

Books that inspired our scientists and staff

Books are categorized by grade level based on interest-level designations from the [Accelerated Reader BookFinder website](#). Descriptions for most books are provided by the [NY Public Library website](#).

For more great reading recommendations, see the complete lists of [Newbery](#) and [Caldecott](#) Medal winners on the American Library Association's website.

Lower Grades (K-3)

The Mousehole cat

by Antonia Barber, illustrated by Nicola Bayley

When the Great Storm-Cat threatens the small English village of Mousehole, only a fisherman's cat can soothe its fierceness during a dangerous sea venture

Bears in the night

by Stan and Jan Berenstain

Seven bears sneak out of bed, through the window, and across the dark countryside to investigate the source of a noise.

Mister Dog: the dog who belonged to himself

by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Garth Williams

Recounting the day of a dog named Crispin's Crispian who belongs to himself and his meeting a boy who also is his own boss.

The little island (Caldecott Medal Winner 1947)

by Margaret Wise Brown (pseudonym Golden MacDonald), illustrated by Leonard Weisgard

Text and illustrations depicts the changes that occur on a small island as the seasons come and go, as day changes to night, and as a storm approaches.

Wait till the moon is full

by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Garth Williams

A baby raccoon must wait for a full moon to play in the forest with the other animals.

Stellaluna

by Janell Cannon

After she falls headfirst into a bird's nest, a baby bat is raised like a bird until she is reunited with her mother.

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In the woods: who's been here?

Lindsay Barrett George

A boy and a girl in the autumn woods find an empty nest, a cocoon, gnawed bark, and other signs of unseen animals and their activities

Homme qui plantait des arbres (The man who planted trees)

by Jean Giono

This is the story of a peaceable shepherd who spent years planting trees, giving life to an arid, desolate countryside. The translator is Jean Roberts.

Pagoo

by Holling Clancy Holling, with illustrations by the author and Lucille Webster Holling

The life story of a hermit crab

What do you do with a tail like this? (Caldecott Medal Honor Book 2004)

By Steve Jenkins and Robin Page

Amazing things that animals can do with their ears, eyes, noses, mouths, feet and tails

Blueberries for Sal (Caldecott Medal Honor Book 1949)

by Robert McCloskey

Little Sal and Little Bear both lose their mothers while eating blueberries and almost end up with the other's mother.

Owls in the family

by Farley Mowat, illustrated by Robert Frankenberg

Story of two owls, wol and weeps, who could turn a household upside down, outwit a dog, and terrorize a neighborhood in Saskatoon, Saskatchewan

Te amo, sol; te amo, luna (I love you sun; I love you moon)

by Karen Pandell, illustrated by Tomie dePaola

The children in this illustrated book love nature and love each other.

We're going on a bear hunt

by Michael Rose, illustrated by Helen Oxenbury

Brave bear hunters go through grass, a river, mud and other obstacles before the inevitable encounter with the bear forces a headlong retreat.

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The Lorax

by Dr. Seuss

The story of the greedy Once-ler, who ignores the Lorax's warnings and chops down all the Truffula trees, causing a local pollution problem

The giving tree

by Shel Silverstein

A young boy grows to manhood and old age experiencing the love and generosity of a tree which gives to him without thought of return.

Owl moon (Caldecott Medal Winner 1988)

by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr

On a winter's night under a full moon, a father and daughter trek into the woods to see the Great Horned Owl

Middle Grades (4-8)

The birchbark house

written and illustrated by Louise Erdrich

Omakayas, a seven-year-old Native American girl of the Ojibwa tribe, lives through the joys of summer and the perils of winter on an island in Lake Superior in 1847

Julie of the wolves (Newbery Medal Winner 1973)

by Jean Craighead George, illustrated by John Schoenherr

While running away from home and an unwanted marriage, a thirteen-year-old Eskimo girl becomes lost on the North Slope of Alaska and is befriended by a wolf pack

My side of the mountain (Newbery Medal Honor Book 1960)

by Jean Craighead George

A young boy relates his adventures during the year he spends living alone in the Catskill Mountains including his struggle for survival, his dependence on nature, his animal friends, and his ultimate realization that he needs human companionship.

The wind in the willows

by Kenneth Grahame, illustrated by Robert Ingpen

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The beloved story of the animal friends and their adventures

Minn of the Mississippi (Newbery Medal Honor Book 1952)

written and illustrated by Holling Clancy Holling

A snapping turtle, born at the Minnesota headwaters of the Mississippi River, takes a 25-year journey down the river, viewing all of the sights and customs down to New Orleans

Paddle to the sea (Caldecott Medal Honor Book 1942)

written and illustrated by Holling Clancy Holling

An Indian figure in a canoe carved by a young Indian in the Nipigon country north of the Great Lakes travels through all of the Great Lakes and down the St. Lawrence River before he reaches the sea.

White Fang

by Jack London

The story of a dog brought up by a wolf-pack, who eventually comes to know human friendship

The call of the wild

by Jack London

The adventures of an unusual dog, part St. Bernard, part Scotch shepherd, that is forcibly taken to the Klondike gold fields where he eventually becomes the leader of a wolf pack

Rascal (Newbery Medal Honor Book 1964)

by Sterling North, illustrated by John Schoenherr

The author recalls his carefree life in a small Midwestern town at the close of World War I, and his adventures with his pet raccoon, Rascal

Island of the blue dolphins (Newbery Medal Winner 1961)

by Scott O'Dell, illustrated by Ted Lewin

Left alone on a beautiful but isolated island far off the coast of California, a young Indian girl spends eighteen years, not only merely surviving through her enormous courage and self-reliance, but also finding a measure of happiness in her solitary life

Abel's island (Newbery Medal Honor Book 1977)

by William Steig

Castaway on an uninhabited island, Abel, a very civilized mouse, finds his resourcefulness and endurance tested to the limit as he struggles to survive and return to his home

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The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn

by Mark Twain

The adventures of a young boy and a run-away slave as they float down the Mississippi on a raft

Charlotte's web (Newbery Medal Honor Book 1953)

by E.B. White

Wilbur, the pig, is desolate when he discovers that he is destined to be the farmer's Christmas dinner until his spider friend, Charlotte, decides to help him.

Trumpet of the swan

by E.B. White

Louis, a voiceless trumpeter swan, finds himself far from his wilderness home when he determines to communicate by learning to play a stolen trumpet.

Upper Grades (9-12)

Watership down

by Richard Adams

After one of them had a vision of doom, a maverick band of rabbits starts searching throughout England for a safe place where they can live in peace

The yearling

by Majorie Kinnan Rawlings, illustrations by Edward Shenton

A young boy living in the Florida backwoods is forced to decide the fate of a fawn he has lovingly raised as a pet.