



100 Best Books for Children

Anita Silvey

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By selecting only 100 “best books” Anita Silvey distinguishes her guide from all the others and makes it possible to give young readers their literary heritage in the childhood years.

The books we hear or read when we are children stay with us all our lives. If we miss them when we are young, we’ll miss them forever: no *Hungry Caterpillar*, no *Winn-Dixie*, no *Roll of Thunder*. As adults we remember a few familiar favorites, but no one but an expert like Anita Silvey, with her thirty-five years at the heart of children’s book publishing, could put together an authoritative list like this one. Parents, grandparents, teachers, librarians, and bookstore clerks will feel completely comfortable recommending these books for any child, from infancy to almost-teens. Silvey includes, in addition to the 100 best, extensive lists of books to meet special needs and interests as well as classics, selected by age, to round out this extraordinarily useful work.

In addition to giving an age range and the plot of each book, Silvey relates the fascinating, often hilarious story behind the story, something only an insider in the field of children’s publishing could tell. *100 Best Books for Children* is as much fun to read as it is helpful.

100 Best Books for Children Details

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Author : Anita Silvey

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From Reader Review 100 Best Books for Children for online ebook

Joy Rancatore says

Anita Silvey's book brought back so many great memories of my childhood reading experiences. I was disappointed that I've only read 24 on her list; but I'm anxious to read almost all of them now!

100 Best Books for Children gives book lovers, parents and teachers a behind-the-scenes look at how these top books came to be and separates them by age categories. The stories behind both the books and their authors are fascinating. At the back of the book is a list of more top children's classics and a reading log to record thoughts for each of the 100 mentioned in detail. This book just fuels my passion that children should be given the love of reading from a young age, and it provides a great resource for finding the right book for the right child.

Here's my favorite quotation from the book: "Nothing in a child's intellectual development offers more pleasure or more excitement than a good book. Nothing lasts longer in memory than childhood reading experiences. And nothing ensures the success of a child more in society than being read to from infancy through young adulthood. Reading books to and with children is the single most important thing a parent, grandparent or significant adult can do." xi

Julia says

Out of the last two books that I had read this is one that actually turned out to be my favorite when the other was the one I was leaning towards. Although both cover the same topic there was enough differences in the books to make them widely different as well as in their presentations to the reader.

First of all this book wasn't presented in any fancy colors or gadgetry that would make it any different from a regular book. The cover that was chosen for this particular edition was one that was nice and did catch my eye but otherwise that is as fancy as it gets for this book.

What the book does make-up for in lacking aesthetics is that it recognizes readers from birth (a possible far reach) and allows more book titles per age group although one age group only had just four titles that were included. Furthermore the author recognizes that although an author may have more than one good book by opening up the author's other books that takes away from even more enjoyable titles thus the limit was one title per author. As a result there were lots of authors that I had read and enjoyed as a child but also plenty more that were new either since I hadn't got a chance to find them when I was young or since they are rather new favorites.

At the same time, the author gives the reader the basics of her book such as title, author, illustrator if there was one, publisher, date and page number. Then the reader is given a bit of a summary of a read as an introduction to an even longer and yummier story on relationships, how a story came to be, ties to history and so much more. For me it was paradise to get to know all this extra stuff right on top of what I did know for it allows me a chance to know the history that helps to intimate such already snug book friends.

Finally there is a list included in the back that allows the reader to find where their book can be found within the book if they are looking for a particular genre or even to find other books that should have been included

or would have been depending upon how truly far back you were going on being young.

The only other letdown for me was their was an included "journal" section to help readers who may be attempting to read these books. In my opinion it wasn't enough room for any detailed notes if you are the type that likes to get your nails down deep.

All in all it was a great book and one that I wouldn't mind having for my own collection, especially when starting to read pre-found treasures from yesteryears.

Elizabeth says

This is a really good reference for getting fresh ideas on books for kids. The author gives backstories on 100 books, and she gives lists of many more books grouped by age and subject matter. It is subjective, of course, but Silvey has obviously made children's literature her life's work.

Most of the books she recommends are ones I had read, but there were a few that were new. Really recommended for list-makers like me or for parents whose kids are stuck in a reading rut!

Cheryl says

Well, first off, the bit in the blurb that says "If we miss them when we are young, we'll miss them forever: no Hungry Caterpillar, no Winn-Dixie, no Roll of Thunder" is BS. The best books can appeal to people of any age. And I'm reading for just that reason: to see what I can catch up on.

I am familiar, as it turns out, with almost all of the books Silvey lists. Many of them are among my favorites. Of course, some of my favorites are missing, but that's to be expected.

There are spoilers (sans alerts!), especially for *The Giver*. If you've not read that, and its sequel, don't read Silvey's notes for that book!

Each of her micro-essays is interesting. Usually there's a tidbit about the author, illustrator, or making of the book. Usually there's a summary of what it's 'about.' Often there's context, why the book is valuable, what it teaches, which kinds of children, or teachers, like it.

Seldom, unfortunately, is there much of an analysis of what actually makes it a good book. Valuable lesson? Check. Interesting setting? Check. Accessible character? Check. But, is it *effective*, and how, and why? Well, I guess that might be beyond the scope of a populist book like this. But for those titles I don't appreciate, it would have maybe helped to have more explication. I am **still** not convinced that *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* is one of the top 100, or even 1000.

I do like her revelation of the idiom 'reading rebel' instead of 'reluctant reader' in the story behind *Stone Fox*. Apparently John Reynolds Gardiner was such a lad. I appreciate learning that the working title of *The Westing Game* was "Eight Imperfect Pairs of Heirs," which I prefer. This would be a handy accompaniment to a Newbery challenge, as many of Silvey's favorites are also the committees' favorites.

The specialized lists at the end are less relevant & helpful than the Listopias here, though. And I don't believe there's more than one or two books here that are less than 20 years old.

Most damning of all, imo, is that I got no (zero, 0, zilch) titles to add to my to-read lists. And though I have been inhaling children's books for many of the past five decades, I'm not as well-versed as Silvey must needs be, and I'm sure there are gems I've not yet become aware of.

Recommended to god-parents and new teachers, especially, as they develop libraries for the children they serve. Recommended to anyone interested.

Not *highly* recommended to anyone, especially not to my fellow fans of children's books who have already read so many: Lisa, Gundula, Ronyell... etc.... you-all can skip it.

3.5 stars rounded up because it was a quick & fairly engaging read, even given its imperfections as a resource.

Emily says

I'm always a little skeptical of a book that claims to have whittled down an enormous field of candidates to the "top 100" or "best 50" or whatever, but I think Ms. Silvey did a pretty good job here. She provides several paragraphs of background for each of the books, often with biographical information about the author and illustrator as well as brief commentary on the book itself and its impact. Plus, she includes a list called "Beyond the 100 Best" at the end of the book, so it will take you a while to run out of reading material.

I was reminded of many books I loved as a kid (*The Carrot Seed* by Ruth Krauss, *The Story of Ferdinand* by Munro Leaf, *Officer Buckle and Gloria* by Peggy Rathmann, and *Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day* by Judith Viorst, among others) and reached the limit on my library card checking them out so my kids can experience them too. And I discovered several gems that I haven't read before. My kids (especially the six-year-old) and I adored *Tuesday* by David Wiesner and my nine-year-old has read and re-read *The True Story of the 3 Little Pigs* by Jon Scieszka a dozen times. Some of the books on the list spoke to me (or my children) more than others, but it's a pretty safe bet that you'll find quite a few books on her lists that strike a chord with you.

So far we've worked our way through the board books, picture books, and books for beginning readers. And I've got 12 of the books she lists for young readers (ages 7 to 9) on hold at the library waiting for me to go get them. We still have a way to go to get through her list of books for middle readers (ages 8 to 11) and older readers (ages 11 to 12) and I think many of those will end up being our read-aloud bedtime books. The only question is which to read first...I can't wait!

For more book reviews, come visit my blog, Build Enough Bookshelves.

Tim Timberly says

I'm always looking for lists of good books, so I liked this book. The short essays on each book were very readable and provided fun insight into the stories behind the books.

Aline Newman says

Anita Silvey is the former publisher of children's books for Houghton Mifflin and a long-time book reviewer for and editor of The Horn Book Magazine. When it comes to children's books Anita has read and compared many thousands of them. In this list of the best, she gives the publishing details of each book and follows with a 400-500 word essay that summarizes the plot and gives the true, poignant, and often funny backstory. Sometimes this is the tale of how the book came to be written. Other times it is the story of how the author finally managed to get it published. Always it is fascinating and inspiring, especially to a new author like me. I love this book so much that I just ordered her new one, called Children's Book-a-Day Almanac.

Desertisland says

I wrote this brief review for library adult Summer Reading Program: "Children's book expert describes what makes notable classics enjoyed by both kids and adults, and also tells "story behind the story" on creation of many famous & beloved books which will fascinate aspiring writers & illustrators".

I'd already read pretty much all titles included (but may start re-reading some--being worth re-reading is one reason these books are on the list!) Began browsing through Silvey's "500 Great Books for Teens", and so may find some crossover works that can interest older readers which I may review for next adult Summer Reading Program.

(One reason I reviewed "100 Best Books for Children" for adult SRP is that at least one other adult kept turning in very short basic & bland remarks on recent picture books aimed at young children--getting chances with each "review" for adults prize drawing, which seemed to me not quite fair for those who'd read books hundreds of pages long. Maybe next year guidelines for the 3 levels-- children, teen & adults--might be stressed and clarified?)

Melissa says

I thought it was an interesting idea to narrow down a list of only 100 books for children. There were a lot of titles I agreed with and a few that I didn't. There was some interesting background for each of the titles. I've read most of the books, but am interested to read the ones I've missed.

Wanett says

I really enjoyed learning a bit about the creative process behind these books. Especially the details about who had difficulty being published and the number of drafts some projects went through. I also loved the biographical information. Writing was the second career for some authors and there were quite a few who didn't begin to write until very late in life. That is so inspiring to me.

I can't comment on whether I agree with all of the selections because I am unfamiliar with most of them. I

was not read to often as a child and when I began to select my own books I didn't really receive any guidance on the best or most "classic" ones. I borrowed this from the library, but I will be purchasing a copy for my own collection.

I read this for class. We had to choose a print info source and an online source of the same type. This book is technically a bibliography. I will be evaluating The World Shakespeare Bibliography Online <http://www.worldshakesbib.org/> for my online source.

Brittany says

Silvey, A. (2004). 100 best books for children. Boston: Houghton Mifflin.

Citation by: Brittany Payne

Type of Reference: Handbook

Call Number: Ref 011.62

Content/Scope: This resource selects the 100 best books published between 1902 and 2002 for children aged 0 to 12. It is a great reference tool for middle school libraries. Students will enjoy using this book as a reference when choosing books to read. Entries include title, author, illustrator, publisher, awards, age level and number of pages, as well as plot synopsis, background information about the writing of the book and how it was received by critics, and a brief description of the writing.

Accuracy/Authority/Bias: Although the topic can have the potential for being biased, the writing in this book is completely unbiased, showing a variety of children's books. The book accurately provides references outlining the 100 best books for children. This book was written by a respected children's book reviewer, editor, and publisher.

Arrangement/Presentation: The book is organized by age group, beginning with board books for ages 0-2, picture books, books for beginning readers, books for young readers, and books for middle readers.

Relation to other works: There are many handbooks available; this handbook is especially relevant for late elementary/middle school library media centers.

Accessibility/Diversity: This is an accessible, diverse guide to the 100 best children's books published between 1902 and 2002 for children between the ages of 0 and 12.

Cost: \$20

Professional Review:

100 Best Books for Children.

Silvey, Anita (author).

Apr. 2004. 208p. Houghton, hardcover, \$20 (0-618-27889-3). 011.62.

REVIEW. First published July, 2004 (Booklist).

Kelly says

In 2017, one of my goals was to read all 100 works featured in this book. To keep track of my progress, I made an Excel document with the titles and authors, separated into sections by age group. Having read all 100 books, I feel more confident in my "literary heritage." I'm also glad to have reread some old favorites as well as experiencing titles that are new to me. It's never too late to read quality children's literature! This is a fabulous resource for parents, teachers, and librarians.

Keli says

Synopsis

Parents and adults who work with children are sure to find some wonderful book suggestions for children from birth through twelve years old.

Review

Glancing through the table of contents, this book seems like a simple list of some of the most obvious children's books. Divided up by age group, the list includes titles such as *Goodnight Moon*, *The Snowy Day*, *Bridge to Terabithia* and *The Giver*. While the list doesn't offer any surprises, the discussion of them does. Silvey doesn't present a simple overview of familiar books. She goes into the story behind the stories. *Goodnight Moon* was the result of a dream. Had it not been for a chance encounter with an old schoolmate, the world might have been deprived of Dr. Seuss. The result is a well organized book that is sure to excite adults about sharing literature with children. And while any comprehensive book list would need to go far beyond the titles presented here, this is an excellent base.

Critical Reviews

Publisher's Weekly

PW gives a very cut and dry review of this book. It relates the organization, the author's credentials, a sampling of titles and a brief mention of the background information. No critical information is included.

School Library Journal

SLJ, on the other hand, offers a very comprehensive review of the contents of the book. Also, it is written in the same style as the book. This review would actually make me excited to read the book.

Other Bibliographic Information

Heather says

I really just sort of skimmed this book, but promptly created a spreadsheet with a column for myself and each of my kids. What I liked best about this book was the scope of criteria Ms. Silvey applied in selecting her books. A good story is important, of course, but she also took true literary criteria into consideration. This means you'll see books with a variety of storytelling methods, books with multi-cultural themes, books that tackle challenging issues, and books that you've never heard of before. I consider myself well read but was dismayed to see how few of the books on this list are ones I've read (though two of my favorite books of all time are one the list!). I'm looking forward to introducing myself and my children to these books and discovering for myself how great they might be.

Monique says

So this book was short and sweet, filled with summaries and reminders of old favorites, some you heard about and never read and others you feel ashamed you have never heard of like Sadako and the Thousand Paper Cranes because they are great! Out of the 100 I would only modestly say I have read maybe twenty of them but that's throughout my lifetime I only wish I had discovered some of these gems while growing up..I loved getting reintroduced to little kid books I could share with my precious niece, godchildren and all the special children I know but also books turned movies like The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe, to the Giver, the BFG, and most recently A Wrinkle in Time and I loved all of it, it reawakened my obsession with the Phantom Tollbooth the book and the movie and made me remember again why I loved reading as a child, the books, the nonsensical impossible scenarios, loved it all and needed a reminder tonight about some of the classics--Come on Ramona and Beezus, Caps for Sale and ugh I could go on and on but enjoyed reminiscing with this lil book!
