

Best Books For Libraries 2020 - Elementary School

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Early Reader Books

Highlights Puzzle Readers Level P, Level 1 and Level 2 (K-2)

Level P = Bear and Friends, Level 1 = Nick and Nack, Level 2 = Kit and Kaboodle.

4 books in each level published in 2020. Cute, fun and colorful characters. Level 1 review = Nick loves to make things and Nack love to find things! A great read promoting critical thinking and STEM. There is repetitive text, letter recognition, sequencing and spatial relationship learning while reading this series. They are great examples of observing surroundings to creatively solve problems in a fun way. Hidden picture pages mixed into the storybooks on every 3rd or 4th page. Books designed for children to read the text, find hidden pictures, and then re-read the book.

LaRochelle, David. ***See The Cat*** (K-3)

A cross between Mo Willems and Dr. Seuss! This ER leveled book has 3 stories with the same dog named Max as a recurring character in each story. It has the rhyming of Dr. Seuss and the twists in each story plot like Mo Willems. The "book" keeps telling the dog he is a cat, which makes the reader want to read more to see how this all works out! In the first story the problem is the dog keeps telling the book he is a dog, not a cat, only to find out there is a cat floating on a balloon behind him. At the end of each story all the pieces to the mystery come together and the story makes sense. These 3 humorous stories can be read over and over again for the laughs as well as phonic reinforcement. Mike Wohnoutka's illustrations are simple, colorful and blend seamlessly with each story. This is laugh-out-loud funny!

Yolen, Jane. ***School of Fish: Rocking the Tide***. (Grades K-1)

This Level One Ready to Read story features ocean creatures in rhyming text about music day at school. Mike Moran's colorful depictions of a red lobster, purple octopus, and a silver fish add expression to the characters who are worried about their performance in front of the whole school.

Picture Books

Barnes, Derrick. ***I Am Every Good Thing*** (K-3)

A beautiful picture book about a boy showing what makes him amazing, unique and special. The illustrations depict his curiosity, bravery, kindness, sense of humor and his ability to persevere when he gets scared. A great book to share with children to give them a sense of confidence and willingness to help others.

Copeland, Misty. ***Bunheads***. (Grades K-3)

The story starts with Misty at her ballet class where her teacher announces the auditions for a classic ballet, Coppelia. Misty is enchanted by the story of Coppelia and decides to audition for the part of Swanilda. The dance terms and illustrations of movements during class will be familiar to children who take ballet classes. Misty Copeland is the first African American female principal dancer with the American Ballet Theater and *Bunheads* is the true story of her as a young dancer. *Bunheads* is the first in a planned series about Misty Copeland who will certainly inspire many children.

Davis, Jacky & Soman, David. ***Agent Lion***. (Grades K-2)

A lion detective with a hunger for jelly donuts is given the task of finding Ms. Flamingo's cat. The endpapers filled with scrumptious donuts tell the reader right away that Agent Lion has a sweet tooth. Agent Lion's theories about the missing cat are ludicrous and his methods would not be recommended by any police agency. His mistakes while obvious will delight young readers as they correct his errors including the fact that a pigeon is not a cat and that cats do not like to fly kites. Will the case of the missing cat ever be solved?

Hunter, Anne. ***Where's Baby?*** (K-2)

Children and caregivers have laughed out loud at this relatable hide-and-go-seek story. Papa fox doesn't realize he is even playing a game with baby fox. Papa begins the story by searching for baby fox. He searches inside the house, up in a tree, around the bend, over a hill, under the water.etc...each time he shouts, "are you there baby"? But each time another animal answers no. On each page, baby fox is hiding some place behind Papa fox in the scene, just out of sight of papa. At the end Papa asks Mother fox if she has seen baby, and she replies. "Look behind you". That is when Papa finds baby, and they all have a good laugh! The book reinforces spatial relationships, repetitive text and family closeness.

Robinson, Christian. ***You Matter***. (K-3)

A beautiful illustrated picture book showing that no matter you are big or small, first or last, sad or happy, you matter. Children will see themselves in this book and learn that no matter what

their differences or circumstances are from others, they matter. Illustrations are bright, colorful and engaging. A great read aloud and a book children will want to read over and over again.

Shiram, Meera. ***A Gift for Amma: Market Day in India.*** (K-3)

A young girl explores the vibrant rainbow of items in a Southern Indian Street Market as she searches for a gift for her mother. Endnotes explain all the items on sale and introduces readers to markets around the world. A perfect read aloud with vibrant and colorful illustrations sure to engage young audiences.

Umrigar, Thrity. ***Sugar In Milk*** (K-3)

Beautifully colored & vibrant illustrations by Khoa Le bring the words to this story to life. This is an ancient Persian legend, transformed by author Thrity Umrigar, sharing the power, positive aspects and wisdom of diverse cultures commingling within a community. The main character is a young girl who immigrated to America to live with her aunt and uncle. She is sad and lonely and misses her old community and life back home. Her aunt shares a tale about how the Persians left their land for new land. When they landed in India the ruler sadly showed them how full his land was with his people already, by filling up a glass full of milk. The Persian ruler adds sugar, without spilling any of the milk, to show how his people will expand and make India that much more fulfilled and a sweeter place to live for all. Young readers will be taken in with not only the illustrations but also this story that gives a positive perspective on immigration. The story ends with the young girl keeping a packet of sugar in her pocket to remind her of how sugar makes things sweeter and more enjoyable. The book is easy to read with limited text per page.

J Fiction Books

Baldwin, Cindy. ***Beginner's Welcome*** (Grades 3 - 7)

AL, as her dad used to affectionately call her, short for Anne Lee, is entering 6th grade only months after her dad dies of a heart attack. Anne and her mom have to move to a small apartment where her mom can barely make ends meet working full time as a Merry Maid. Finances are a constant stress for her mom since there was very little life insurance money. On top of all this, her dad's ghost is present daily in the apartment, making it hard for Anne Lee and her mom to move forward in life and make peace with his death. Anne meets Mitch, a new girl at her new school, and they learn how to accept one another, trust each other, and depend on each other. Since her mom works late, Anne is alone after school and decides to go to the mall, where she meets an elderly gentleman named Ray who plays the piano in the mall atrium. Her dad used to play and soon Anne has convinced Ray to give her piano lessons in the mall. Through her bonds with Mitch and Ray, Anne Lee learns how to take off her "invisibility cloak"

she wears so no one will notice her, saves Ray's life, competes in a piano contest, connects her mom with a hair stylist that helps her get into beauty school, and has a closer relationship with her mom. Together, with her mom, they finally understand how to move forward in life, allowing their dad's ghost to finally be at rest.

Bleacher, Jennifer. ***Stick with Me.*** (Grades 3-5)

Two twelve year old girls, Izzy and Wren meet each other during winter break when Izzy's mom rents their house to Wren's family for a week. Izzy, a talented artist, is dealing with a mean girl, Daphne and the feeling that she doesn't belong. Wren is an ice-skater whose sister's surgery for epilepsy is the reason they have to leave their town for a week. Izzy and Wren bond at theater camp but a drawing of Izzy's former best friend Phoebe and the queen of mean Daphne causes misunderstanding between the girls. This honest look at friendship and the realistic portrayal of both Izzy and Wren's families will resonate with many young readers.

Bowling, Dusti. ***The Canyon's Edge*** (Grades 4-7) A novel told in verse about a young girl's story of survival and endless search for a loved one. Nora and her father travel to the desert to climb through the canyons on the one year anniversary of her mother's death. In the twisting, winding depths of the canyons Nora finds herself lost and alone. Nora must conquer all of her fears on her own to save herself and her father. Along the way, Nora learns about fear, grief and how to have hope in this unfair world.

Butler, Dort Hilstead. ***Dear Beast.*** (Grades K-3) A funny early reader told in letter form with colorful cartoon art. A jealous cat really, really wants to drive away her owner's new dog. Simon has taken care of his owner, Andy, for many years. He's a good cat. Clean, responsible, and loyal. What more could a boy want? Even when Andy's dad moves out, Simon is certain that Andy doesn't need another pet. So why would Andy's dad adopt a DOG?! To make matters worse, the animal is a rude, rowdy troublemaker. Simon decides to write him a letter and when the back and forth correspondence is quite unexpected, Simon realizes the dog may be here to stay. Will there be room for the dog? A tale begging for a sequel!

Castillo, Lauren. ***Our Friend Hedgehog: The Story of Us*** (Grades K-3)

A beautiful story of friendship reminiscent of Winnie the Pooh. Hedgehog and Mutty live on a tiny island, just the two of them. A storm comes and carries Mutty away. As Hedgehog searches for her friend she meets a mole, an owl, a beaver, a hen and her chicks and a girl new to the neighborhood named Anika Mae. The eight of them work together to find Mutty and discover the true meaning of friendship. Beautiful illustrations can be found throughout the chapter book and a cute map can be found on the front and back cover of the book.

Kelly, Erin Entrada. ***We Dream of Space.*** (Grades 4-6)

12 year old twins Fitch and Bird Thomas, and their 13 year old brother Cash are in the same grade due to Cash being held back. Fitch is a gamer of all sorts, Bird is an aspiring engineer/astronaut, and Cash is a wannabe basketball player. The book is written with multiple viewpoints from each sibling as they move through their days in school and at home. Each

sharing honest, naive, tender emotions. Each navigating social interactions, disappointments, misunderstandings, a first crush and more. Home life depicts each escaping to their own part of the house plus parents who don't agree on anything and argue often. The siblings all have the same science teacher, Ms. Salonga, at some point during the school day. The year is 1986. The year of The Challenger space mission. Ms. Salonga has her classes engaging in group exercises, expanding the student's view of what space travel means to humans. After The Challenger's devastating disaster, Bird no longer believes in the space program. But thanks to a surprisingly loving act from her brother Cash, Bird regains hope of one day following her dreams. Fans of The Mr, Terrupt trilogy will love this. A relatable read. Great for struggling readers with short chapters.

McDunn, Gillian. ***The Queen Bee and Me*** (Grades 4-6)

A beautifully honest and complex book about middle school friendship which will resonate with readers of all ages. Meg has always found comfort in her best friend Beatrix's shadow; however, something changes once they are in middle school. Beatrix and Meg have been friends since Kindergarten but when Meg tries to step outside her role as sidekick, Beatrix is not happy. A special science elective is Meg's first step away; but when she's paired with quirky new girl Hazel, Beatrix steps in to take her claim on Meg. Is being Beatrix's friend worth turning down the possibility of finding her own voice?

Ohlin, Nancy. ***Alicia Alonso Takes the Stage*** (Grades 2-4)

Ballerinas and readers interested in dance will be enthralled by this series addition. Known for their inspiring historical fiction, this "Rebel Girls" installment tells the coming-of-age story of world-renowned ballerina Alicia Alonso, and her challenges and accomplishments as a dancer. Alicia's love of dancing began as a small child performing for her family each evening. This passion for dance blossomed into a dream that Alicia longed to fulfill. Growing up in Cuba and living in Spain for a short period of time, Alicia learned Cuban and Spanish dances. But her true love was ballet, for which she moved to the United States. The story chronicles Alicia's struggles as a dancer, including a physical eye impairment that made her start losing her sight. This chapter book is brimming with colorful illustrations that will help readers imagine the events in Alicia's life unfolding. The back of the book contains extension activities related to dance and movement.

Sachar, Louis. ***Wayside School Beneath The Cloud Of Doom*** (grades 3-6)

After 40 years author Louis Sachar is back and just as good! This can be a stand alone title or will encourage readers to read or re-read the first 3 books in the series. As in his others, Sachar takes stereotypical students - brainy, class clown bully, shy, etc...plus daily school elements such as bells ringing, stairs, principals, etc...and turns them upside down! Students will relate and identify these in their own experiences and want to keep reading to see how the author manipulates each scenario he writes about. Each chapter feeds upon the last one, making the reader want to keep reading to see how all these quirky situations complete themselves at the end of the book. The cloud of doom is what hovers over Wayside School making everyone in it

do things they never thought they would do nor possible to do. The book will have readers smiling if not laughing out loud...wanting more! Great for struggling readers with short chapters.

Stone, Nic. ***Clean Getaway*** (grades 4-6))

William, aka Scoob, has volunteered to take a road trip with his elderly G'ma (grandmother) after he gets in trouble at school and was punished by his single dad. G'ma is white, who married a black man in the 1960s who was falsely convicted of a crime (stealing) and sentenced to prison. G'ma is now taking the road trip she and her husband started out taking, but had to turn back once she found out she was pregnant with a son. Scoob is dark-skinned and learns what a Green Book was that showed African Americans which states and towns were safe for them to travel in during the 1960s. G'ma reveals her past bit by bit, and past mistakes as the trips unfolds, leaving Scoob to digest what family means and what love looks like. A remarkable realistic fiction/historical fiction title that gives fun facts about each of the states they travel through in the southern USA. Humorous in some chapters, adventurous in others, and introspective all around. The sprinkle of illustrations help tell the story.

Timberlake, Amy. ***Skunk and Badger*** (2nd-5th grade)

Badger is perfectly content living in his aunt Lulu's brownstone and pursuing his "Important Rock Work." He is disturbed by the arrival of a Skunk who has been invited to stay by Aunt Lulu. Skunk is a fun-loving impulsive creature while Badger is grumpy and set in his ways. However the odd-couple pair become friends and this story may remind readers of Frog and Toad or the Winnie-the-Pooh books. The advanced vocabulary and detailed paragraphs make this story ideal for voracious readers. It would also be a good choice for a class read aloud as the author explores themes of tolerance and friendship. Illustrator Jon Klassen provides black and white drawings and color paintings that give a vintage look to the story.

Wolkenstein, Evan. ***Turtle Boy*** (Grades 4-6)

Star Review Choice! Fans of Wonder & Mr Terupt series will love this realistic fiction story about Will, a middle schooler with a gradually deforming chin. He will need an operation, but because his dad died in a hospital, he is deathly afraid of hospitals. He gets bullied because of his looks, hence the name "Turtle Boy". What his tormentors don't realize is Will's abundant obsession of turtles in real life! His community service project lands him as a volunteer visiting an older student, R.J. who has a terminal illness. Will soon is following through on what R.J has on his life's bucket-list. He is also helping his science teacher save the land behind the school that needs to be preserved as a rare turtle sanctuary. For a boy who classifies himself as a loner, has a lot of fears, and doesn't want to ever step out of life's box he has put himself in, he sure spends most of his time outside that box in this tender story of friendship, trust and perseverance.

Woodson, Jacqueline. ***Before the Ever After*** (Grades 5 and up)

This novel in verse covers a topic that is not usually found in children's fiction - head injuries in football. The main character, Zacharias Johnson, Jr. (aka ZJ) seems to have a great life to the outside world. However his father is a football star who is experiencing health issues from

injuries he sustained as a professional player. The worst part for ZJ and his family is that his father struggles with memory loss. ZJ's father even forgets his son's name at times and has become very angry.

The novel starts in 1999 when ZJ's dad was healthy and listened to music with his son. ZJ would watch his father play football on TV on Sundays. Then the reader is brought forward to the current situation which ZJ calls the "ever after." Woodson conveys the fear and sadness that many families experience when a parent goes through a physical and mental health crisis. There are no easy answers but the support of friends and a tight-knit community can provide some relief.

J Non Fiction Books

Brian, Rachel. ***Consent (for kids!) Boundaries, Respect, And Being In Charge Of You*** (Grades 1-5)

This title begins by making itself personal to the reader and claiming it as a book written solely for them, investing the reader to read more. Creatively written with lots of speech bubbles mixed with text and green and white illustrations. Consent first identifies what personal boundaries are and how to use words to communicate personal feelings. Rachel Brian shows the reader how to "trust their gut", how to have a say in the way others treat them, and how to identify how others want to be treated to grow healthy relationships. She balances this serious topic with humor and everyday life situations all students can relate to. I feel this book will be shared from student to student willingly!

Fleming, Candace. ***Honeybee: The Busy Life Of Apis Mellifera*** (grades 1-4)

Illustrated by Caldecott Medal/Honor winner, Eric Rohmann with his larger than life oil paintings. This book reads like a picture book using descriptive text mixed with large illustrations, drawing the reader into the 35 day life span of a honeybee. The first 24 days of the honeybee's life is spent doing a different task each day. It does not fly until the 25th day. At the end of each of the pages about the first 24 days, there is the question "flying"? Leaving the reader curious to find out what day the Apis flies. Rohmann's illustrates this momentous day with a 4 page spread in the middle of the book. This is a great non fiction title that can be re-read over and over again and identifying new aspects of a honeybee's life shown on each page. At the end of the book there is a clear and understandable diagram of a honeybee, a glossary, facts about how to help honeybees, websites and more related book titles about the honeybee.

Ottaviani, Jim & Wicks, Maris. ***Astronauts: Women on the Final Frontier***. (Grades 5 and up)

This informational book about female astronauts is in graphic format and begins with an astronaut putting on all her gear. The creators of *Primates* (2013) embarked on the story of how women fought their way into NASA to become astronauts. The narrator, Mary Cleave showed an interest in science from a young age and became flying planes at age 14. Readers will also learn about Valentina Tereshkova, a Soviet cosmonaut and the first woman in space. The time periods of the 60s, 70s, and 80s are accurately depicted in the illustrations.

Soontornvat, Christina. ***All Thirteen: The Incredible Cave Rescue of the Thai Boys' Soccer Team*** (Grades 4-8)

This nonfiction narrative will have readers racing to the end of the book even if they know the real life ending. 12 members of a soccer team and their coach went cave exploring on a summer day in 2018 in northern Thailand. The boys and their coach quickly became trapped in a flooding cavern without food and only the light of their flashlights. The author Soontornvat was visiting family in Thailand during this time period and she brings unique details to the story including information about Thai culture. The best part of this tale is that the rescue was achieved by a group of international citizens which was led by Thai engineers and civilians. Readers will also discover STEM knowledge about caves.

J Biographies

Hubbard, Rita Lorraine. ***The Oldest Student: How Mary Walker Learned to Read*** (Grades K-3)

In 1848, Mary Walker was born into slavery. She longs to be free and at age 15 she is. One day Mary meets a group of evangelists on the roadside and is given a bible by one of the women in the group. Mary vows to learn how to read the worlds in the bible. Years go by describing Mary's life of being a wife, a mother to her sons and a hard worker. She longs to learn how to read during these busy years spent working and being a caregiver but there is never enough time. At age 114, Mary had outlived her entire family. She decides to take a reading class and after much hard work, finally learns how to read. She still misses her sons, but whenever she was lonely, she read from her Bible, looked out her window and read the words from the street below. A beautiful and moving story of Mary Walker's life accompanied by beautiful illustrations.

Robinson, Teresa. ***Queen of Physics: How Wu Chien Shiung Helped Unlock the Secrets of the Atom*** (Grades 1-3)

Wu Chien Shiung or Madame Wu was born in China at a time when girls were not expected to study in school or aspire to the same careers as boys. Wu's parents were different and they encouraged her to excel in school and pursue her academic interests. This picture book biography shows readers the obstacles that Wu faced but it is also a story of perseverance. Wu became the first female instructor at Princeton University and gained the respect of famous scientists including Robert Oppenheimer. She was a physicist who specialized in beta decay but was passed over for awards including the Nobel Prize. A dictionary of physics terms is appended.

J Graphic Books

Dumuis, Sandra. ***Farm Crimes; Cracking The Case Of The Missing Egg***. (Grades 1-4)

A funny beginner graphic novel. This is a story originally published in French. Dumais translated it in English and published this version in 2020. The story jumps into a relatable barnyard scene with cow, hen, dog, sheep, racoon and pig. After hen discovers her egg is missing the gang recruits the #1 goat detective Billiam Van Hoof to help find it. The detective fumbles his way through the case with his terrible detective skills, relying more on what the other animals find rather than his own questionable tactics. All the animals help out with multiple humorous situations cropping up.. In the end they discover the egg has hatched into a chick and that is why they could not find the missing egg. Hen and her baby live happily ever after each wearing their own bunny slippers! Each page is broken down into 2-4 panels with colorful illustrations and easy to read speech bubbles. There are some pages with narrative text to help the reader understand what is happening. Readers will enjoy trying to solve this mystery right along with the farm animals.

Ferry, Beth. ***Fox and Rabbit***. (Grades 1-3)

A dynamic first in a graphic novel series for early readers transitioning to chapter books. Fox loves to try new things and is afraid of heights while Rabbit likes being prepared and is afraid of everything else. Together, Fox and Rabbit set out on a fun adventure facing their fears and finding magical surprises along the way.

Goerz, Gillian. ***Shirley and Jamila***. (Grades 4-6)

Jamila Waheed, age 10, is the new girl in town who loves basketball and would like to play all summer long. Her mother, however, has other ideas and wants to enroll Jamila in science camp. Shirley, the child detective in town, wants to go out on her own solving mysteries. Her mother does not want Shirley to be alone in town. So, the girls' moms come up with a plan to let their daughters spend their summer together on the basketball court. Then, Oliver shows up begging for Shirley's help because his pet gecko has been stolen from the town pool. Shirley takes the case and when it turns out Jamila's got some detective skills of her own, a crime solving partnership is born.

Green, John Patrick. ***InvestiGators*** (Grades 2 - 5)

A missing baker, 2 alligators that are investigators, a triceratops and lots and lots of scientists fill up this funny mystery graphic novel! Humorous puns are speckled throughout this good read. There are several subplots intertwined in the story line forcing the reader to read each speech bubble so they don't miss any key details. The book begins with a missing baker and 2 out of the 3 alligators. These reptile detectives are on the job trying to solve the mystery of the missing baker. As they dive into this task, they keep uncovering more questionable suspects and mysterious happenings occur that block them from finding the baker. In the end the baker is found safe and the 3rd alligator emerges. The book is the first in a trilogy I am sure readers will want to read all 3!

Johnson, Varian. ***Twins*** (Grades 4-7)

Maureen and Francine Carter are twins and best friends. They participate in the same clubs, enjoy the same foods, and are partners on all their school projects. But just before

the girls start sixth grade, Francine becomes Fran -- a girl who wants to join the chorus, run for class president, and dress in fashionable outfits that set her apart from Maureen. A girl who seems happy to share only two classes with her sister! Maureen and Francine are growing apart and there's nothing Maureen can do to stop it. Are sisters really forever? Or will middle school change things for good?

McMahon, Bob. ***Cookie and Broccoli: Ready for School!*** (K-3)

The first in an early graphic novel series about outgoing Cookie and shy Broccoli as they navigate the ups and downs of beginning first grade- perfect for fans of Narwhal and Jelly.

Pierce, Lincoln. ***Battle of the Bodkins.*** (Grades 2-5)

This is the sequel to Max and the Midnighters but it is not necessary to have read the first book to understand this new story. Max must handle a new teacher, Sir Brickbat and a spell that has created bodkins (they resemble Byjovian residents but are really enemies). Max and her pals, the Midnighters try to figure out who is human and who is a bodkin before the whole kingdom is invaded. Fans of Dav Pilkey will enjoy this comic adventure.

Stilton, Geronimo & Elisabetta Dami. ***The Sewer Rat Sink.*** (Grades 2-5)

A fun new graphic novel featuring Geronimo Stilton. A stinky smell is taking over New Mouse City and soon everyone who lives there escapes, leaving Geronimo all alone. With the help of his friend, Hercule, private detective, Geronimo sets out to save his beautiful city. They head underground into the sewer world of Mouse Island to investigate. A hilarious adventure sure to delight all Geronimo Stilton fans.