Preface

*Essentials of Children's Literature* is a brief, affordable, comprehensive textbook with rich resources—a true compendium of information about children's literature. It is tailored to a survey course in children's literature but is also suitable as a companion text in an integrated language arts course because of its brevity and affordability.

The primary focus of a survey course in children's literature should be reading children's trade books, not reading an exhaustive textbook about children's books. Students in such a course need direct experience with books—reading independently, reading aloud, discussing, writing, comparing, criticizing, evaluating, and connecting to their lives as well as exploring ways of sharing books with children.

One of our goals is to awaken or reawaken the joy of reading for college-level students. This reawakening can happen only by experiencing the pleasure and excitement of reading excellent trade books. At the same time, the body of knowledge about literature and about teaching literature to children can be conveyed most efficiently through a textbook. *Essentials of Children's Literature* presents this body of knowledge in a clear, concise, direct narrative along with brief lists, examples, figures, and tables, thus freeing class time for involvement with literature.

The eighth edition of *Essentials of Children's Literature* heralds two milestones. It was over two decades ago that we began conceptualizing and planning this book. Much has changed since the first edition to influence the world of children's literature, and although successive editions have reflected these changes, the book remains, in essence, true to our initial concept—a comprehensive but brief alternative to compendium textbooks. The second milestone is that Kathy G. Short, professor of children's literature at the University of Arizona, has moved into the role of senior author for this edition. Kathy's research in global children's literature and intercultural understanding, children's dialogue about literature, and inquiry-based curriculum is internationally known.

**New to This Edition**

Our goals in revising this book were twofold: to make it as fresh and current as possible and to produce a brief text without sacrificing content. We have added many new children's book titles and retained older titles most likely to be known and appreciated by students. Features within chapters—Milestones, Excellent Books to Read Aloud, Notable Authors and Illustrators, and Invitations for Further Investigation—have been updated to include important developments, recent outstanding children's titles, outstanding new creators of children's books, and current issues and topics related to the field. We have reorganized some of the content in the chapters and moved sections from one chapter to another to create a stronger structure and flow to the text.
We have also integrated a strong focus on global and multicultural titles and authors throughout all of the chapters.

The most important revision is integrating connections to the Common Core State Standards throughout the chapters. For example, we have added a focus on a specific literary element and a reader connection to each of the genre chapters to encourage close reading, a discussion of text complexity, an expanded discussion of informational books, and an analysis of how the standards connect to the use of literature in classrooms. In addition, the Invitations for Further Investigation have been expanded to provide suggestions for close reading and text analysis related to the focus of that chapter. Revisions to individual chapters are as follows:

**Chapter 1: Learning about Story and Literature**
- Added a discussion of the role of story in making meaning of our lives
- Updated sections on the value of literature in children's lives and in their learning
- Moved the section on why reading and literature are at risk in our society from Chapter 2 to Chapter 1

**Chapter 2: Learning about Children and Literature**
- Reorganized the chapter to focus on strategies for knowing the child and for knowing books
- Included new examples of children's literature titles appropriate for the various stages of children's development
- Added information on text complexity as defined by the Common Core State Standards
- Moved information on book awards, review journals, and professional organizations from Chapter 3 to Chapter 2
- Moved the description of the political context and standards to Chapter 12

**Chapter 3: Learning about Literature**
- Updated the discussion of New Criticism and Reader Response as related to Common Core State Standards
- Included new book titles in the literary elements section
- Added a new section on knowledge of literature as a discipline as a frame for the features in the chapters

**Chapter 4: Picture Books and Illustration**
- Updated discussion of the visual elements, artistic media, artistic styles, and book design
- Added a section on the Postmodern Picture Book
- Updated titles of picture books throughout the chapter and in the Recommended Picture Books list
- Updated Recommended Lists of Transitional Books and Easy-to-Read Books due to their emphasis within Common Core State Standards
Chapter 5: Poetry
- Updated examples of poems and types of poetry books
- Updated Recommended Poetry Books list
- Added Reader Connections section on reading and writing poetry in the classroom

Chapter 6: Traditional Literature
- Revised discussion of evaluation and selection with an additional focus on plot
- Updated Recommended Traditional Literature list
- Added Reader Connections section on storytelling in the classroom

Chapter 7: Modern Fantasy
- Revised discussion of evaluation and selection with an additional focus on theme
- Updated discussion of fantasy books often challenged by censors
- Updated examples of types of modern fantasy and titles for recommended book lists
- Included Reader Connections section on censorship (moved from Chapter 12)

Chapter 8: Realistic Fiction
- Revised discussion of evaluation and selection with an additional focus on character
- Updated examples of types of realistic fiction and of titles in Recommended Realistic Fiction Books list
- Added Reader Connections section on character education with examples of paired texts to examine character traits

Chapter 9: Historical Fiction and Biography
- Revised discussion of evaluation and selection with an additional focus on setting and point of view
- Added Reader Connections section on developing an understanding of historical contexts using jackdaws
- Updated Recommended Historical Fiction and Biography Books lists by historical time period

Chapter 10: Informational Books
- Expanded discussion of types of informational books and their features and structures
- Revised discussion of evaluation and selection with an additional focus on style
- Added Reader Connections section on pairing informational books with a fiction book
- Updated examples of types of informational books and Recommended Informational Books list

Chapter 11: Literature for a Diverse Society
- Highlighted curriculum that is culturally responsive (finding one's own culture within education), culturally expansive (going beyond one's own culture), and culturally critical (addressing critical literacy and social justice education)
- Updated Recommended Book lists for Multicultural and International Literature
Preface

Chapter 12: Literature in the Curriculum

- Completely reorganized chapter with a major section on the Politics of Literacy and Literature that addresses Common Core State Standards and common misunderstandings of these standards
- Revised and updated sections on planning a literature curriculum, integrating literature into a literacy curriculum, and evaluating a literature curriculum
- Updated tables on important studies on literature and reading and literature and writing
- Added conceptual planning webs on journeys and refugees

Chapter 13: Engaging Children with Literature

- Organized chapter into sections on Reading Widely for Personal Purposes, Reading Critically to Inquire about the World, and Reading Strategically to Learn about Literacy
- Added more discussion of plays and resources for plays
- Updated discussion of digital books and e-books
- Updated children's book examples and websites

Appendixes

- Appendix A, Children's Book Awards, updated to include award winners and honor books for the years 2009–2012
- Appendix B, Professional Resources, updated to reflect the latest titles and editions
- Appendix C, Children's Magazines, updated to include new magazines and to reflect current magazine content, intended audience, website, and ordering information

Supplements for Instructors and Students

The following supplements comprise an outstanding array of resources that facilitate learning about children's literature. For more information, ask your local Allyn & Bacon Merrill Education representative or contact the Allyn & Bacon Merrill Faculty Field Support Department at 1-800-526-0485. For technology support, please contact technical support directly at 1-800-677-6337 or http://247.pearsoned.com.

Instructor’s Manual and Test Bank

The instructor's manual features multiple syllabi of typical survey courses in children's literature. The test bank includes multiple-choice, matching, fill-in-the-blank, short answer, and essay questions. This supplement has been written by the text authors. (Available for download from the Instructor Resource Center at www.pearsonhighered.com/irc.)
MyEducationKit™

Dynamic Resources Meeting Your Needs

MyEducationKit is a dynamic website that connects the concepts addressed in the text with effective teaching practice. Plus, it's easy to use and integrate into assignments and courses. Visit the website to access a variety of multimedia resources geared to meet the diverse teaching and learning needs of instructors and students.

Pearson's Children's and Young Adult Literature Database

A searchable database of thousands of excellent children's literature titles comes with the MyEducationKit. This database allows users to find books in every genre, by hundreds of authors and illustrators, by awards won, by year published, by topic and description, as well as many other search options. In the Assignments and Activities section of the MyEducationKit site, users will learn how to use the database to:

- Create text sets to accommodate lesson needs.
- Develop an individualized reading list.
- Pull together trade books to enrich a math, science, or social studies unit.
- Prepare an author or illustrator study.

Assignments and Activities

Designed to save instructors preparation time and enhance student understanding, these assignable exercises show concepts in action (through database use, video, cases, and/or student and teacher artifacts). They help students synthesize and apply concepts and strategies they read about in the book.

General Resources on MyEducationKit

The Resources section on MyEducationKit is designed to help students pass their licensure exams, put together effective portfolios and lesson plans, prepare for and navigate the first year of their teaching careers, and understand key educational standards, policies, and laws.

This section includes:

- **Licensure Exams:** Contains guidelines for passing the Praxis exam. The *Practice Test Exam* includes practice multiple-choice questions, case study questions, and video case studies with sample questions.
- **Lesson Plan Builder:** Helps students create and share lesson plans.
- **Licensure and Standards:** Provides links to state licensure standards and national standards.
- **Beginning Your Career:** Offers tips, advice, and valuable information on:
  - Resume Writing and Interviewing: Expert advice on how to write impressive resumes and prepare for job interviews.
  - Your First Year of Teaching: Practical tips on setting up a classroom, managing student behavior, and planning for instruction and assessment.
• Law and Public Policies: Includes specific directives and requirements educators need to understand under the No Child Left Behind Act and the Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004.

Visit www.myeducationkit.com for a demonstration of this exciting new online teaching resource.

Acknowledgments

We particularly want to acknowledge the contributions of Desiree W. Cueto at the University of Arizona to this edition. Desiree did the background research on new book titles, research, and trends that provided the basis for updating and revising this edition, as well as serving as a sounding board for reorganizing and revising the chapters. Her thinking and ideas are woven throughout this text and made an invaluable contribution to our writing and consideration of new potentials and structures.

We gratefully acknowledge the reviewers of the eighth edition: Terry Diana Benton, Youngstown State University; Brenda Cole, Columbia College; Gail Ditchman, Moraine Valley Community College; Renee L. Funke, Jamestown Community College; and Karen Guerrero, Mesa Community College.

We are also indebted to David Wiesner for the cover art for this edition of Essentials of Children's Literature. His art underscores the wonder and flights of imagination that books inspire in the lives of children.
Part 1 introduces you to the field of children’s literature. These chapters will support you in learning how to read, select, and evaluate children’s books.

Chapter 1 defines children’s literature and examines the role of story and books in the lives of children. Stories fill our daily lives and are the way in which we make sense of our experiences. Literature thus plays an essential role in children’s lives, inviting children into new experiences that provide them with important connections and understandings that go beyond entertainment and instruction. Overlooking this personal purpose for reading can have personal and societal implications.

Chapter 2 emphasizes the need to know both children and books in order to connect children with books that are significant in their lives and learning. Knowing children includes general guidelines for the types of literature likely to appeal to children as they develop from year to year, strategies for determining children’s reading interests, and the factors to consider in evaluating text complexity. Knowing books involves building a knowledge of resources for book selection, including review journals, professional websites, and major awards, in order to select a balance and variety of books for children as well as understanding why children resist reading.

Approaches to studying and interpreting literature, elements of fiction, and categories of literature are treated extensively in Chapter 3. The chapter concludes with a table of literary genres and their locations within this text.

Examples of notable books are provided throughout this text, but we do not include lengthy plot summaries or book reviews. We believe that more is gained from reading and discussing children’s books themselves than reading about the books in a lengthy text.
Reading

We get no good
By being ungenerous even to a book,
And calculating profits . . . so much help
By so much reading. It is rather when
We gloriously forget ourselves and plunge
Soul-forward, headlong, into a book’s profound,
Impassioned for its beauty and salt of truth—
’Tis then we get the right good from a book.

—Elizabeth Browning
A child leans forward, head cupped in hands, eyes wide with anticipation, listening to a story. Whether that child is seated beside an open fire in ancient times, on a rough bench in a medieval fairground, or on the story rug in a modern-day classroom, this image signals the same message—children love a good story.

**Definition of Children’s Literature**

This book is about literature for children from infancy to early adolescence, written for you as teachers, librarians, and parents. In these roles, you will have many opportunities to invite children to engage with good books. This text will help you become acquainted with these books and the criteria to consider in selecting a range of books for children.

Children's books, first and foremost, are literature. Literature is not written to teach something, but to illuminate what it means to be human and to make accessible the most fundamental experiences of life—love, hope, loneliness, despair, fear, and belonging. Literature is the imaginative shaping of experience and thought into the forms and structures of language. Children read literature to experience life, and their experiences inside the world of a story challenge them to think in new ways about their lives and world.

More specifically, **children's literature** is good-quality trade books for children from birth to early adolescence, covering topics of relevance and interest to children through prose and poetry, fiction and nonfiction. They are the books that children see as reflecting their life experiences, understandings, and emotions. This definition contains key concepts that will help you find your way around the more than 250,000 children's titles published in the last decade and currently in print (Children's Books In Print, 2012) and the more than 20,000 new children's titles being published annually in the U.S. (Library and Book Trade Almanac, 2012), as well as the additional thousands of children's books published worldwide each year. In addition, children's books are now being published in a range of electronic formats, including interactive digital books, books on e-readers, and applications on smartphones and tablets. These formats are not in competition with print books, but instead offer different kinds of experiences and potentials for children to connect with literature.

**Content**

Children's books are about the full range of experiences of childhood from the difficult to the exciting. Whether these experiences are set in the past, present, or future, they should be relevant to children today. The content of children's books includes amazingly diverse and interesting topics, including dinosaurs, Egyptian mummies, and world records. This content can be expressed in prose or poetry. If the literary work is prose, it can be in the form of fiction (an invented story), nonfiction (factual), or a combination of the two.

The manner in which content is treated is significant to children. Childhood stories that are forthright, humorous, or suspenseful are appropriate for young readers; stories about childhood that are nostalgic or overly sentimental are inappropriate and written for adults. The content should authentically reflect diverse cultural experiences and not contain stereotypical images. When stories show children as victims of natural and human-made disasters, they should contain some hint of hope for a better future rather than only depict the hopelessness and despair of the moment. An element of hope does not mean that all stories have “happy endings” where all turns
out well at the end. Many children have experienced difficult life situations and know that always having a happy ending is unrealistic.

Teachers and librarians distinguish between the terms textbook and trade book. A textbook, by design and content, is for the purpose of instruction, such as the basal reader used in many classrooms for reading instruction. In contrast, a trade book, by design and content, is primarily for the purposes of entertainment and information. Trade books are often referred to as library books and storybooks. The books highlighted in this text are trade books, not textbooks.

**Quality**

Not all trade books aimed at young readers are worth close attention. Books ranging in quality from excellent to poor are readily available in bookstores and libraries as well as online. Racks of children's books can be found in department stores, drugstores, and even grocery stores. But the question is: Are they high-quality children's books?

**Quality in writing and illustration** has to do with originality and importance of ideas, imaginative use of language and image, and beauty of literary and artistic style that enable a work to remain fresh, interesting, and meaningful for many years. The best children's books offer readers enjoyment as well as memorable characters and situations and valuable insights into the human condition. These books have permanent value and stay in our memories.

This is not to say that books of good-but-not-great quality, such as series books, have no value. These books do not win literary prizes, but they are enjoyed by young readers and encourage more reading. However, you will probably not want to select series books to read aloud to your students. Read-alouds should challenge readers to consider new possibilities rather than focus on the easy and enjoyable books they are already reading independently.

Many recent so-called children's books are nothing more than advertisements for film and television characters and associated products, such as candy, clothing, and toys. These books represent the low end of the quality spectrum and focus on the child as a consumer, rather than a reader and human being.

**The Value of Story in Making Meaning of Our Lives**

This text focuses on literature; but we need to remember that books connect to broader notions of story as meaning making. Stories of all kinds are woven so tightly into the fabric of our everyday lives that it’s easy to overlook their significance in framing how we think about ourselves and the world. They fill every part of daily life as we talk about events and people, read books, browse online news reports, send text messages, listen to music, watch video clips, check in with friends on Facebook, and catch up on a favorite television show. We live storied lives.

Stories are thus much more than a book—they are the way our minds make sense of our lives and world. Stories allow us to move from the chaotic “stuff” of daily life into understanding. An endless flow of experiences surround us on a daily basis, and we create stories to impose order and coherence on those experiences and to work out their significance (Rosen, 1986). Stories provide a means of structuring and reflecting on our experiences. We tell our stories to invite others to consider our meanings and to construct their own, as well as to better understand those experiences ourselves. We listen to other’s stories to try on another perspective or way of living in the world.
Story is thus a mode of knowing—one of the primary ways in which we think and construct meaning from our experiences. Our views of the world are a web of interconnected stories: a distillation of all the stories we have shared. This web of stories becomes our interpretive lens for new experiences and is culturally based. Our human need to story about our experiences may be universal but there is no one way to tell stories. Our stories are always interwoven with the stories that exist within our own cultures both in content and in the style and structure of the telling. All children come to school with stories, although the types of stories that they are familiar with and the ways in which they tell stories may be quite different from school norms.

We also construct stories to make sense of information. Theories are just bigger stories. Scientists create a theory by using current information to tell a story that provides an explanation of a natural phenomenon, such as black holes. They change their stories over time as new information and perspectives become available. A story is thus a theory of something—what we tell and how we tell it reveals what we believe (Rosen, 1986).

Story is at the heart of who we each are as human beings and who we might become. We often treat books for young children as “cute” or as instructional lessons rather than recognizing their broader role as story. The values of literature for children, both inside and outside of school, are interwoven with story as meaning making.

The Value of Literature in Children’s Lives

Descriptions of children’s literature in elementary schools typically focus on how to use children’s books to teach something else. Literature is viewed as a material that is used to teach reading, math, science, or social studies or to teach comprehension skills or writing strategies. We are often so focused on using literature for other purposes that we lose sight of literature as having value in and of itself for children’s lives as well as serving the purpose of enhancing their academic learning.

Enjoyment

First and foremost, good books offer enjoyment. Those of you who read widely as children will never forget the stories that were so funny that you laughed out loud, the poem that was so lilting that you chanted it from memory, the mystery that was so scary that your heart thumped with apprehension, and the characters who became your best friends or family. These positive early experiences often lead to a lifetime of reading enjoyment.

Personal and Cultural Identity

Stories that are handed down from one generation to the next connect us to our past, to the roots of our cultural identities and national heritage, and to the general human condition. Readers grow in their own identities by finding themselves and their families and communities within books and exploring the multiple connections of their identities, including race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, religion, language, disability, region, family structures, and social class.

Stories are also the repositories of culture. Knowing the tales, characters, and expressions that are part of our cultural heritage is part of being culturally literate. In addition, stories based on events in the past provide a connection to the people, both ordinary and extraordinary, who made history.
Chapter 1 Learning about Story and Literature

Imagination and Transformation
By seeing the world around them in new ways and by considering ways of living other than their own, children are encouraged to think creatively and divergently. Stories can provide children with alternative pathways for understanding their past or imagining their future. As children enter a world through stories that differ from the present, they develop their imaginations and are inspired to overcome obstacles, consider different perspectives, and formulate personal goals. They transform their understandings of the possibilities for themselves and the world.

Often, story characters are placed in situations that require them to make difficult life decisions. As the story unfolds and a character's decision and the consequences of that choice become apparent, readers can critically consider their own decisions and develop their own moral concepts and values.

Knowledge and Insights
Good books offer information and wisdom and so combine the heart and mind, reason and emotion. Informational books provide factual knowledge, whereas fiction and poetry offer insights into life along with information. When a story is so convincingly written that readers feel as though they have lived through an experience or been in the place and time of that story, the book has given them a valuable personal experience that takes them beyond the constraints of their current lives. These experiences encourage children to view situations from perspectives other than their own.

Understanding and Empathy
Literature helps children gain an appreciation of the universality of human needs across history, which makes it possible for them to understand what connects all of us as human beings as well as what makes each of us unique. Living someone else's life through a story can help children develop a sense of social justice and a greater capacity to empathize with others. All children can benefit from stories that involve them in the lives of characters who struggle with disabilities, politics, or difficult circumstances or whose lives differ because of culture or geography. Literature plays an essential role in building intercultural understanding as children immerse themselves in the lives and thinking of characters within global cultures. Likewise, children can relate on a more personal level with the events and people of history when reading historical fiction which focuses on characters who are their own age.

Literary and Artistic Preferences
Another valuable result of children's interactions with literature is that they come to recognize the literary and artistic styles of many authors and illustrators. Children who read regularly from a wide variety of books develop their own personal preferences for types of books and select favorite authors and illustrators. Personal preference and interest as expressed through self-selection of reading materials are powerful motivators for becoming a lifelong reader.

The more children know about their world, the more they discover about themselves—who they are, what they value, and what they stand for. These insights alone are sufficient to warrant making good books an essential part of any child's home and school experiences. But literature is also valuable for learning in school contexts as well.
Literature is of tremendous value for children's learning across the curriculum in schools. Literature provides interesting texts that support students in learning about text structures, literary elements, and reading/writing strategies, and in exploring important concepts, perspectives, and ideas in science and social studies.

Reading and Writing

Reading, like any other skill, improves by engaging in the actual process. Many teachers and librarians believe that regular reading of excellent appropriate literature can foster language development and help young children learn to read and value reading. Reading is devalued if we only give children beginning reading materials that aren't worth the effort of reading them and don't read aloud to them from books that engage their interest and minds.

Reading aloud to children at home and in the classroom greatly benefits children's acquisition of reading strategies and their attitudes toward reading. The landmark study *Becoming a Nation of Readers* (Anderson, Hiebert, Scott, & Wilkinson, 1985) noted that “the single most important activity for building the knowledge required for eventual success in reading is reading aloud to children” (p. 23). This report also noted that the greatest gains in vocabulary, fluency, and comprehension came from independent reading by children. So the two most important engagements we can provide on a daily basis is to read aloud excellent literature and schedule time for silent independent reading of free-choice materials and books. Table 1.1 provides a summary of the landmark studies supporting these practices.

By listening to and reading excellent literature, children are exposed to rich vocabulary and excellent writing styles, which serve as good mentor texts for their own speaking and writing voices. Books that use particular literary devices such as dialect, dialogue, and precise description provide demonstrations of options for students' writing.

Government policies have had a tremendous effect on the teaching of reading and writing in classrooms and thus on the use of literature within literacy instruction. The specific policies change over time with the Common Core State Standards and assessments most recently affecting classrooms. Connections to these standards have been integrated throughout the chapters in this book, but are addressed in depth as part of text complexity in Chapter 2 and the political context of reading in Chapter 12.

Literature across the Curriculum

*Literature across the curriculum* refers to using literature as teaching materials in social studies and history, science, health, and mathematics. Many trade books contain information that is relevant to the topics, issues, and themes that are explored in schools. Moreover, this information is often presented through captivating, beautifully illustrated narratives that are interesting and are more comprehensible and memorable to students. When using literature across the curriculum, teachers and students are not confined to a dry pedantic textbook as the sole resource. Using several sources of information provides fuller factual coverage of topics and leads to more informed consideration of issues and perspectives. The abundance of well-written informational books for children provides rich resources for inquiries in the content areas. Teachers support the teaching
### Table 1.1 Landmark Studies on Literature and Reading

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<th>Researcher(s)</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Findings</th>
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| Carlsen & Sherrill (1988) | College students who become committed readers | Conditions that promote a love of reading in childhood include:  
- Freedom of choice in reading material  
- Availability of books and magazines  
- Family members who read aloud  
- Adults and peers who read  
- Role models who value reading  
- Sharing and discussing books  
- Owning books  
- Availability of libraries and librarians |
| Eldredge & Butterfield (1986) | 1,149 beginning readers in 50 classrooms | Use of children's literature to teach reading has a much greater positive effect on students' reading achievement and attitudes than does use of basal readers with traditional homogeneous grouping. |
| Fielding, Wilson, & Anderson (1986) | Middle-graders | Students who read a lot at home show larger gains on reading achievement tests. |
| Leinhardt, Zigmond, & Cooley (1981) | Elementary-grade children | The amount of time children spend reading silently in school is associated with their year-to-year gains in reading achievement. Children improve their reading ability by increasing their reading. |
| Applebee (1978) | Children ages 2 to 17 | Children's sense of story grows as they mature. Hearing and reading literature has a positive effect on children's language development. |
| Butler (1975) | Cushla, a severely disabled child from ages 4 months to 3 years | Reading aloud daily from picture books enabled this child to learn to read. |
| Durkin (1966) | Children who learned to read before attending school | Children who learned to read before attending school were read to regularly from the age of 3. Early reading and early writing are often linked. |

of mathematics, social studies, and science through engaging students in nonfiction and by pairing fiction with informational texts.

**Art Appreciation and Visual Literacy**

Illustrations in children's picture books can be appreciated for their cognitive value in helping to tell the story and for their aesthetic value as art. Picture books provide a means of understanding art as a meaning-making process and appreciating art for its own sake. By calling attention to
particularly striking and unusual illustrations as you read aloud to children, you show that you value art. Students gain an understanding of art by discussing the artist’s style, medium (watercolor, oils, pastels, etc.), and use of color, line, and shape as well as by using picture books as demonstrations of media, techniques, and topics for their own artwork.

In addition, children can learn to critically read visual images through interactions with picture books and so develop their visual literacy. Visual literacy is essential to acquiring the ability to critique the pervasive images of popular culture and mass media.

So Why Are Literature and Reading at Risk in Our Society?

Given the significant values of story and literature, you might assume that engaging with all kinds of books for personal reading would be a valued activity in our society. Research indicates that the opposite is true and that voluntary reading is at risk. Newspaper headlines put a spotlight on illiteracy, the number of people who cannot read and write at the levels needed to function in our society, when the much bigger problem is aliteracy, the number of people who can read and choose not to. They read work-related materials, but reading books for personal purposes is not part of their lives.

Voluntary reading of literature in the U.S. has been monitored by the U.S. Bureau of the Census and the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) since 1982. From 1982 to 2002, NEA reports show a steady decline in voluntary reading across all age groups in the U.S., but particularly among young adults ages 18–24. The NEA’s 2008 report shows that this slide has finally reversed itself and that, for the first time in twenty-five years, our love of literature has been rekindled with a 7 percent rise in adults reading literature, particularly novels and short stories. Despite this slight rise, there is still cause for concern because only 50.2 percent of Americans report reading any literature in 2008 and only 54.3 percent read any book that was not related to school or work. The U.S. population now breaks into almost equally sized groups of readers and nonreaders, not because the nonreaders cannot read but because they are choosing not to read books, either electronic or print. The NEA (2008) believes that one reason for the recent slight rise in reading is that parents, teachers, librarians, and civic leaders took action and created thousands of programs for families, schools, and communities based on publicity about the major declines in earlier reports.

The NEA’s 2007 report found a correlation between the decline in reading and increased participation in a variety of electronic media, including the Internet, video games, and portable digital devices. This correlation is a concern because reading books supports the development of the focused attention and contemplation essential to complex communication and insight. The report also noted that the percentage of 17-year-olds who read nothing for pleasure doubled over a twenty-year period while the amount they read for school (15 or fewer pages a day) stayed the same. There was also a significant decline from childhood to adolescence from 54 percent to 22 percent for those who read almost daily for pleasure. College attendance is no longer a guarantee of active reading habits; one in three college seniors read nothing for pleasure in a given week. Our assumption is that high school and college students stop reading for personal purposes because reading becomes associated with textbooks and school work—hardly motivating reading!
The NEA 2007 report details the consequences of the loss of reading for pleasure, noting that voluntary reading correlates strongly with academic achievement in reading and that proficient readers have more financially rewarding jobs and opportunities for career growth. Literary readers are three times more likely than nonreaders to visit museums, attend plays or concerts, and create artwork, and twice as likely to exercise, volunteer, and vote. The greater academic, professional, and civic benefits associated with higher levels of leisure reading and reading comprehension point to the significance of your role as a parent, teacher, or librarian in the lives of children.

Books do change lives for the better, but you need to be a reader to engage children as readers. Many of you are likely to be among those college students who stopped reading due to the lack of relevance in teacher-selected reading materials, dull textbooks, boring instructional practices, lack of time, peer pressure, past failures, a preference for electronic media, and a perception of reading as hard work. Due to the heavy load of course work and textbook reading, you are much more likely to watch television or YouTube videos and surf the Internet, activities that require passive participation, when you have free time. One of our goals is that you rediscover the joys of reading for pleasure and gain insight through reading lots of children’s books (electronic and print): graphic novels and novels in verse; fantasy in new worlds and fiction about the past, information about the world and fiction about the struggles of daily life. If you are to immerse children in reading good books that add to their lives, not put them to sleep, you need to find those books for your life as well.

As you learn about literature in the chapters of this textbook be sure that you immerse yourself in interesting books. Read picture books and novels, fiction and nonfiction, stories and poems, to reclaim these values for yourself and for the children with whom you will interact. We have kept this textbook concise with many invitations for you as a reader to encourage you to reclaim your reading life. We want you to experience reading as life—not school work.

**Invitations for Further Investigation**

- Document the types of stories that you use across a single day and the different ways in which you tell those stories. Share your data with a small group and create a list of roles that stories play in your lives.
- Create a time line of stories that you remember from your childhood at home and at school. What kinds of stories were significant (oral, written, film, etc.)? What specific stories do you remember interacting with over and over? Were there memorable people with whom you interacted around these stories? Why were those stories important to you as a child? Write or draw one of your literacy memories to share,
- Reflect on your reading life as an adult. What types of books or materials do you read as an adult? If you do not read for pleasure as an adult, trace why reading does not play a role in your life.
- Read one of the landmark studies and reflect on the significance of this study for the role of literature in the lives of children today. Another option is to divide into six groups with each group reading and discussing one of the landmark studies. Then form a new group with one person representing each study. Brainstorm a list of implications for your own work as a parent or educator.
References


Chapter 1  Learning about Story and Literature  13

MyEducationKit™

Go to the MyEducationKit for this text where you can:

- Search Pearson’s Children’s and Young Adult Literature Database, housing more than 22,000 titles searchable in every genre by authors or illustrators, by awards won, by year published, and by topic and description.
- Explore genre-related Assignments and Activities, assignable exercises showing concepts in action through database use, video, cases, and student and teacher artifacts.
- Listen to podcasts and read interviews from some of the brightest and most enduring stars of children’s literature in the Conversations.
- Use Lesson Planning Software to develop high-quality lesson plans.
My Book!

I did it!  
I did it!  
Come and look  
At what I’ve done!  
I read a book!  
When someone wrote it  
Long ago  
For me to read,  
How did he know  
That this was the book  
I’d take from the shelf  
And lie on the floor  
And read by myself?  
I really read it!  
Just like that!  
Word by word,  
From first to last!  
I’m sleeping with  
This book in bed,  
This is the FIRST book  
I’ve ever read!

—David L. Harrison
We can engage children as readers by not only placing reading materials in their hands that interest them and are appropriate for their reading abilities but that also challenge them as inquirers. Finding the right book is always a combination of knowing the child and knowing the books. This intersection of books and readers is based on building our knowledge of children and developing our strategies for selecting books.

**Connecting Children with Books: Know the Child**

The best teachers know their students well—their long-term and short-term interests, their home environment and families, their friends and social activities, their hobbies, their skills, their hopes or plans for the future, and the kind of books they currently select in free-choice situations. Children's interests have been shown to be one of the most powerful motivating forces available to teachers. Because there are now books on almost every topic conceivable and written at varying degrees of difficulty, you should be able to assemble a collection of books from which your students can make satisfying selections.

You will also want to have a grasp of your students' reading and listening levels. Young children, in particular, are able to listen to and comprehend more difficult material than they are able to read and comprehend. For these children, teachers can read aloud more challenging books while providing a choice of easier reading material for independent reading.

**Considering the Age-Level Characteristics of Children**

Teachers and librarians who are consistently successful in helping children find books narrow the field of choices by first considering general factors such as the types of books and topics appropriate for children of a particular age level. Children's physical, cognitive, language, and moral development are important considerations, as is their developing concept of story. Teachers and librarians also consider personal and cultural factors such as the child's interests, experiences, and reading ability to select specific titles. Knowing children's general reading preferences provides some guidance in book selection, but there is no substitute for personally knowing each child.

**Ages 0 to 2**

In choosing books for infants, consider the practical aspects of physical development, such as how well infants can see the illustrations and how long they will sit still for a book experience. Often these books are collections of nursery rhymes, concept books, board books, and interactive books. Common features of these book types and formats are simplicity of content or story; repetitive text or language patterns; clearly defined, brightly colored illustrations, usually on a plain background; physical durability; and opportunities for the child to participate or interact with the book.


**Ages 2 to 4**

Many of the book types enjoyed by babies are also enjoyed by toddlers, but with slight differences in emphasis. Nursery rhymes, for example, are often committed to memory by toddlers. Concept books can now include letters (ABC books), numbers (counting books), and more
complex concepts such as opposites. Word books, another type of concept book that encourages labeling, promote vocabulary development and can include creative options as in Seymour Chwast Says—Get Dressed (2012) with foldout pages of labeled types of clothing for all kinds of adventures.

Picture storybooks that appeal to this age group feature simple plots, illustrations that tell part of the story, and characters who exhibit the physical skills (running, whistling, buttoning clothes, tying shoes) that 2- to 4-year-olds take pride in accomplishing. A perennial favorite, Owen by Kevin Henkes (1993), and a more recent book, Will Sheila Share? by Elivia Savadier (2008), feature protagonists who overcome problems typical of children at this age. Children also enjoy wordless books because they can “read” the pictures and enjoy the books independently, and folktales because of their relatively simple plots, repetitive aspects, and two-dimensional, easy-to-understand characters.

**Ages 4 to 7** Increasing independence and enthusiasm for finding out about the world are characteristics of 4- to 7-year-olds. Stories in which children interact with other children, spend time away from home, begin school, and learn interesting facts are popular. Picture storybooks, folktales, and informational picture books will be at the heart of literature experiences during these years. Rosemary Wells’s (2008) *Yoko Writes Her Name* and Marla Frazee’s (2008) *A Couple of Boys Have the Best Week Ever* are excellent books as is the informational book *What Do You Do with a Tail Like This?* by Steve Jenkins and Robin Page (2003).

Most children become emergent readers at this age level. Easy-to-read books and predictable books make use of familiar words, word and sentence patterns, illustration clues, and rhyme to make the text easier to read. Often these books appear in a series. Books for beginning readers should connect to children’s interests, experiences, and reading abilities to support them in their initial reading experiences. The classic, easy-to-read Frog and Toad series by Arnold Lobel has been enjoyed by young children for forty years and can be used alongside more recent series like Cynthia Rylant’s Henry and Mudge books and Wong Herbert Yee’s Mouse and Mole books.

**Ages 7 to 9** Most 7- to 9-year-old children become readers as they are beginning to understand and accept others’ perspectives, recognize that life and people do not fit into neat categories, and develop an understanding of time in the past and future. They also start to assert their growing abilities to meet their own needs. With these skills they enjoy reading or listening to books about the lives of children of the past and present in picture books, transitional books, and some novels. Fittingly, these books often center on the adventures of young characters within their neighborhoods and communities, such as Lenore Look’s Ruby Lu and Alvin Ho books, Nikki Grimes’s Dyamonde Daniel series, Sara Pennypacker’s Clementine series, and Annie Barrows’ Ivy and Bean series.

**Ages 9 to 14** With their rapidly developing physical and mental skills and abilities, 9- to 14-year-olds are ready for more complicated story plots, including such devices as flashback, symbolism, and dialects of earlier times or different cultures. Both historical fiction and science fiction, which are set in the distant past and the distant future, respectively, are understood and enjoyed. They also enjoy stories about their peers who are growing up, asserting themselves, using their newfound skills, moving toward independence, and meeting challenges, as in survival stories. They are better able to recognize the legitimacy of opinions, mores, and lifestyles different from their own and so enjoy stories that present alternative points of view, nontraditional characters, and moral dilemmas. Some good examples include *Inside Out and Back Again* (historical fiction, Vietnamese immigrant) by Thanhha Lai (2011), *The Arrival* (fantasy, wordless novel) by Shaun Tan (2007), and *Red Kayak* (realistic fiction with a moral dilemma) by Priscilla Cummings (2004).
Part I
Children and Literature

Considering Research on Children’s Reading Interests

Research studies on reading interest, reading preference, and reading choice provide useful information for selecting books for collections and children. These studies try to infer what students like to read. Generally, a reading interest suggests a feeling one has toward particular reading material; a reading preference implies making a choice from two or more options; a reading choice study investigates the materials that children select and read from a specific collection. These studies do not always provide an opportunity for students to express their interests and children can only select from the books offered by the researcher as an option. Although the findings from this body of research can be useful, the results of these studies reflect the reading interests of groups of students, not individuals.

Many studies of children's reading interests have been conducted during the past fifty years. Differences in the choices offered to children and in the ways data were gathered make generalization difficult, but a few patterns have emerged from these studies:

• There are no significant differences between the reading preferences of boys and girls before age 9. The greatest differences in reading preferences of boys and girls occur between ages 10 and 13, a result of socialization and media images.
• Boys and girls in the middle grades (ages 10 to 13) share a pronounced preference for mysteries along with humor, adventure, and animals.
• Preferences of boys in the middle grades include nonfiction, adventure, sports, science fiction, and fantasy stories, while the preferences of girls at this age include fantasy stories, animal stories, romance, and stories about people.

Certain characteristics of books may matter as much to a young reader as the topic. The patterns across studies (Langerman, 1990; Worthy, 1996; Worthy, Moorman, & Turner, 1999) include the appeal of:

• Short books or books with short sections or chapters
• Picture books, illustrated books, comic books, and novels in which illustrations are interspersed throughout the book
• Cover illustrations that suggest the topic of the story
• Episodic plots or progressive chronological plots that can be easily followed
• Quick start to the story with action beginning on the first or second page to hook the reader
• Rapid introduction to main characters and a focus on only a few main characters
• Characters that are the age of the reader or slightly older
• Books based on movies and television

In addition, trivia books such as the Guinness Book of World Records, sports statistics books, joke books, and guides for video and computer games are appealing to some readers. Although you will want to encourage children to read books of excellent quality, the first step is to create an enthusiasm about books and reading and so start with high appeal books. Once children are willing readers, you can find many opportunities to booktalk and read aloud excellent books that they will come to love and want to read.

These studies support adults in making general predictions about the types of books students of a certain age might enjoy, but general reading preferences do not capture individual reading
interests. Since most teachers and school librarians work with particular groups of children over an extended time, they can learn the interests of each child and gain the knowledge needed to successfully match children and books.

**Discovering Reading Interests of Individual Students**

Learning students' reading interests can be accomplished by observing and keeping a record of students' choices of books from the classroom collection or from the school library media center. You can also learn about children's interests through their free-choice writing and journal writing or by directly asking children to list their interests or the type of books they like to read. You can get to know students by talking and listening to them in whole-class sharing and in one-to-one conferences. The following questions might start a dialogue between you and a child:

1. Who is in your family? Tell me about each family member.
2. What are your favorite things to do?
3. Are you good at doing something? Tell me about it.
4. What would you like to learn more about?
5. What do you like to spend most of your free time doing? What do you do after school? On weekends?
6. Do you like fiction (stories) or nonfiction (information books) better?
7. What kinds of stories do you like to hear?
8. Which topics do you enjoy reading about in information books?
9. Are there some kinds of books you don't enjoy reading? If so, why?
10. Tell me about a book that you especially enjoyed and why you enjoyed it.

Yet another way for teachers and librarians to keep current on students' reading interests is to conduct **reading interest inventories** several times a year. These steps are one way to conduct a classroom reading interest inventory:

1. Collect thirty to forty appropriate books that are new to your students and represent a wide variety of genres and topics.
2. Number the books by inserting paper markers with numbers at the top.
3. Note the number and genre of each book on a master list.
4. Design a response form for students (Would You Like to Read This Book?), where children circle yes or no next to each number.
5. Place the books in numerical order on tables and shelves around the classroom or media center.
6. Give students 20–30 minutes to make the circuit, browse the books, and mark their response forms.
7. Collect and tally their responses and compare to your master list to arrive at the types of books which seem to most interest students.

Classroom reading interest inventories provide teachers and librarians with helpful information about students' current interests and introduce children to new genres, topics, and
books. Many students will discover a book that they want to read from the books set out in this manner. Common sense tells us that children will engage more vigorously to reading or learning something that they are interested in than something that they find boring. Interest generates engagement, and so introducing students to good books on topics that satisfy their individual interests is essential.

### Evaluating Text Complexity

Teachers and librarians typically consider the readability and conceptual difficulty of books in selecting books to meet the reading needs of the children with whom they work. **Readability** is an estimate of a text's difficulty based on its vocabulary (common versus uncommon words) and sentence structure (short, simple sentences versus long, complex sentences). **Conceptual difficulty** is related to the complexity of ideas in the book and how these ideas are presented. Symbolism and lengthy description contribute to the complexity of ideas, just as the use of flashback contributes to the complexity of plot presentation.

Students' reading levels differ greatly in most classrooms, making it important to provide materials of varying difficulty. Being able to assess the difficulty of reading materials is helpful; however, for independent, leisure reading, students should be encouraged to read books of interest to them regardless of the level, so long as they are capable of comprehending the material and want to read it. As adults, we would not appreciate being told that we cannot read a book because someone else thinks it's too easy for us. We should respect the rights of children to select their own books for leisure reading if our goal is that they become lifelong readers. Their selections for personal reading are balanced with teachers’ selections of complex texts for instructional purposes.

The Common Core State Standards (CCSS) focus attention on **text complexity** and the need for children to engage with texts that gradually increase in difficulty of ideas and textual structures. This focus on rigor in reading is based on the goal that students understand the level of texts necessary for success in college and careers by the time they graduate from high school (Fisher, Frey, & Lapp, 2012). Text complexity is determined by consideration of three dimensions discussed in the Common Core State Standards (National Governors Association Center for Best Practices and Council of Chief State School Officers, 2010).

1. **Qualitative dimensions of text complexity**—informed decisions by teachers and librarians about the difficulty of a text based on their judgments about the influences of these aspects on a specific reader:

   a. **Levels of meaning and purpose.** Determining greater or less complexity based on how many layers of meaning are in the text and whether the purpose of the text is implicit or clearly stated.

   b. **Structure.** Examining if the text is organized around a simple, well-marked, and conventional structure that readers will quickly recognize or a structure that is unusual and seldom used, involving elements such as flashbacks or complex graphics.

   c. **Language conventionality and clarity.** Examining whether the text uses clear, literal, contemporary language or relies on figurative, ambiguous, archaic, academic, or unfamiliar language.

   d. **Knowledge demands.** Evaluating assumptions about the types of life experiences and cultural or content knowledge that readers will bring to a particular text.
2. **Quantitative dimensions of text complexity**—computerized readability formulas that rate a text on word familiarity, word length, and sentence length, based on the assumption that unfamiliar words, long words, and long sentences increase complexity.

   a. **Possible formulas** include the Fry Readability Graph, the Dale-Chall Readability Formula, the Lexile Framework, the Accelerated Reader ATOS formula, and Coh-Metrix.

   b. **CCSS recommends the Lexile Framework** (www.lexile.com; Schnick, 2000), but notes that this framework does not provide accurate levels for K–1 reading materials, poetry, and complex narrative fiction for young adults.

3. **Reader and task considerations related to the texts**—considering the fit between a text and a specific reader who is engaging in a particular task with that text.

   a. **Experiences and strategies of the reader** including cognitive abilities, motivation, interest, knowledge, and experiences.

   b. **Task** that the reader is asked to engage in with a particular text.

Considering all three dimensions of text complexity, instead of relying only on quantitative leveling of texts, such as the Lexile levels, is essential. Readability formulas may be helpful in selecting books but they have drawbacks. Although sentence length and word choice are important, a student’s prior knowledge or interest in a topic cannot be factored into a formula. The formulas also have difficulty measuring conceptual difficulty, the complexity of the ideas in a book, and how these ideas are presented. Symbolism, abstraction, and figurative language contribute to the complexity of ideas, just as the use of nonlinear plots or shifting points of view contribute to the complexity of the plot. *Skellig* (Almond, 1999) is a novel of magical realism in which two children become involved with an otherworldly being hidden in a garage. The text has easy vocabulary and short sentences with a readability of around grade 3.5. Yet the concepts of spirituality, faith, and prejudice cast the conceptual level of this novel at a higher level, making it more appropriate for students who are 11 to 15, depending on the background of the specific student. Another example is John Steinbeck’s *Grapes of Wrath* (1939), which scores at a second to third grade level on quantitative measures because it uses familiar words and short sentences through dialogue. Teachers, however, note that the many layers of meaning and mature themes indicate that this book is meant for grades 6 and above.

Information on readability can be found on some book covers and many online databases list the Lexile reading levels. Teachers can also estimate difficulty by selecting a page of uninterrupted text, reading the first sentence, counting the words in the sentence, and looking to see if this length appears to be typical of the rest of the page. The page can then be read for word difficulty, noting the frequency of words students will likely not know.

The Common Core State Standards include a list of Text Exemplars consisting of stories, poems, and informational texts at each grade level. Excerpts from these texts are provided to help educators explore text complexity. This list of texts is not intended as books for all students to read; instead these texts are provided as exemplars for teachers to use in understanding text complexity so they can make more effective selections for their students. Teachers would never want to limit children to reading only the books on these lists since many are classics that are dated and do not reflect the multicultural or global nature of the world.
Connecting Children with Books: Know the Books

Teachers and librarians who read children’s books regularly and who are familiar with a wide variety of genres as well as informed about recently published books are more likely to know the right book for the right moment and purpose in a child’s life. Reading widely also allows you to share your reactions to a book with children and engage with them as a reader, rather than as an expert. Other ways to become familiar with a variety of books include sharing information about books with colleagues, reading book reviews, and consulting award lists. The resources you can consult in developing knowledge of books and reference sources are integrated throughout the chapters in this text.

After you have read a number of books from a genre, particularly notable examples, you will develop a framework for thinking about that type of book, whether or not you have read an individual title. You will also develop a sense of how to evaluate the ways in which authors use literary and visual elements within particular genres. Criteria for evaluating literary and visual elements of literature within specific genres are discussed throughout the chapters in this text and so you will gradually develop your own understandings and internal sense of these criteria.

Balance and Variety in Book Selections

In your work with children, you will need to know many kinds of books because all classrooms include children with a wide range of reading abilities and interests. You have your own reading preferences but need to go beyond those interests to gain familiarity with many different types of books, including picture books, easy-to-read books, short chapter books, longer books, and books of prose, poetry, fiction, and nonfiction. Balance among the genres of literature as well as variety in topics are essential. The chapters in this text will help you build this range and balance.

The books available in the classrooms and chosen as read-alouds also need to be varied in order to challenge students and enhance their language and cognitive development. The mood of the books should include stories that are sad, humorous, silly, serious, reflective, boisterous, suspenseful, or scary. A steady diet of light, humorous books might appeal to students at first, but eventually, the sameness will become boring. Reading aloud books with the same predominant emotion ignores the rapid change and growth in personal lives and choices that are the hallmark of youth.

A balance between male and female main characters over the course of a year is necessary to meet the needs of children and to help members of each gender understand more fully the perspectives, problems, and feelings of members of the opposite gender. Classroom and school library collections need to have a wide range of topics with a balance of male and female main characters. In addition, understanding and empathy for people with physical, emotional, mental, and behavioral disabilities can be gained through portrayals in books. When a positive image of people with disabilities is conveyed through books, children with disabilities encounter characters like themselves.

The representation of people of color as main characters is essential to presenting a realistic view of society and the world and to challenging stereotypes. Through well-written multicultural literature, children of color can see characters from backgrounds similar to their own in leading roles. Characters with whom one can identify permit a deeper involvement in literature and help children understand situations in their own lives. Children also need to see that someone from a different race, ethnic group, or religion has many of the same needs and feelings as they do, as well as come to recognize and value differences in experiences and cultural views. Literature by and about people different from oneself can develop an understanding and appreciation for difference as a resource, not a problem.
Global and international literature, literature from nations and regions of the world, should also be included in read-aloud choices and in classroom and library collections in order to encourage the development of global understanding. Through reading or listening to books about the lives of children from global cultures, children will experience cultural literacy on a worldwide basis.

Finding this range of books and staying current with new releases involves familiarity with the major book awards and review journals as well as attending professional conferences to meet authors and illustrators and attend sessions on literature. These resources will allow you to locate the best in books being published for children and books that meet specific needs for diversity in collections.

**Book Awards**

Book award programs have been established to elevate and maintain the literary and artistic standards of children's books and honor the authors whose work is judged by experts in the field to have the greatest merit. These awards provide teachers and librarians with one source for selecting excellent works of literature to share with children. Table 2.1 lists the major awards for children's books in the U.S., Canada, and Great Britain. The winners of these major children's book awards and other awards for specific genres or topics are found in Appendix A.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award/Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>For/Year Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Newbery Medal/U.S.</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>The most distinguished contribution to children's literature published in the previous year. Given to a U.S. author. Established 1922.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pura Belpré Awards for Writing and Illustration/U.S.</td>
<td>Annual, two awards</td>
<td>Writing and illustration in a work of literature for youth published in the previous year by a Latino writer and illustrator whose work portrays, affirms, and celebrates Latino cultural experiences. Established 1996.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

(Continued)
Some book award programs involve children in the selection process. The Children's Choices Project, sponsored by the International Reading Association/Children's Book Council Joint Committee, features newly published books selected by children around the country. The list of winners appears each October in *The Reading Teacher* and is available at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

Most states also have their own children's choices award and programs. Usually a ballot of book titles is generated for certain age ranges, such as 5–8 and 9–12, based on nominations from teachers, librarians, or children. The list is circulated across the state for children to vote on their favorites. Balloting usually occurs in the spring to permit reading time over the course of a school year. More information on state children's book awards and programs, including websites for many of the state programs, can be found at [www.childrensbooks.about.com/cs/stateawards](http://www.childrensbooks.about.com/cs/stateawards).

Another book award program, Teachers' Choices Project, sponsored by the International Reading Association, also develops an annual list of winners. Teachers read and vote for recently published books worthy of use in the classroom, then develop the Teachers' Choices Booklist. The list appears in the November issue of *The Reading Teacher* and is available at [www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org).

### Review Journals

Journals that review children's books and feature current topics in the field of children's literature are an important source of information for teachers and librarians. Professional teacher journals on literacy for elementary teachers, such as *The Reading Teacher* ([www.reading.org](http://www.reading.org)) and *Language Arts* ([www.ncte.org](http://www.ncte.org)), have columns that review new children's books. *The Journal of Children's Literature* ([www.childrensliteratureassembly.org](http://www.childrensliteratureassembly.org)), a journal dedicated to children's literature and those involved in it, also has review sections of new children's books. In addition, these journals contain articles discussing effective strategies for incorporating literature into reading and content-area instruction and for bringing children and books together.

The following review journals offer evaluative reviews and suggested grade-level ranges for books. These reviews primarily come from the perspectives of librarians and literary critics. These journals are readily available in most university libraries as well as some school and public libraries.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Award/Country</th>
<th>Period</th>
<th>For/Year Established</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carnegie Medal/Great Britain</td>
<td>Annual</td>
<td>The most distinguished contribution to children's literature first published in the United Kingdom in the previous year. Given to an author. Established 1936.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
• **Booklist** (www.ala.org/offices/publishing/booklist). This journal reviews current print and nonprint materials for children and adults that are worthy of consideration for purchase by public libraries and school media centers. It also has a free online version at www.booklistonline.com.

• **The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books** (http://bccb.lis.illinois.edu). This publication reviews current children's books, assigning a recommendation code to each.

• **The Horn Book Magazine** (www.hbook.com). This magazine includes detailed reviews of high quality children's books. The Newbery and Caldecott acceptance speeches are featured in the July/August issue.

• **Kirkus Reviews** (www.kirkusreviews.com). This publication annually reviews approximately 5,000 titles of prepublishing books for adults and children.

• **School Library Journal** (www.schoollibraryjournal.com). This journal includes both negative and positive reviews of most children's books published. It also includes articles of interest to school librarians.

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**Professional Associations and Websites**

Major professional associations that have strong connections to the field of children's literature and so provide a range of services, projects, and resources of use to teachers and librarians include:

• **Association for Library Service to Children** (ALSC; www.ala.org/alsc). This professional group is a division of the American Library Association and provides services primarily to librarians and media specialists as well as supports major book awards in children's literature.

• **International Reading Association** (IRA; www.reading.org and clrsig.org). This professional organization offers services to teachers of language, literacy, and literature. Its Children's Literature and Reading Special Interest Group has a website, awards, activities, and journal, *The Dragon Lode*.

• **National Council of Teachers of English** (NCTE; www.ncte.org and www.childrensliteratureassembly.org). This professional association addresses teaching and research in language and literature from preschool through college. The Children's Literature Assembly at NCTE promotes literature in the lives of children, supports several awards, provides a forum for exchange among teachers of children's literature, and publishes the *Journal of Children's Literature*.

• **Children's Literature Association** (ChLA; www.childlitassn.org). This professional group has many members from the field of English and addresses criticism, research, and teaching of children's literature through its journal the *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*.

• **United States Board of Books for Young People** (USBBY; www.usby.org and www.ibby.org). This professional group of publishers, authors, educators, and librarians promotes the use of literature to build international understanding and the right of all children to have books in their own language and culture. The U.S. national section is part of the international organization, IBBY, which publishes *Bookbird: A Journal of International Children's Literature*.

The following websites are helpful in locating professional information about children's literature:

• **Carol Hurst's Children's Literature Site** (www.carolhurst.com). This educational consultant provides book reviews, curriculum ideas, themes, and professional topics.
Connecting Resistant Readers with Books: Know the Books and the Readers

Children and adolescents resist or reject reading for many reasons. Reaching these resistant readers who can read but choose not to requires that parents, teachers, and librarians know books as well as those readers in order to find just the right books for them. Because children resist reading for different reasons, the types of books we offer also need to vary.

Some children who have good to excellent comprehension, few difficulties in decoding, and average reading rates by third or fourth grade rarely read or do not like to read. With little or no reading practice, these children eventually lose their former reading achievement levels. Sometimes these children perceive the books they are forced to read in school as irrelevant to their lives and therefore boring. They may lack encouragement at home to read for recreational reasons. They seldom or never go to public or school libraries to select books for their reading enjoyment because the emphasis by their teachers and parents is almost exclusively on improving their reading skills. Neither their parents nor their teachers serve as reading role models, nor do they persist in their efforts to foster a love of reading because their focus is on raising test scores to the detriment of other aspects of reading. These children desperately need books that relate closely to their interests and lives in all kinds of formats.

Some children struggle with reading from the earliest grades and become discouraged. Most of them can decode, but this skill remains a conscious cognitive act rather than an automatic process. The act of concentrating on decoding words slows the reading rate and fluency of these children, hampers their ability to recall what they have read to make sense of the text, and tires them mentally. Others in this group are fluent decoders who have difficulty comprehending what they read. Experiencing ridicule by their peers and embarrassment in class for their reading difficulties has taught them to avoid reading whenever possible. These are the children for whom regular immersion in reading whole books for pleasure is especially important to develop reading fluency. They need books that are more supportive, such as easy-to-read books, transitional chapter books, graphic novels, and informational books heavy in visuals.

Some children resist reading because the books they are asked to read do not depict their lives or the lives of those who are significant to them in their families and communities. Children's books are more multiculturally and globally diverse today than in years past, but books that reflect
the true range of cultural diversity of our society are still underrepresented in the broader body of children's books. Unless adults make a conscious effort to search out books reflecting a range of cultural identities, children may not find themselves in books and so resist reading because they see these books as threatening and demeaning to their identities and irrelevant to their lives.

Students learning English as a second language sometimes encounter difficulties in reading because they lack strong vocabularies and well-developed sentence structures in English to draw on when encountering English language texts. They are also often asked to read texts that portray unfamiliar experiences and cultural norms and thus avoid reading whenever possible. This group is large and growing and so teachers need to be familiar with predictable books, concept books, and wordless books as well as books from a range of global cultures.

Boys who resist reading may do so in part because of the preponderance of female teachers in U.S. schools (75% in grades K–12) who tend to select reading materials that do not always appeal to boys (Brozo, 2005). Their resistance to reading also may stem from the perception that reading, because it is quiet and passive, is a female activity, or because teachers ask them to read silently from fiction when they prefer to interact socially with peers around an informational book. On average, boys exhibit more difficulty in reading and other language areas than girls. Some boys are avid readers, but of materials that schools do not traditionally recognize, such as magazines, Internet websites, and informational books. Informative sources about boys and reading are Reading Don’t Fix No Chevys: Literacy in the Lives of Young Men (Smith & Wilhelm, 2002); Teaching Reading to Black Adolescent Males: Closing the Achievement Gap (Tatum, 2005); Reluctant Readers: Connecting Students and Books for Successful Reading Experiences (Jobe & Dayton-Sakari, 1999); and Connecting Boys with Books 2: Closing the Reading Gap (Sullivan, 2009).

By connecting books with readers we can inspire young people to love reading and to become aware of its power to inform, entertain, educate, and transform as well as help them develop the habits of lifelong readers.

**Invitations for Further Investigation**

- Conduct a reading interest inventory with a group of students. Analyze your findings, then suggest appropriate titles to children for independent reading from books available in the school.
- Observe and document the reading habits and literary selections of three children over a period of several weeks. Select one avid reader, one typical reader, and one resistant reader for your observations.
- Create a list of favorite books that you remember reading as a child and use a database to look up the Lexile ratings for those texts. Consider the quantitative ratings for these books and how they match up with when you actually read them as a child. What factors in your own characteristics as a reader influenced your ability to read and understand these books?
- Explore a book review journal or website that interests you and provide a description of the resources and services available on that site for class members.
- Locate your state’s children’s choices book award and read some of the current nominees or recent winners of the award. Evaluate their student appeal, literary quality, complexity, curricular value, and illustration quality.
- Read some of the research on boys as readers and create a list of the types of books and reading materials and practices that may be more appealing and engaging for boys who resist reading.
References


Go to the MyEducationKit for this text where you can:

- Search Pearson’s Children’s and Young Adult Literature Database, housing more than 22,000 titles searchable in every genre by authors or illustrators, by awards won, by year published, and by topic and description.
- Explore genre-related Assignments and Activities, assignable exercises showing concepts in action through database use, video, cases, and student and teacher artifacts.
- Listen to podcasts and read interviews from some of the brightest and most enduring stars of children’s literature in the Conversations.
- Use Lesson Planning Software to develop high-quality lesson plans.