick, and I loved every page. At the end of it, I looked up and thought, ‘Hey, I just read a 400-page book. Wow.’”
—Chris Raschka, author of *Side by Side*



29 “I was 11 when a family friend sent me **Harry Potter and the Sorcerer’s Stone**, by J. K. Rowling (ages 9+). It was the first time a story made the world beyond the pages disappear. I’ve never looked back.”
—Victoria Schwab, author of *The City of Ghosts* series

30 “Everyone at my house loves **Sideways Stories From Wayside School**, by Louis Sachar (ages 8 to 12). The linked stories are absurdist and filled with vivid details—it’s like David Sedaris for kids.”
—Curtis Sittenfeld, author of *Prep*

31 “For an imperfect girl like me, **The Secret Garden**, by Frances Hodgson Burnett (ages 9+), showed that difficult people could grow and change and be redeemable. It prompted me to write books whose heroines and heroes could

be pains in the tush but also likable and even lovable.”
—Judith Viorst, author of *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day*

32 “As an aspiring babysitter in third grade, I was enchanted by the implausible idea of two girls stranded on an island with four babies to care for. I read **Baby Island**, by Carol Ryrie Brink (ages 9 to 12), countless times, wishing it could happen to me, knowing it couldn’t, loving the book anyway, and realizing this was what reading was about.”
—Ann M. Martin, author of *The Baby-Sitters Club* series

33 “My dad bought the beautifully illustrated book **The Little Grey Men**, by B.B. (ages 8 to 12), for me when I was 8 or 9. It’s about three gnomes searching for their long-lost brother. Aside from being a rattling good adventure story, it’s a wonderful sort of nature study, following gnomes through the seasons.”
—Actor Julie Andrews, author of *Home Work: A Memoir of My Hollywood Years*



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Series That Hook Kids for the Long Haul

46 “Even though her life was quite different than my own, I used to imagine that one day, I could solve mysteries just like she did. The **Nancy Drew series**, by Carolyn Keene (ages 9 to 12), felt like a time machine to me, letting me imagine what my life might be like when I grew up.”
—Supreme Court Justice Sonia Sotomayor, author of *Just Ask! Be Different, Be Brave, Be You*

47 “The **Diary of a Wimpy Kid series**, by Jeff Kinney (ages 8 to 12), made my two sons readers. They even knew the date when the next Wimpy Kid book was due to come out!”
—Jerry Craft, author of *New Kid*

48 “My favorite books in elementary school were about real kids, like Ann M. Martin’s *Baby-Sitters Club* series and all things Judy Blume. Blume’s **Just as Long as We’re Together** (ages 10+) was a standout. The characters are flawed and complicated and the ending doesn’t feel tidy, which is how friendships are when you’re 12. And every age thereafter, come to think of it.”
—Raina Telgemeier, author of *Smile*

49 “I tried to read all of the **Hardy Boys series**, by Franklin W. Dixon (ages 9 to 12), keeping a log of which ones I checked out of the library. The bright-blue spines, menacing covers, dated detective argot: I was obsessed.”
—Mac Barnett, coauthor of *The Terrible Two* series

50 “My introduction to adventure was the **Magic Tree House series** (ages 7 to 12), by Mary Pope Osborne. It’s about a brother and sister who find a time-traveling treehouse in their backyard and use it to go back in time. It felt like there were hundreds of these books, and I loved every second spent reading them.”
—Tomi Adeyemi, author of *Children of Blood and Bone*

Twice the Kudos for Maurice Sendak

51 “Barbara and I asked our mom to read **In the Night Kitchen** (ages 4 to 8) over and over. Those images of Mickey getting baked into the bread, swimming in the milk, and crowing like a rooster have never left me. I loved the dreamlike quality of the words and pictures and that it was a little scary, but in a friendly way.”
—Jenna Bush Hager, coauthor of *Sisters First*

52 “My mind was blown when I saw Max’s bedroom from **Where the Wild Things Are** (ages 3 to 5) turn into a forest. How did that magic happen with just three simple page turns and four images? From that point on, all I wanted was to become a children’s book author and illustrator so I could figure it out.”
—Marla Frazee, author of *The Boss Baby*

BOARD BOOKS BELOVED BY PARENTS EDITORS (AND THEIR BABIES)

- 34** *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, by Eric Carle
- 35** *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault
- 36** *The Mitten*, by Jan Brett
- 37** *Pat the Bunny*, by Dorothy Kunhardt
- 38** *Harold and the Purple Crayon*, by Crockett Johnson
- 39** *Goodnight Moon*, by Margaret Wise Brown
- 40** *Guess How Much I Love You*, by Sam McBratney
- 41** *Elmer*, by David McKee
- 42** *The Runaway Bunny*, by Margaret Wise Brown
- 43** *The Little Engine That Could*, by Watty Piper
- 44** *Blankie*, by Leslie Patricelli
- 45** *Where Is Baby’s Belly Button?* by Karen Katz



PROP STYLING BY RANDI BROOKMAN HARRIS; BOOK COVERS: COURTESY OF THE PUBLISHERS; PREVIOUS SPREAD, GLASSES, VERY FRENCH GANGSTERS.

Comics & Other Funny Stories

53 “The ‘Peanuts’ comics, by **Charles M. Schulz** (ages 8+), made me want to write things that contain comedy with melancholy and heart.”

—**Jory John**, author of *The Good Egg* and *The Bad Seed*

54 “I bought *Imogene’s Antlers*, by **David Small** (ages 3 to 7), with my own money in second grade. The story and art were so funny and got me excited about writing and drawing my own books too.”

—**Lauren Castillo**, author of *Our Friend Hedgehog*

55 “When I was 5 and my sister was 7, I didn’t know how to read. I watched as she lay on the couch, giggling and refusing to tell me why. I sulked and vowed that my future would hold the paradise of reading *Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle*,

by **Betty MacDonald** (ages 8 to 12), on the couch. It did.”

—**Annie Barrows**, author of the *Ivy + Bean* series

56 “As a kid, I collected soda bottles and turned them in for a nickel, which allowed me to buy comic books. My favorites were ‘*Prince Valiant*’ comics, by **Hal Foster**. Being courageous and determined became a mantra for me growing up in a poor, segregated community.”

—**Jewell Parker Rhodes**, author of *Black Brother, Black Brother*

57 “My children and I read the *Arabel and Mortimer* series, by **Joan Aiken** (ages 5 to 10), aloud together over and over.

They were just insane for it, laughing harder each time.”

—**Sara Pennypacker**, author of the *Clementine* series

Memorable Books for Beginning Readers

58 “My daughter, Mattie, never got tired of *Wacky Wednesday*, by **Dr. Seuss** (ages 3 to 7). You have to count all the things that are ‘wrong’ in the pictures, so she would laugh while counting. It’s one of our favorite memories.”

—**Melissa de la Cruz**, author of the *Descendants* series

59 “My 5-year-old daughter is just figuring out how to read, and the book she’s learning with is *Frog and Toad*, by **Arnold Lobel** (ages 4 to 8).

The language is simple, but the stories are fun and often profound. I love them as much as she does.”

—**Matt de la Peña**, author of *Last Stop on Market Street*

60 “My mother did something clever when I was 4 years old. Every day, she wrote a word on an index card for me to learn.

Big, Little, Dog, Hat. After a month, she handed me *Go, Dog. Go!* by **P. D. Eastman** (ages 3 to 7), and told me to read it to her. I remember holding it in my hands and saying, ‘I can’t read this.’ But it turned out she had taught me every word inside. It was a proud moment in my life, and to this day I long to party inside a tree.”

—**Nick Bruel**, author of the *Bad Kitty* series

64 “Everything about *Little Bear*, by **Else Holmelund Minarik** (ages 4 to 8), was perfect to me—the shape, the way it felt in my hands, the magical simple cover. Add to that the gentle rhythm of Minarik’s writing, the evocative Maurice Sendak drawings, the perfect relationship of mother and child.”

—**Sandra Boynton**, author of *Barnyard Dance!*

61 “Each story in the *Elephant & Piggie* books, by **Mo Willems** (ages 4 to 8), is a fast-moving drama, and the characters have distinct personalities: Elephant, the sky-is-falling worrier; Piggie, the glass-half-full optimist. I read aloud the part of Elephant, my wife reads the part of Piggie, and my daughter loves watching us act it out in scenery-chewing, ham-it-up fashion.”

—**Ransom Riggs**, author of *Miss Peregrine’s Home for Peculiar Children*

62 “As a little girl, I would giggle at how Amelia from the *Amelia Bedelia* series, by **Peggy Parish** (ages 4 to 8), would take her chores literally.

To this day, I think about what a clever device it was to illustrate how language can be misunderstood.”

—**CBS Evening News** journalist **Norah O’Donnell**, coauthor of *Baby Love*

63 “Our son, Liam, has started to get excited about the idea of stringing sounds together to make words. *Hop on Pop*, by **Dr. Seuss** (ages 2 to 5), has been the most helpful. The storytelling is silly, and it contains many two- and three-letter words that are easy to sound out.”

—**Designer Lauren Conrad**, author of the *L.A. Candy* series

Irresistible Wordplay

65 “Around 9, 10-ish, 11, *The Phantom Tollbooth*, by **Norton Juster** (ages 8 to 12), was my go-to book. The main character travels to ‘Dictionopolis,’ a town where people go to buy words and letters that each have their own flavor, aroma, and texture.”

—**Emma Walton Hamilton**, coauthor of the *Very Fairy Princess* series



66 “The genius of Dr. Seuss was his ability to distill serious messages into simple rhyme.

You have a heart of stone if you’re not moved by *The Lorax* (ages 5 to 9), and its message about environmentalism is even more relevant today.”

—**Cressida Cowell**, author of the *How to Train Your Dragon* series

67 “I struggled in school. Reading a book was like being served bitter spinach. All that changed when I was introduced to *Selected Poems of Langston Hughes* (ages 12+). The poems weren’t reading. They were sweet wordplay, letter music, possibilities on paper!”

—**Andrea Davis Pinkney**, author of *The Red Pencil*

68 “*Marvin K. Mooney Will You Please Go Now!* by **Dr. Seuss** (ages 2 to 5), ignited my passion for words. I vividly recall my parents reading the rhyming story to me.”

—**Actor Gabrielle Union**, author of *Welcome to the Party*



Read-Aloud Chapter Books for Bedtime

69 “In third grade, the ‘library lady’ handed me *Hitty, Her First Hundred Years*, by Rachel Field (ages 8 to 12) and said, ‘I think you’ll like this.’ I’m still in love with the clumsy-looking carved wooden doll and her hundred years of adventures... some 80 years later.”

—The late Tomie dePaola, author of *Strega Nona*

70 “*Anne of Green Gables*, by L. M. Montgomery (ages 8 to 12), made me a reader because of the pathos, the wry humor, and Anne herself, who breaks a slate over Gilbert Blythe’s head. I was an obedient child (hmm...), but I wished we still had slates and that I had nerve!”

—Gail Carson Levine, author of *Ella Enchanted*

71 “When I was in second grade, the student teacher read aloud a chapter a day from *The Search for Delicious*, by Natalie Babbitt (ages 8 to 12). I was entranced by it and looked forward to the reading. When the story was finished, I took the book out of the library and started reading it on my own.”

—Grace Lin, author of *A Big Bed for Little Snow*



72 “I wasn’t much of a reader until I met Charlotte and Wilbur in *Charlotte’s Web*, by E. B. White (ages 8 to 12). I think it’s

76 “My love for *The Hobbit*, by J. R. R. Tolkien (ages 12+), was sparked by an animated feature that ran during prime time when I was in fifth grade. I wanted more than the movie could give me, so I grabbed a copy of Tolkien’s hefty novel from the library and dove in. I was hooked from the first line.”

—Jeff Kinney, author of the *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* series

fair to say that a spider and a pig forever changed my life.”

—Katherine Applegate, author of *Wishtree*

73 “In fifth grade, I never knew books could be like *James and the Giant Peach*, by Roald Dahl (ages 8 to 12). A little weird. Kinda quirky. A bit naughty. Like, bad grown-ups got what they deserved! I loved it.”

—Aaron Reynolds, author of *Creepy Carrots!*

74 “*Stuart Little*, by E. B. White (ages 8 to 12), is such an odd book—a mouse born to human parents—but I don’t remember questioning this too much. I loved watching him figure out how to live a human life in a mouse-size body and wished for a motor car just like he had that would take me anywhere.”

—Veera Hiranandani, author of *The Night Diary*

75 “In third grade, I would come home from school and read a book from the *Uncle Wiggily series*, by Howard R. Garis (ages 8 to 12). I loved the stories mostly because they were so kindhearted and often involved tasty snacks. At least that’s how I remember them.”

—Mary Pope Osborne, author of the *Magic Tree House series*

GRAPHIC NOVELS FOR THE WIN

77 “I couldn’t wait for my daughter to fall in love with *A Wrinkle in Time*, by Madeleine L’Engle (ages 10 to 14), just as I had as a kid. I handed Lucy the book when she was 8.

‘Boring,’ she sniffed. I tried again when she was 9, and 10, and 11. Nothing worked until I discovered Hope Larson’s graphic novelization of the book. Finally, my daughter was enraptured. She finished the graphic novel and couldn’t get to the actual book fast enough.”

—Jennifer Weiner, author of the *Littlest Bigfoot series*

OTHER GRAPHIC NOVELS THAT WEINER’S KIDS LOVE

- 78** *Ms. Marvel Volume 1: No Normal*, by G. Willow Wilson and Adrian Alphona (ages 13+)
- 79** *Anya’s Ghost*, by Vera Brosgol (ages 12+)
- 80** *Lumberjanes*, by Noelle Stevenson and others (ages 9+)
- 81** *Persepolis*, by Marjane Satrapi (ages 13+)

Captivating Older-Kid Reads

82 “The common denominator with books I loved growing up is visceral food scenes. I recall when Brian in *Hatchet*, by Gary Paulsen (ages 10+), gets his hands on one of the foolbirds and how he roasts it over a spit. All kids like to imagine life without adults, surviving off their own wits and know-how.”

—Jenny Han, author of the *To All the Boys I’ve Loved Before series*

83 “I wanted to be a detective after reading *The Adventures of Sherlock Holmes*, by Sir Arthur Conan Doyle (ages 12+). When I visited London with my parents, I made them take me to 221 Baker Street. Disappointingly, there was only a bank there, but my love of stories obviously stuck!”

—Cassandra Clare, author of *City of Bones*



84 “Why did *Black Boy*, by Richard Wright (ages 14+), make me a reader? Simple. On the second page, young Richard sets the curtains on fire and burns his mother’s house down. That’s pretty much all it took.”

—Jason Reynolds, author of *Long Way Down*

85 “The one-legged pirate captain Long John Silver from *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson (ages 12+), was one of my heroes. It was my first encounter with the fun side of evil. When my friends and I played pirate, I pretended

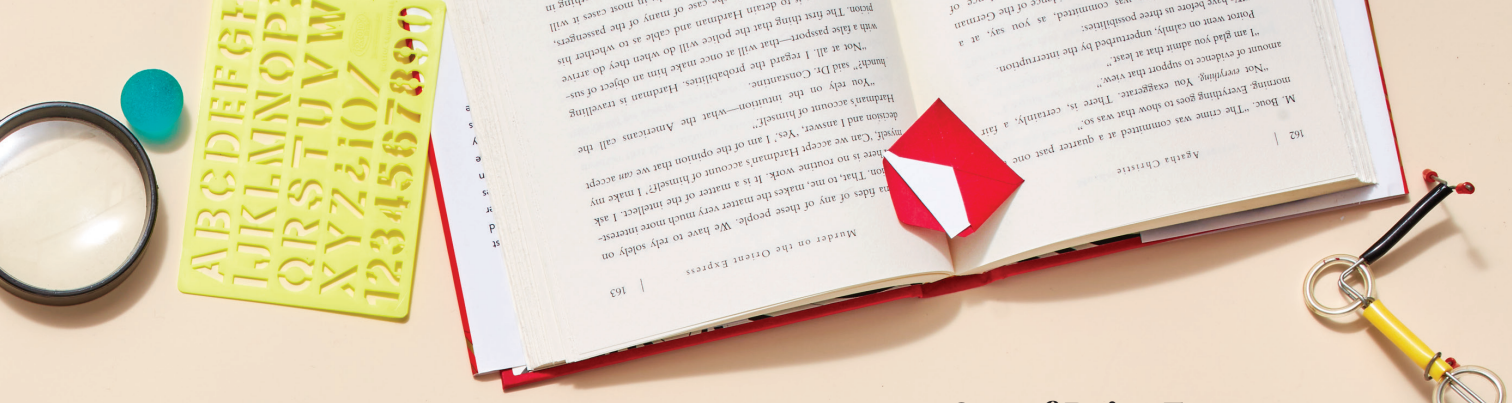
I had a parrot on my shoulder and a peg leg like my hero. And I began searching the library for every pirate story I could find.”

—R. L. Stine, author of the *Goosebumps series*

86 “*Jamaica Inn*, by Daphne du Maurier (ages 12+), was the first novel I read all the way through without being told to. I realized that reading, which I had studiously avoided most of my childhood, could actually be entertaining if you gave it a chance.”

—David Macaulay, author of *The Way Things Work*





87 "I loved books until I was 10, when the adults in my life began to tell me what to read. Two years later, while cleaning up our garage, I stumbled upon **The Greatest: My Own Story**, by **Muhammad Ali** (ages 12+), and read all 400 pages in one night."
—**Kwame Alexander**, author of *The Undeclared*

88 "My childhood was tumultuous, but mysteries were satisfying and grounding. I remember loving **Murder on the Orient Express**, by **Agatha Christie** (ages 12+). It was so complex and rich in detail. It also had the satisfaction of the big reveal at the end. That was more reassuring than a treacherously happily ever after."
—**Veronica Chambers**, author of *Finish the Fight!*

89 "Based on the biblical story of Esther, **Behold Your Queen!** by **Gladys Malvern** (ages 14+), was full of intrigue and romance that my Sunday-school teachers could never imagine. It also introduced me to

92 "It wasn't until high school that I became a real lover of books. Each of the stories in **Nine Stories**, by **J. D. Salinger** (ages 14+), was enjoyable to read but then always left me pondering as to what was the true meaning. What was the author trying to say? No book had ever challenged me like that before."
—**Louis Sachar**, author of *Sideways Stories From Wayside School*

the world of historical fiction, which I gulped down."
—**Sharon M. Draper**, author of *Out of My Mind*

90 "Long before Jack Skellington, there was creepy, charming, eloquent Carapace Clavicle Moundshroud, guiding wide-eyed boys through all the delightfully macabre traditions of Halloween. **The Halloween Tree**, by **Ray Bradbury** (ages 12+), intrigued me because light and dark could exist side by side."
—**David Yoon**, author of *Frankly in Love*



91 "**Tuck Everlasting**, by **Natalie Babbitt** (ages 10+), left me breathless. My brain raced to keep up with its sophistication, pushing me to a new level of understanding."
—**Soman Chainani**, author of *The School for Good and Evil* series

Out-of-Print Faves (Get 'em Used!)

94 "I pored over the oversize, full-colored **The Flight of Dragons**, by **Peter Dickinson** (ages 6+), which posited, from an academic but still lighthearted perspective, that dragons were real. There were passages and even diagrams that proved how they flew and why they escaped the fossil record."
—**Dave Eggers**, author of *Most of the Better Natural Things in the World*

95 "I checked out **The Big Book of Cats**, by **Gladys Emerson Cook** (ages 4 to 8), every week in kindergarten. The lushly painted cat portraits with brightly colored eyes and fluffy fur were so engaging, the words were just frosting on a cat cake."
—**Matt Lamothe**, author of *This Is How We Do It*

96 "My grandfather bought **The Ruby Knight**, by **David Eddings** (ages 8 to 12), for me when I was 10, introducing me to the world of fantasy. It had adventure, magic, monsters, swords, and a cool invented world."
—**Christopher Paolini**, author of *The Inheritance Cycle* series

97 "In **The Man With the Purple Eyes**, by **Charlotte Zolotow** (ages 6 to 8), the illustrator depicted the main character, Anna, with black hair, which meant that Anna looked a little like me.

When my daughter was born, I named her Anna after that character!"
—**Linda Sue Park**, author of *A Long Walk to Water*

98 "I never met Astrid Lindgren, but she was my best friend through childhood. Still is. Her book **The Brothers Lionheart** (ages 8+) is the greatest of adventures about tyranny and dragons, life and death, friendship and bravery."
—**Fredrik Backman**, author of *A Man Called Ove*

99 "I had the entire Sweet Pickles collection on my bookshelf, and **Very Worried Walrus**, by **Richard Hefter** (ages 8 to 12), is the one I read again and again. I was very, very worried all the time. When I read that book, it felt as if someone understood me. Even if it was a walrus who was afraid to ride a bicycle."
(Available as an e-book.)
—**Erin Entrada Kelly**, author of *Hello, Universe*

100 "When I was in fourth grade, I found **City Boy**, by **Herman Wouk** (ages 8 to 12), on my parents' bookshelf. I thought it would be a book for children because of the title, but it was a 'grown-up' story, no pictures, with rich, complex characters. I had never known reading could offer such a rewarding experience!"
(Available as an e-book.)
—**W. Bruce Cameron**, author of *A Dog's Purpose*

93 RAMONA QUIMBY



When thinking about books that cemented a love for reading, many authors mentioned this Beverly Cleary series that began in 1955. "Nothing holds up like Ramona," says **Rainbow Rowell**, author of *Eleanor & Park*. "Ramona the Pest is the first book I can remember that just spoke to me on a soul level. Ramona is messy and vulnerable and funny. Her world feels real and relevant." Adds **Daniel Handler**,

author of the *Series of Unfortunate Events* series: "Cleary's anarchism, the unpredictable arc of the story, and the sneaky truths it held sealed my fate: I gave my life to literature." **Kevin Henkes**, author of *The Year of Billy Miller*, credits the Ramona series for inspiring his son and daughter. "I remember with clarity and fondness reading Ramona aloud. Their enjoyment was obvious, their laughter infectious."

