

Modern Classics

A selection of some of the best loved stories for children published over the last forty seven years. Aimed mostly at children aged from 8 - 12, these titles and others like them have for years provided the stepping stones from picture books to senior fiction. Some, like E.B. White's *Charlotte's Web*, are timeless and universal in appeal. Others, like Lucy Boston's *The Children of Green Knowe* are very much of their place and time but underpinned by universal themes.

If you are wanting to inspire children of 8 - 12 with a love of books and reading use this list as a starting point and set aside time to read aloud.

ADAMS, Richard

Watership Down

Penguin 1974

A story with memorable characters and plenty of action, which describes the world of rabbits in a beautifully observed countryside, with a main theme of leadership. A long story suitable for good readers of 10+ or read aloud to younger readers. (RT, BB)

AIKEN, Joan

Black Hearts in Battersea
ape 1965

The intrepid Dido Twite, helped by Simon, (who features in the earlier *Wolves of Willoughby Chase*), uncovers skulduggery in the colourful London underworld of what seems like the 18th century, but what Aiken declares to a Time that Never Was. (BG)

BANKS, Lynne Reid

The Indian in the Cupboard
Harper Collins 1995

Omri is given an old plastic Indian and an old bathroom cupboard and it seems a good idea to place the model

in the cupboard. Imagine his amazement when the Indian comes to life and Omri realises that he is now responsible for the life and safety of this small, but very demanding Indian brave. 8+ (JC)

BOWDEN, Nina

Carrie's War

Puffin Books, 1973

Carrie and Nick are evacuated from London during the Second World War and are taken to live with a Miss Evans and her brother in the country. The book has strong characters and intriguing plot and suspense - making it a story to really enjoy. (JS)

BOND, Michael

A Bear Called Paddington

Collins 1958

The first in a series of successful stories of the humorous antics of a bear befriended by a long-suffering family. For 7 - 9 year olds. (RT)

BOSTON, Lucy

The Children of Green Knowe

Puffin (1954), 1975

The stories of Green Knowe are inspired by the Norman Manor House in which the author lived. In this first story, Tolly, a young boy is sent to stay with his great grandmother for Christmas. During his explorations of her ancient house and its grounds, he finds himself meeting, in a spiritual sense, the children who lived there in the past. Mysterious and intensely imaginative. Very English in its setting, character and historical references. (SG)

BYARS, Betsy

The Midnight Fox

Faber & Faber 1970

Here is a story of city kid sent unwillingly to his Aunt and Uncle's

farm while his parents go on holiday. Initial fears and despondency turn to intrigue as he finds himself caught up in the life of a wild fox. A funny yet sensitive and moving story with characters that stay in your heart. Read this aloud to 8 - 10 year olds. (SG)

COERR, Eleanor

Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes

A Sparklers Classic

Hodder Headline 1995

This is a very moving story of a young girl suffering leukaemia as result of the atomic bombing of Hiroshima. It is a story of courage and hope, and carries a positive message for world-wide peace. Also available as a beautiful picture book with illustrations by Ed Young. G.P. Putman's Sons, New York 1993. (CA)

COOPER, Susan

The Dark is Rising

Chatto & Windus 1973.

This second book of a quintet is perhaps the most powerful and memorable as 11-year-old Will is plunged into a world of Arthurian and Celtic legend. There he learns that he is one of the "Old Ones" who must help to correct a balance between Good and Evil. Underpinning this exciting story are deep philosophical questions, such as the nature of Time. (BG)

COWLEY, Joy

The Silent One

Whitcoulls 1981 & 1985

The Silent One is a young deaf and dumb boy who is treated as an outcast in his island village. A white turtle becomes his friend. They share suspense, danger and excitement. (BB)

DAHL, Roald

The B.F.G.

Puffin Books 1984

Children will love getting their tongues around the names of the imaginary foodstuffs and translating the nonsense words in this story about a little girl who is kidnapped by a Big Friendly Giant. Suitable for read-aloud 7+ or read alone 8 - 9. (CA)

DE JONG, Meindert

The House of Sixty Fathers

Lutterworth 1958 Puffin

This story is based on a true incident and is a good one to illustrate the true meaning of war when boys demand a "war story". Tein Pao is left alone, in enemy country, with only his pet pig for company after the Japanese destroy his village, but finds his family again despite immense difficulties. 9+ (HB)

L'ENGLE, Madeleine

A Wrinkle in Time

Constable, 1962, Puffin. Newbery Medal Winner

Charles Wallace Murray searches through a 'wrinkle in time' for his missing father and finds himself on an evil planet where individual freedom doesn't exist and all life in enslaved by IT - a huge pulsating brain. Charles is helped by the funny and mysterious trio of guardian angels, Mrs Whatsit, Mrs Who and Mrs Which. An exciting fantasy/science fiction story for 10+. (HB)

GARFIELD, Leon

Smith

Constable 1967

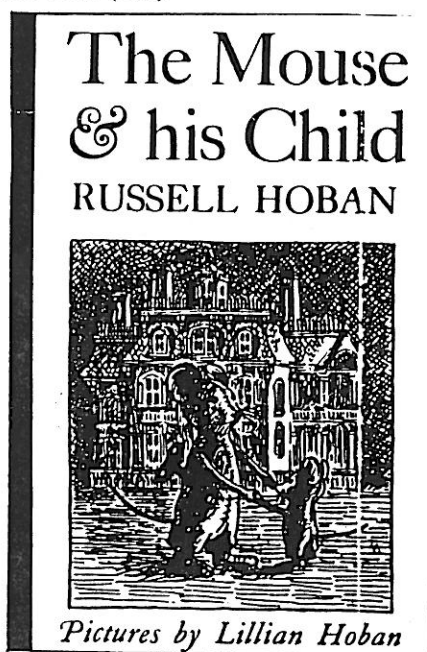
Smith is a pickpocket in 18th century London. But when he steals an important document he cannot understand it because he cannot read. Compelling, beautifully written. Garfield makes history come alive because he examines perennial problems - in this case the difficulties of communication. (BG)

GARNER, Alan

Elidor

Collins 1965

Are King Arthur and his knights really sleeping under the hill, or are there more sinister forces? When a 20th century boy stumbles upon them he finds himself in the middle of a struggle which could have far-reaching consequences. Older readers might like to re-visit Garner's marvellous *The Owl Service*. (BG)



GEE, Maurice

The Halfmen of O

Puffin 1982

For readers 9+ who enjoy the thrilling and sinister, this story of Susan and her cousin Nick will introduce them to the beautiful land of O. It tells of their last-ditch attempt to save the planet from cruel Otis Claw and his followers the Evil Halfmen. (JC)

GEORGE, Jean Craighead

Julie of the Wolves

Puffin 1972

Miyax, the Eskimo heroine of the story finds herself alone on the tundra, except for a pack of wolves who will either destroy her or help her to live. A unique picture of life in the frozen north. Newbery Award 1973. For 11+ years. (HB)

LE GUIN, Ursula

A Wizard of Earthsea

Puffin 1971

A beautifully written story for older children or adults. Ged is a talented young wizard who in his wish to show off his power allows an evil shadow to enter the world. Ged must then go on a quest to rid the world of this evil. The first book in The Earthsea Trilogy. (HB)

HARRIS, Rosemary

The Moon in the Cloud

Faber 1968 Puffin. Carnegie Medal winner

At a time extremely long ago... when the Lord God stirred and grumbled, "they're all bad down there, except the Noahs, I'll have a flood," is the setting for this funny, unforgettable story of Reuben the animal tamer who travels to Kemi (Egypt) in search of sacred cats for the ark and eventually takes the place of the undeserving Ham. A book for all ages - if you enjoy it read the other two in the trilogy. (HB)

HOBAN, Russell

The Mouse and His Child

Faber & Faber 1969

Thrown away, then rescued from a dustbin and repaired by a tramp, a clockwork mouse and his child set out on a perilous journey to find a home and family of their own. Hoban is a keen observer of life as well as a story teller. Read it aloud to children with a taste for wit humour and irony. 9 - 12 years. (SG)

HOLM, Anne

I Am David

Methuen 1965

David escapes from a concentration camp, the only life he has ever known. So many things are new to him, including happiness. His travels take him across Europe to Denmark. A moving story for 10 - 14 years olds. (RT)

HUGHES, Ted

The Iron Man

Faber & Faber 1985

From the attention gripping beginning to its thoroughly satisfying conclusion children will find this story fascinating. The need for community co-operation and world wide conservation are issues that arise from this compelling story. 8 to 12 year olds will enjoy the many situations to be dealt with when a huge mechanical man arrives in a remote neighbourhood. A sequel, *The Iron Woman*, was published in 1993. (CA)

JANSSON, Tove

Finn Family Moomintroll

Puffin (1950) 1961 ✓

The family of Moomins are small, shy and fat and live deep in the forests of Finland. Their adventures are full of magic, humour and unexpected happenings. A story that continues to delight children all over the world. Wonderful to read aloud. (SG)

JOHNSTON, Phyllis

No one Went to Town

Moana Press 1980

This story of the Tarrant family, pioneers in Taranaki hill country, is based on fact. The children in the tales, May, Phil and Claude told their childhood memories to the author, who is May's daughter. Because of the remoteness of the farm visits to town were only made when someone was seriously injured, hence the title. A fascinating book, giving a true-to-life picture of life in NZ in the early days of this century, with all the adventures and fun along with the undoubted hardships. 9+. (JC)

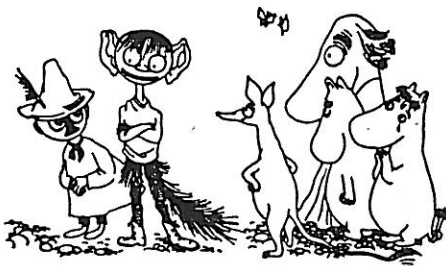
Also, *Blackboot and Buttonhooks*, *A Comet in the Sky*, *My Things and the Hidden Light*; *Then There Were Nine*.

JONES, Diana Wynne

Dogsbody

Macmillan 1975

When Sirius the Dog Star displeases other Star Lords he is sent to Earth as a dog. Diana Wynne Jones manages to turn science into fiction in a highly acceptable manner. Her later novel, *The Power of Three* undoubtedly helps readers to understand quantum mechanics in later life! (BG)



JUSTER, Norton

The Phantom Tollbooth

Collins 1981

Milo is spoilt. And very very bored. The arrival of a mysterious package changes his whole outlook on life. Through the Tollbooth lies the strange and fascinating land of the Kingdom of Wisdom peopled by such characters as King Azaz the Unabridged, the unhappy ruler of Dictionopolis, Faintly Macabre the not-so-wicked Which, The Whether Man and the Threadbare Excuse. A great read for readers who enjoy fantasy, numbers and words. 8+ (JC)

KING, Clive

Stig of the Dump

Puffin 1963

The discovery of a boy from the past living in the local dump marks the beginning of a friendship full of adventure and surprise for 8 year old Barney. A great read aloud 7 - 10 years (SG)

LEWIS, C.S.

The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe

Collins 1950 ✓

During the Second World War a family of 4 boys and 2 girls from is

evacuated from London and sent to the house of an old Professor, who lived in the heart of the country. The children's adventures begin when Lucy the youngest child, hides in a wardrobe and finds that it extends in to the fantasy land of Narnia, where it is always winter and never summer. The story tells of their part in freeing Narnia from the White Witch's spell. (JS)

LINDGREN, Astrid

Pippi Longstocking ✓

OUP 1954 Puffin 1976

Pippi Longstocking is the strongest girl in the world. She lives by herself with her horse and her monkey and has the funniest and wildest adventures imaginable. A great favourite. Read aloud to 6 - 9 years. (SG)

LIVELY, Penelope

The Ghost of Thomas Kempe

Heinemann, 1973

Thomas Kempe is a poltergeist. The problem is that the young occupant of an old cottage is blamed for his misdemeanours. Can Thomas Kempe be exorcised? An entertaining story in which Lively once again examines the nature of Time. (BG)

LOCKE, Elsie

The Runaway Settlers ✓

(Puffin 1971), Hazard Press 1993

This book set in early New Zealand tells of the trials and tribulations of a woman and her children who arrive in N.Z. to start a new life. Wonderful descriptions of challenging situations in our country's pioneering days. A must read for all New Zealand children. (CA)

MAHY, Margaret

1st, 2nd and 3rd Margaret Mahy Story Books

Dent 1972-3

Margaret Mahy is at her best in her short stories and these splendid

collections should not be overlooked in favour of her picture books and novels. They are illustrated by Shirley Hughes. (BG)

MANNING, ROSEMARY

Green Smoke

Puffin 1957

This delightful, almost whimsical and often humorous book is the first of four about R. Dragon who is aged 1500 years old and has a weakness for almond buns. Susan discovers him while on holiday at Constantine Bay and finds the perfect (almost) companion. He tells tales about King Arthur, of Cornish giants and fairies, takes Susan on journeys and teaches her songs. 8+ (JC)

Also, *Dragon in Danger; The Dragon's Quest and Dragon in the Harbour.*

NORTON, Mary

The Borrowers

Puffin (1955) 1962

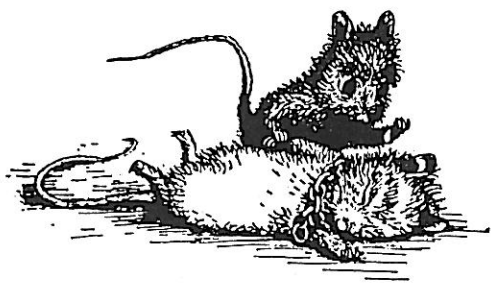
The Borrowers are a race of tiny people, surviving through wit and ingenuity in a world full of humans much larger and more powerful than themselves - children have no trouble relating to this situation! Unparalleled for humour, invention and sheer imaginative genius. (Also superbly produced for television) (SG)

O'DELL, Scott

Island of the Blue Dolphins

Puffin 1960

A story based on an actual incident of an Indian girl who is stranded on a remote island off the coast of California for 18 years, and how she manages to survive while overcoming her upbringing of tribal restrictions on females. A Newbery Award winner. An exciting story for 9 - 14 year olds. (RT)



PEARCE, Philippa

Tom's Midnight Garden

Puffin 1958 Carnegie Medal winner

A timeslip book in which Tom steps into a garden which is only there at night, and into the life of Hattie, a Victorian child. The threads of the story, past and present, are tied together when Tom meets the real life Hattie as an old woman. An absorbing read for 10+ (HB, BG)



RANSOME, Arthur

Swallows and Amazons

Puffin Books 1974

The books in this series are challenging reading for able children 9+. They tell in language and a style typical of the era of first publication (1932) about the many escapades and innovative activities of a group of children messing about in boats. (CA)

SELDEN, George

The Cricket in Times Square

Puffin (1960) 1963

Set in the Times Square station, New York, this story of a country cricket befriended by a small boy, a cat and a mouse, was chosen as one of the four best children's books published in America in 1960. It remains a great favourite - a universal story that deals with universal themes. Excellent to read aloud. (SG)

SERRAILLIER, Tom

The Silver Sword

Puffin Books (1956) 1960

A moving story of courage and endurance featuring four deserted and starving children who, during the Second World War begin to make the dangerous journey from Poland to Switzerland, where they hope to find their parents. (JS)

SHARP, Margery

The Rescuers

Puffin (1959) 1964

The Prisoners' Aid Society is a band of mice whose work is to help, amuse and comfort lonely prisoners. When they hear of a poet shut away in the dreaded Black Castle, three of them set out on a heroic rescue attempt that proves to be not only thrilling and surprising but often very funny. Very good to read aloud. (SG)

SMITH, Dodie

The One Hundred and One Dalmatians

Mammoth (1956) 1990

Set in London this delightful action packed story tells the tale of two dogs (later extended to 101) who regard their owners as pets. (BB)

SOUTHALL, Ivan

Hills End

Puffin 1962

Set in Australia, this story tells of a disastrous flood that leaves seven children alone and struggling for survival. Ivan Southall tells a very good story but he is also a keen observer of human nature - *Hills End* is as much an exploration of character as it is a gripping and suspenseful adventure. 10+ (SG)

STREATFEILD, Noel

Ballet Shoes

Dent 1936 Puffin

The middle class English work of nannies and nurseries may seem foreign to children today but they will still identify with the trials and

tribulations of Pauline, Petrova and Posy who are such well drawn characters that it doesn't matter how long ago they were created. Nor do you have to be a ballet fan to enjoy this story. 10+ (HB)

SUTCLIFF Rosemary ✓
Warrior Scarlet

Oxford University Press 1959
Drem is a Bronze Age boy, who must prove his manhood by killing a wolf. But how can he do it with a withered sword arm? Rosemary Sutcliff has total penetration of her subject matter. By the end of the novel we too, have lived in the Bronze Age, and have learnt how to triumph over adversity. (BG, RT)

TOLKEIN J.R.R.

The Hobbit

Allen & Unwin 1937

"The Lord of the Rings" has been voted the 20th Century's most influential book by British and New Zealand readers. But it is *The Hobbit* which first introduces us to Bilbo Baggins and Frodo, and to the whole world of Middle-earth. Wonderful to read aloud to a wide age range. (BG)

TREASE Geoffrey

Cue for Treason

Oxford Blackwell 1940

Trease writes very accessible stories about the past. This one is the background to Shakespearean drama. When the text of one of Shakespeare's plays is stolen is it from a rival dramatist, or is it part of a treasonable plot against the Queen? The book effortlessly gives a great deal of information about 16th Century drama within an exciting frame work. (BG)

WHITE, E.B ✓

Charlotte's Web

Puffin Books 1963

You will all be familiar with this story of a lonely pig befriended by a spider. It is a wonderful story and

one of the best read alouds ever for children aged 6 - 9. (BB, SG)

WILDER, Laura Ingalls

Little House on the Prairie ✓

Harper Trophy 1971

Little House on the Prairie is number two in a series of seven books. The first book *Little House in the Big Woods* is about the family's life in the Wisconsin forest. *Little House on the Prairie* and the subsequent books tell the real life stories of Laura Ingalls and her family as they head West in a covered wagon. The books recount incidents of fear, fun and adventure in the pioneering days the USA. Well loved by many 8 - 10 year olds. (CA)



NZ POST CHILDREN'S BOOK AWARDS

The winners of the New Zealand Post Children's Book Awards were announced at a ceremony at Government House, Wellington, on Wednesday 9th April. Convenor Gillian Newman noted that the book awards "have become so well established in both the publishing and the school calendar that many of those for whom these books were written will not have known a time when it was difficult to find a story on the shelves of their bookshop or library that was written by a New Zealander".

Gillian Newman and fellow judges Dick Weir and Robyn Bargh assessed 114 entries. Excerpts from their comments regarding the winning book in each category follow:

Non-fiction category

PICTURE BOOK MAGIC

by Chris Gaskin and Denis Page
Reed Publishing

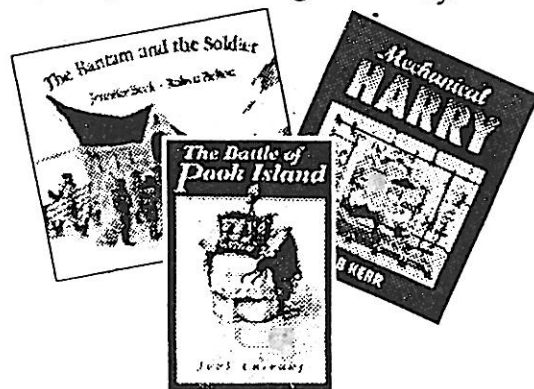
The winner in this category, *Picture Book Magic* is a captivating blend of illustration, photography and text. Chris Gaskin, himself an award-winning illustrator, has interviewed nine other leading New Zealand illustrators and largely let them tell their own stories, incorporating descriptions of their developing sense of themselves as artists with photos and examples of their work. The accounts of these distinctively New Zealand artists' early lives, and their explanation of how they live and work now, are fascinating - for children and adults. Children who love to draw and paint will find much here to inspire them, especially in the detailed descriptions of methods and media.

Picture Book Category and Book of the Year

THE BANTAM AND THE SOLDIER ✓

by Jennifer Beck, illustrated by Robyn Belton
Scholastic

This story, telling how Arthur, amid the mud and slaughter of the trenches in France during the First World War, found and kept a bantam he named after his niece at home in New Zealand, meets all the criteria in terms of appeal, integrity, story, character, design and production. The text and illustrations complement each other, the draughtsmanship is superb, the language simple but effective. A touching and heartfelt idea is portrayed with startling authenticity.



Junior Fiction Category

THE BATTLE OF POOK ISLAND

by Jack Lasenby

Longacre Press

Once again, Jack Lasenby takes us back to the wild Seddon Street Gang living life precariously but to the full in the depressed 1930s township of Waharua. This is a master storyteller at work. He has an authentic voice, wonderful descriptive powers and no inhibitions about allowing his characters to show both their good and bad facets.

The publishers have produced a work of quality with impressive allegorical cover artwork by David Elliot, a map (always a delight) and a glossary. This book is also great read aloud material. Although it is the third Seddon Street Gang story, it stands alone happily but will certainly encourage readers to return to the earlier adventures.

Senior Fiction Category

SANCTUARY

by Kate De Goldi

Penguin Books

Sanctuary is a neat, witty, clever, well crafted, believable, empathetic and thought-provoking novel. Non-condescending and non-judgmental, it has integrity and speaks directly to its readers. It confronts issues head on and provides no pat answers.

Patricia, traumatised by the death of her little sister, unable to forgive her mother or herself for fatal mistakes, develops a mistaken and simplistic urge to correct all that's wrong with her world by freeing Cleo, a panther unintentionally cruelly caged by well-meaning animal lovers. The parallels between the imprisoned creature and Patricia's own caged spirit imbue this excellent novel with vivid imagery. The reader is turning the pages nervously as the denouement approaches and the ending, though shocking, is hopeful and realistic.

Best First Book

RELIABLE FRIENDLY GIRLS

by Jane Westaway

Longacre Press

The teenagers about and for whom these stories are written have all the hallmarks we recognise from our own interactions with adolescents - or, if we can remember with honesty, in our younger selves. The connections are immediate, accurate and all the more clever for being succinct and bite-sized. These are the young people you meet every day, trailing school bags, slouching at the bus-stop, lounging about their untidy bedrooms, serving you at the supermarket. But they are also young people full of love, joy and friendship, and raw with anger, hurt and disappointment. They are zany, exasperating, sad, loveable and alive!

Children's Choice Award

MECHANICAL HARRY

by Bob Kerr

Mallinson Rendel

The attraction of this picture book is apparent as soon as you place it in front of a group of children, even of a wide age range. Who among us has not dreamed of contraptions to ease our passage through the day! There are certainly pictures to pore over and the precise detail in every spread repays careful attention. (A book about Heath Robinson lies on the bedroom floor as Harry rises early in the morning.)

Brightly coloured, with minimal text but maximum fascination for both the mechanically and the non-mechanically minded, this book has pick-up appeal that owes much to its well-designed cover. At the back of the book a little trick sends the reader back to the beginning to search for the hidden screwdrivers in every picture.

OBITUARY

Gaelyn Gordon



The War Memorial Hall at Ellerslie, in Auckland, was packed on Tuesday 20 May with friends and relatives joining in a commemoration of the life of Gaelyn Gordon who died on Saturday 17 May.

Gaelyn had planned it all, knew exactly what she wanted and would have been pleased with the result. During the last days of her illness she spoke of the gathering as "not a funeral, not a farewell, not a celebration, just a bit of a do, a going away party."

Friends and relatives spoke of her family life, her days as a teacher, her writing and publishing, her works for children in picture books, junior novels and for older teens. She would never refer to her readers as teenagers, her publisher, Paul Bradwell wrote of her. Rather she spoke of 'pre-pubescent' humans.

Gaelyn will be remembered, of course for her books, but also for her often times wicked sense of humour and for her happy knack of making the person she was talking to feel special.

Until her illness forced her to resign Gaelyn served on the committee of the New Zealand Children's Book Foundation - we missed her when she left and we, along with countless avid young readers and others involved in the children's book world will continue to miss her.

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