

Reading and Responding

A Guide to Literature

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Chapter

1

Literature to Delight and Challenge

...if there is no teacher in there constantly encouraging, probing, pushing, delighting and challenging kids to read widely and deeply within and beyond their immediately perceived horizons, who will do it?

*Dr. Paul Brock
Teaching Literature*

This book is intended to provide experienced and novice teachers with a practical resource highlighting the wide range of literature that has an important place in elementary classrooms. Literature can excite, inspire, amuse, and delight students from their very first year of school and is a key element of the literacy curriculum at all levels of schooling.

The exploration, enjoyment, and study of literature can include literature in English, or in translation, from many cultures and countries. Students can encounter literature from all over the world; places such as North America, Great Britain, Europe, and Australia. Many of the texts discussed in this book have been chosen from these sources. Literary texts may be contemporary, historical, or classic. They may be set in today's world, in the past, or sometimes in more than one time. Young readers have quickly become accustomed to reading texts that are often described as multimodal, as they often include various combinations of written, visual, and oral texts. This wide range of different kinds of texts fits within the broad definition of literature, and is reflected in the selection in the following chapters.

Did You Know?



The first book ever printed in what is now the United States is a tiny hymnal printed in 1640 by Puritan leaders of the Massachusetts Bay Colony. Only 11 copies of the Bay Psalm Book survive.

Reading and Responding: A Guide to Literature aims to expand teachers' knowledge and appreciation of the great variety of literary texts that can be introduced into classrooms. These texts will take students into new realms of experience, imagined and actual, and increase their understanding of the lives of others. Literature enables students to encounter characters' different ideas and feelings, and to make connections with their own experiences. Students who read and listen to carefully chosen literature are more likely to become appreciative, competent, and enthusiastic readers who ask many questions and seek answers. Access to a rich array of literature will broaden students' knowledge of the English language, as they actively read and listen to the patterns and cadences of language used for many purposes.

Wolfgang Iser (1978) gave us a full description of the active reader. He suggested that the “unsaid” (the telling gaps or blanks) in a work of fiction is filled by the reader and in the process the “said” expands and triggers reflections in the reader. The reader’s activity is still controlled by the text, but the reader “sets the work in motion and becomes a kind of co-author.” Authors, it appears, really need readers to complete the realization of their work.

When students are introduced, through literature, to the world of ideas, experiences, and words, they will gain new perspectives on the world, as well as the sheer joy of playing with language.

Did You Know?



John Newbery, an English author and bookseller, was the first publisher to devote himself to publishing for children. The Newbery award is named in his honor.

You can introduce many texts into classrooms—books to enrich and extend all curriculum areas, including picture books for all ages and stories that appeal to the imagination. You can provide books in multiple copies for small-group work. Texts can represent a range of themes, genres, cultures, authors, and illustrators. In such classrooms, students debate and discuss ideas about the motivations of characters, about the events in a story, key themes and ideas, and share their individual responses to texts. They learn that texts can be interpreted in different ways, and they learn to justify their own interpretations to others.

This book provides information about a range of children’s books that can be listened to, read, explored, and discussed in the classroom. It provides print and digital titles under various categories, as well as suggesting how these texts can be introduced to readers and how considered responses can be encouraged.

The books suggested in this resource are new and old, contemporary and classic; many will be found in school or local libraries, others are recent publications that are available in bookshops or can be purchased online. A few will require a search to be undertaken but can usually be purchased from online out-of-print vendors.

The emphasis placed upon picture books is a deliberate one because, as Margaret Meek (1982) said, “Fluent readers and absolute beginners both need picture books as the beginning of thinking.” Children and adults remember their responses to the picture books they encountered

when they were very young, such as “I loved it when Max stared into the monsters’ yellow eyes without blinking once,” and “I still love hearing ‘Oh, how Peter wished he could whistle!’ in *Whistle for Willie*. I couldn’t whistle either!” and “I was really worried when Peter went into Mr. McGregor’s garden.”

When deciding what kinds of books are to be in your classroom, consider not only what the students are reading now but also the stories with which they are familiar, as well as stories that they have not yet encountered.

Hundreds of children’s books pour from the presses of the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Australia, New Zealand and many other countries each year. Keeping up with this output is impossible. Yet, if you want to help develop students’ appreciation of folktales, picture books, novels, poetry and nonfiction; stimulate their curiosity; and broaden their knowledge then you must be prepared to read, read, read. Of course there are published lists of recommended titles, reviews in journals and magazines, and books such as this one to guide you, but there’s really no substitute for reading as widely as possible.

In the next seven chapters, you will find guides to many different kinds of literature for students at all elementary grade levels. Each chapter discusses a different kind of text, including alphabet books, picture books, chapter books and novels, pop-up books, informational books, and poetry. The book lists are not intended to be exhaustive, but rather a sample of what is available. Some texts will remind you of your own reading experiences, some will be old favorites, while others may be new to you.

Did You Know?



The final volume of J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*, is the all-time children’s best seller. It has sold more than 15 million copies! The series has sold more than 400 million copies worldwide.

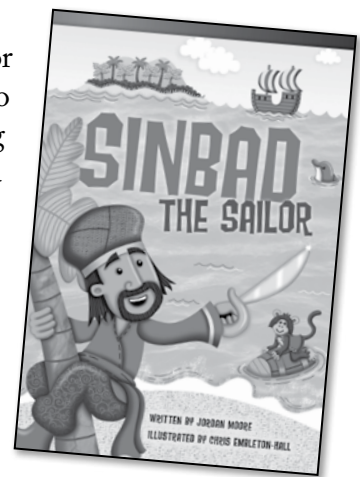
Chapter 5

Series and Chapter Books

The first sentence of every novel should be: 'Trust me, this will take time but there is order here, very faint, very human.' Meander if you want to get to town.

Michael Ondaatje

Many students enjoy reading several books by a favorite author or a series of books about a familiar set of characters. Actually, so do adults! You have probably heard your friends say something like “I can’t wait until there’s another Anita Shreve book to read at the beach” or “Do you know if there’s another John Grisham book out yet?” or “I’ve always loved Richard Ford’s books.” We all know how popular Harry Potter was, and is, with millions of young readers—and older ones, too. And we know that boys love Anthony Horowitz’s series featuring Alex Rider (the world’s most successful 14-year-old spy) and preschoolers love the Maisy books with Maisy and her animal friends and toys.



There are many fine series and individual books that, if introduced, will cater to all readers’ interests. Friends, fantasy, mystery, and humor are the themes that link the most widely read books, so it’s a good idea to keep these themes in mind when selecting books to read out loud or for students to read independently. You can work with “chapter books” or novels that students have read as a group or a class, different stories which explore the same theme, or a novel that has been read to the class over a period of time. And you can introduce particular series by reading one or two aloud to your class; keen readers will follow and read more once they discover the series’ characters.

Sometimes stories leave the reader puzzled. There are questions unanswered or resolutions that do not please. After reading a chapter book or novel, readers need to be provided time to think about what they have read and become aware of the thinking of those around them. We need to encourage students to pose their own questions, make their own statements, and not always answer pre-set questions after the reading of a story. Such a practice usually stifles students' own responses by focusing attention on what should be known about a story rather than encouraging readers to pose their own questions about what they found interesting, confusing, etc. It is through genuine inquiry that students learn, so they need to have a chance to seek and solve problems.

Series and Chapter Books to Enjoy

Series

Here are some great series that you can introduce to your class—watch the students blossom as readers.

Amelia Bedelia Series written by Peggy and Herman Parish, illustrated by Wallace Tripp, Fritz Siebel, Lynn Sweat, and Lynn Avril (the current illustrator)

For nearly half a century housekeeper Amelia Bedelia has been turning ordinary tasks into extraordinary fun. She draws the drapes with a pencil and sketchpad. She makes sponge cake with a real sponge. She recruits a train conductor to lead an orchestra. And when she's driving toward a fork in the road, she's also on the lookout for a spoon. Recommended interest level: grades K–3.

Other books in this series include:

- *Amelia Bedelia Helps Out*
- *Teach Us Amelia Bedelia*
- *Come Back, Amelia Bedelia*
- *Good Driving, Amelia Bedelia*
- *Amelia Bedelia and the Baby*
- *Amelia Bedelia and the Cat*
- *Amelia Bedelia, Bookworm*
- *Amelia Bedelia's First Valentine*
- *An Amelia Bedelia Celebration: Four Stories Tall*

Alex Rider Series written by Anthony Horowitz

Alex Rider has proven to be a valuable resource to MI6. He is highly skilled in numerous activities: karate, languages, climbing, snowboarding, surfing, scuba-diving, canoeing, kite-surfing—you name it! Readers who have enjoyed Robert Muchamore’s *The Cherub Series* are likely to find Alex Rider before you do. Recommended interest level: grades 6 and up.

Other books in this series include:

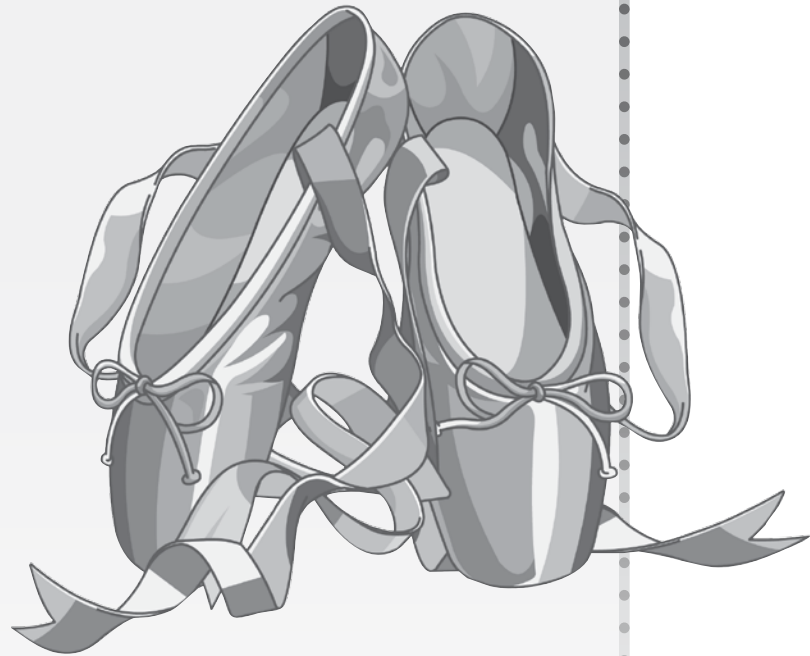
- *Crocodile Tears*
- *Snakehead*
- *Ark Angel*
- *Scorpio*
- *Eagle Strike*
- *Skeleton Key*
- *Point Blank*
- *Stormbreaker*

Angelina Ballerina Series written by Katharine Holabird, illustrated by Helen Craig

Angelina is a little mouse with big dreams to be the greatest ballerina in all of Mouseland. She dances all the time—even when she is supposed to be doing chores or getting ready for school. Recommended interest level: grades PreK–2.

Other books in this series include:

- *Angelina at the Palace*
- *Angelina’s Baby Sister*
- *Angelina’s Birthday*
- *Angelina on Stage*
- *Angelina, Star of the Show*





Chapter

7

Poetry: The Sounds of Language

Poetry should be fireworks—packed carefully and artfully, ready to explode with unexpected effects.

Lilian Moore

Choosing Poems

There are many reasons why we might choose particular poems to introduce to students. We may want to explore the ideas, themes, or emotions expressed in poetry. We may wish to encourage students to see what they know well in different ways. Or we may want to explore the sounds of particular words or nonsensical words that urge us to create silly syllables ourselves, rhymes that can be chanted and extended, rhythms that excite, or expressions that make us ponder. The language structures and vocabulary that are embedded in poetry and song offer a superb store of word power for students' future reading, writing, and speaking.

When selecting poems to introduce consider the following questions:

- What picture books might be considered poems?
- What poems or rhymes do you know well?
- What rhymes and chants do the students know well?
- What popular song lyrics could be examined as poetry?
- Is there a theme or topic that you would like to focus upon?
- What is your favorite anthology?
- Who is your favorite poet?
- Is there a poet you could invite to your classroom?
- Are there posters in the library that feature a poet, a poem, or part of a poem?
Could you use these?

Poetry for Everyone

Poetry written by these poets encourages thought, fun, and fantasy while discovering much about worlds present and past.

| | | |
|--------------------|-------------------|----------------------|
| A. A. Milne | Edward Lear | Langston Hughes |
| Aileen Fisher | E.E. Cummings | Lee Bennett Hopkins |
| Arnold Adoff | Eloise Greenfield | Michael Rosen |
| Benjamin Zephaniah | Eve Merriam | Myra Cohn Livingston |
| Betsy Franco | Hilaire Belloc | Nikki Giovanni |
| Bobbi Katz | Jack Prelutsky | Patricia Hubell |
| Carl Sandburg | J. Patrick Lewis | Roald Dahl |
| Colin West | Jane Yolen | Rose Fyleman |
| David Harrison | Janeen Brian | Shel Silverstein |
| David McCord | Judith Viorst | X.J. Kennedy |
| Dennis Lee | Karla Kuskin | |
| Dr. Seuss | Kenn Nesbitt | |

Poems Readers Will Love!

Alligator Pie written by Dennis Lee, illustrated by Frank Newfield

First published in 1974, this very popular collection offers 64 pages of zany humor and rollicking rhythm. Look for Lee's other delights too: *Jelly Belly*, *Bubblegum Delicious*, and *The Ice Cream Store*. Recommended interest level: grades 3 and up.

Around the World in Twenty-Eight Pages selected by Sarah Keane, illustrated by Bettina Guthridge

Readers can take a quick trip to New York, South Carolina, Schenectady, Peru, Australia, Transylvania, and Canada, and then sail across the English Channel. It's a rather frantic trip but a fun one with poems from renowned poets including Eve Merriam, Diane Siebert, Colin McNaughton, Roger McGough, and Jack Prelutsky. The wacky illustrations by Bettina Guthridge add to the fun. Recommended interest level: grades 3 and up.

The Bill Martin Jr. Big Book of Poetry edited by Bill Martin Jr. and Michael Sampson, foreword by Eric Carle

This full-color treasury contains nearly two hundred poems all chosen by Bill Martin Jr. and features original illustrations by award-winning artists, including Lois Ehlert, Steven Kellogg, and Chris Raschka. It's a finely crafted, handsome anthology capped off with tributes to Bill Martin Jr. by Eric Carle and Steven Kellogg. Recommended interest level: grades PreK and up.

Click, Rumble, Roar: Poems About Machines selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins, photographs by Anna Held Audette

Click, rumble, roar, whirr, clunk, wheeze, zoom—the sounds of machines all around us. The poems selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins and the photographs of Anna Held Audette combine to give readers an intriguing look at machines and our awe-inspiring, humorous, puzzling, and sometimes frustrating encounters with them. This book may be out of print but it's likely to be in the library. Recommended interest level: grades 3 and up.

Did You Know?

Shel Silverstein of *Where the Sidewalk Ends* fame wrote the lyrics to the Johnny Cash hit *A Boy Named Sue*.

Name: _____ Date: _____

My Favorite Author/Illustrator Planning Guide

Directions: Use the graphic organizer below to write notes and ideas for your presentation.

My chosen author/illustrator:

Books of theirs I have read:

Things that make their work appealing:

Reasons I like their work:

Name: _____ Date: _____

Looking Closely

Directions: Select a book with illustrations. Use your looking glass to examine the pictures. Then answer the questions below.

Look closely at an illustration in your book and then prepare a list of all the things that you can see in it.

| | |
|-------|-------|
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |
| _____ | _____ |

If you had to delete two or three illustrations from the picture book which ones would you choose? Why would you do so?

Choose another illustration from the book. What do you think about when you look at it?

Name: _____ Date: _____

Analyzing Text Features

Directions: Use the book you are reading to help you think about the text features that have been used. Complete the chart below then answer the questions.

Book Title: _____

| Text Features | Response |
|---|--|
| illustrations, photographs, labels, captions, charts, graphs, tables, diagrams, cut-away diagrams, maps | How does this graphic feature help you to determine what the book (or chapter) is about? What additional information does this graphic feature provide? |
| | |
| | |
| | |
| | |

Which text features helped you to find specific information?

Which text features helped you to determine other important information?
