

The 2015 Holiday Buying Guide from Reading Rockets



Books as Gifts

Lots of things go away quickly. But stories and books have sticking power and can be shared time and time again. Try a new story, revisit an old favorite. How about a story of fact or perhaps a fantasy? Stories can be read alone, together, aloud or quietly. Pick up a book for yourself and your favorite child this season. You'll find lists by age, for kids 0-12 years old.

Happy Holidays from Reading Rockets!

Books for children 0-3 years old

Baa, Baa, Black Sheep

by Jane Cabrera

Child-friendly illustrations bring the additional verses to the familiar rhyme to life in this lively recasting.

Bear Can Dance!

by Suzanne Bloom

Music can be magical as Bear discovers when music inspires him to dance – to glide across the wintry landscape.

Edible Numbers

by Jennifer Vogel Bass

Count colorful fruits and veggies from one to twelve as one examines the appealing photographs. This is a fine companion to the author's *Edible Colors* (2014).

Jack Wants a Snack

by Pat Schories

Jack wants to join the child's tea party but so does a chipmunk. The adventure unfolds wordlessly in soft illustrations.

I Get Dressed

by David McPhail

Various animals don clothing from gloves to hats. Each is presented on the page with a single word.

I Play

by David McPhail

Single verbs accompany charming illustrations on each open page of this sturdy book to describe a bear cub at play. Pastel backgrounds allow the strong lines to stand out.

Playful Pigs from A to Z

by Anita Lobel

Whimsy abounds in the gentle colors and playful pigs from A to Z. Alliterative sentences describe the activities and suggest other things that begin with the letter.

Rhymoceros

by Janik Coat

Simple shapes and few words are used in this sturdy and sophisticated board book that focuses on rhyming words. The author's *Hippopposites* (2012) is equally appealing (and sophisticated).



Books for children 3-6 years old

Bear Ate Your Sandwich

by Julia Sarcone-Roach

A bear finds his way to the city where a sandwich is left unattended. Does the bear eat it before returning to the forest – or could it be someone else? Careful examination of the illustrations makes one wonder in this charming narration with slyly humorous and elucidating illustrations.

Bear's Surprise

by Benjamin Chaud

Baby bear sets off to find his father, jaunting through intricate illustrations on large pages. The oversized format is sure to engage young readers time and time again as they seek and find more and more details.

A Bear's Year

by Kathy Duval

A mother bear teaches her cubs what they'll need to know as they grow. Lyrical language and gentle illustrations follow the bears over a year.

Big Bear, Little Chair

by Lizi Boyd

The tall format holds surprises for readers in this sophisticated, engaging book of opposites. Indeed there is a big bear and a small chair but there is also a big penguin and a little iceberg and other even less likely juxtapositions. Illustrations use limited but strong color and bold lines with a unique result.

The Bus Ride

by Marianne Dubuc

A girl takes the bus alone for the first time to visit her grandmother though she's really not traveling along. A cast of animals accompany her on the journey presented in the girl's narration and expressive illustrations presented in a long format reminiscent of the shape of a bus.

Counting Lions: Portraits from the Wild

by Katie Cotton

Highly realistic portraits for familiar animals from one to 10 are presented with a tidbit of information about where and how they live. But this is more than a simple (and gorgeous) counting book. Each animal is either endangered or threatened; additional information at the end brings readers up to date with each animal's status.

Goodnight Songs

by Margaret Wise Brown

A dozen original lullabies by the author of *Good Night Moon* are presented here for the first time. Each sweet piece has been newly illustrated by a well-known illustrator in distinctive styles, ranging from Melissa Sweet to Sean Qualls. A CD is included.

The House That's Your Home

by Sally Lloyd-Jones

It is a family that makes a house a home described here in rhythmic language and depicted in idealized, soft illustrations.

Jumping Off Library Shelves: A Book of Poems

selected by Lee Bennett Hopkins

What do books and libraries mean to readers young or old? Fifteen poems pay tribute to just that. Poets included are generally well known and are accompanied by jaunty, playful illustrations which together are sure to please.

Last Stop on Market Street

by Matt de la Peña

A boy wonders why he and his grandmother are taking the long bus ride after church. Where are they going – and why? They share their time with those less fortunate by serving in a soup kitchen. Colorful, angular illustrations capture the cross-town trip and the eventual pleasure they both gain from their efforts.

Look and Be Grateful

by Tomie dePaola

Every day holds something for which children and adults can be grateful. This becomes clear in this small book which features dePaola's signature illustrations in a light colors combined with straightforward, simple language.

Lost. Found.

by Marsha Diane Arnold

An economy of words and animated line drawings with a dash of red combines to tell the story of a bear that loses a scarf but finds companionship. Two words describe the satisfying action on each page: Lost. Found.

Mango, Abuela, and Me

by Meg Medina

Mia must share her room with Abuela but she and her grandmother can't even speak the same language! How they grow comfortable with each other and learn to communicate – even without language – is affectionately conveyed through Mia's narration and gentle, warm illustrations

Mousetropolis

by R. Gregory Christie

Two mice visit each other: the country dweller visits his urban cousin followed by the urban mouse going country after which each decides their own home is best. Handsome illustrations and contemporary language distinguish this retelling of a traditional fable.

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More books for children 3-6 years old

My Dog, Bob

by Richard Torrey

Bob is a talented dog but not in the usual ways. The understated, easier to read text combines with cartoon line drawings for a very funny and quite satisfying look at Bob, his boy and the competition they "lose."

Over in the Wetlands: A Hurricane-on-the-Bayou Story

by Caroline Starr Rose

As a hurricane approaches, animals and their behavior before a storm are described using the cadence of the familiar rhyme, "Over in the Meadow," Handsome, realistic illustration evoke the mood of the weather and its impact.

The Queen's Hat

by Steve Antony

Visit some of London's landmarks as the palace guards chase down the queen's hat that the wind blew off her head. Royal head and hat are reunited after the jaunt shared on open pages that use strong line and dashes of color for a regal read.

R Is for Rocket: An ABC Book

by Tad Hills

The charming black and white pup, Rocket, and other familiar characters from the author are back for an alliterative excursion through the alphabet. Each letter gets its own double page spread on which the letter is highlighted.

Red: A Crayon's Story

by Michael Hall

Red is a crayon though it's really a blue crayon with a red label. When Red's friends convince Red of where its true talents are, things change for the better. This understated, gently humorous story is illustrated in an appealing graphic style with crayon scrawls.

Sea Bones

by Bob Barner

Gentle rhymes are used to introduce sea creatures and their bones (or as in the case of jellyfish, lack of). Additional information is included for each creature. Colorful mixed media illustrations make an appealing and accessible.

Sewing Stories: Harriet Powers' Journey from Slavery to Artist

by Barbara Herkert

Harriet Powers was born into slavery but learned a great deal about fabric and quilting which she used when freed after the Civil War. Her story unfolds in upbeat illustrations and informative text. An author's note provides additional insight into the artist and her quilts.

Special Delivery

by Philip Stead

How young Sadie manages to deliver the elephant to her Great-Aunt Josephine makes for a laugh inducing romp. The silly story is told through comic illustration and an unassuming text with lots of sound effects.

Toys Meet Snow

by Emily Jenkins

Two plush toys, Stingray and a buffalo named Lumpy, and Plastic, a red ball, want to play in the snow. And so they do! Lush illustrations and rich language come together in the toys' first picture book adventure. (The characters were first introduced in longer novels; all are ideal as read-alouds for younger children.)

Tower of Giraffes: Animals in Groups

by Anna Wright

Animals of all types live in groups, have different behaviors and are downright fascinating as presented here. An informal text combines with handsome line drawings to present a variety of domestic and wild animals, sure to build vocabulary and interest.

¡Vámonos! Lets Go!

by René Colato Laínez

The familiar "Wheels on the Bus" has been augmented (e.g., a fire truck goes "woo-oo"), adapted and presented here in Spanish and English. The accompanying illustrations are cheery, adding humor and verve.

Waiting

by Kevin Henkes

"There were five of them. And they were waiting..." Though seasons change, each waiting toy is ultimately satisfied and all are surprised by the latest addition. Gentle illustrations and text capture the difficulty of waiting and the pleasure when it is over.

Where's the Pair? A Spotting Book

by Britta Teckentrup

A rhyming text describes the animals to be found on highly detailed, densely illustrated pages. It takes patience and persistence to identify the creatures but the satisfaction gleaned from this playful book is worth it!



Books for children 6-9 years old

The 50 States: Explore the U.S.A with 50 Fact-filled Maps!

by Gabrielle Balkan

Open the large formatted book and explore the United States. Each state (and the District of Columbia) is presented handsome, colorful, and highly informative maps to create a memorable journey.

Finding the Music/En pos de la musica

by Jennifer Torres

Reyna accidentally breaks her abuelo's vihuela and tries to fix it before her family finds out. Told in both Spanish and English, young readers will recognize the girl's predicament and revel in the resolution in this realistically illustrated tale.

Finding Winnie: The True Story of the World's Most Famous Bear

by Lindsay Maltick

A mother tells her child the story of the real Winne, the true story of how a young veterinarian left his native Canada to fight during the First World War. The bear cub he found became a part of his military before finding a more permanent home and inspired a childhood classic. Gentle illustrations depict the fondness between the man and bear and that shared by mother and child pictured in spot illustrations. Factual information about Harry Colebourn is included as an album. Another book about how Winnie-the-Pooh came to life is presented by Sally Walker in *Winnie: The True Story of the Bear Who Inspired Winnie-the-Pooh* (Holt) with gentle watercolor illustration.

Francine Poulet Meets the Ghost Raccoon

by Kate diCamillo

Animal control officer Francine Poulet has a crisis of confidence when the animal comes out on top after Francine's first encounter with the screaming "ghost" raccoon. Humor abounds in both the story and illustrations in this rollicking and very satisfying saga.

Growing Up Pedro: How the Martinez Brothers Made It from the Dominican Republic All the Way to the Major Leagues

by Matt Tavares

Pedro Martinez grew up in the Dominican Republic but became a star in baseball's major leagues. His life is presented in luminous illustrations and readable text all presented in a large and appealing format.

Home

by Carson Ellis

Where is home? What makes a home? People throughout history, around the world, and in all cultures have made their homes in different structures to suit different needs which are explored here in highly detailed, often playful illustrations and limited text.

I Don't Like Snakes

by Nicola Davies

A girl lives in a family of snake-lovers who dispel the myths that make her dislike the often misunderstood reptile. Factual information combines with lively story illustrated in distinctly different styles to highlight the differences between them.

Little Robot

by Ben Hatke

A little girl activates a robot and finds a friend but now must save her friend from fierce, nasty robots. This nearly wordless adventure is presented in comic book form and is sure to delight young readers.

Lulu and the Hamster in the Night

by Hilary McKay

While at a sleepover at Nan's house, Lulu must keep her hamster safe from Nan's cats – and a secret from rodent-fearing Nan. Lulu's latest adventure can stand alone and is as gently humorous and graciously illustrated as others in the series.

Mummy Cat

by Marcus Ewert

A cat, now a mummy, explores the pyramid in search of his much-loved owner, the young queen, Hatshepsut. Stylized illustrations effectively present ancient Egypt, its hieroglyphics, and the affection between a pet and its owner. Back matter introduces mummies as well as to the period and place in which they were used.

My Pen

by Christopher Myers

A boy using only a pen creates worlds and makes the impossible possible. Black/white line drawings and a first person narrative are effectively used to celebrate what can be done when imagination and the act of creation come together.

Poems in the Attic

by Nikki Grimes

While visiting her grandmother, a girl discovers poems written by her mother as a child traveling with her military family. The girl's poetic musings are juxtaposed to her mother's which are illustrated to show a different period and various places. As the family history unfolds, the connection between generations becomes clear in this engaging and very timely book.

Queen of the Diamond

by Emily McCully

Lizzie Murphy was always athletic. Being a girl in the early 20th century might have limited some girls, but not Lizzie who went on to play professional baseball. This brief look at one girl's ambition is realistically illustrated and is sure to inspire.

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More books for children 6-9 years old

Raindrops Roll

by April Pulley Sayre

Stunning photographs accompanied by lyrical text describe rain and its effects in a rainforest and on people. This handsome book can be read as poetry, examined for its photography, and/or used as an introduction to the water cycle and weather.

Scratch Scratch Scraww Plop

by Kitty Crowther

A young frog has trouble sleeping as there are strange noises all around. His father hears them, too, and so they seek out the source of the noises before finally sleeping. The recognizable story is gently told accompanied by illustrations that evoke the nighttime pond.

Sharks Have Six Senses

by John F. Waters

Sharks have not five but six senses – all used to help them survive and even thrive. “Electroreception” is the sixth sense that allows sharks to detect electric fields emitted by other animals. This introduction to sharks is effectively illustrated with collage and will likely inform as well as dispel shark myths..

Sona and the Wedding Game

by Kashmira Sheth

Sona’s grandparents travel to America from India for the wedding of Sona’s sister. The Hindu wedding traditions are followed including the game in which the younger sibling hides the groom’s shoes. Richly hued illustrations depict the activities and the fun of a family celebration.

Tree of Wonder: The Many Marvelous Lives of a Rainforest Tree

by Kate Messner

What and how many creatures make their home in one almond tree? Count the animals and insects that reside in one single Latin American rainforest tree in lush illustrations and straightforward text.

Trombone Shorty

by Trou “Trombone Shorty” Andrews

Troy Andrews grew up in a New Orleans family of musicians so it’s not surprising that he, too, grew up playing the trombone and singing. His lively narration is rhythmic, sprinkled with colloquialism and enhanced by collage and paint illustrations.

28 Days: Moments in Black History that Changed the World

by Charles Smith

History is made up of moments. Twenty-eight moments revealed in poetry, well-known quotes, and more and rich, swirling illustrations are presented – one for each of the days in Black History Month. This creative presentation, however, amply demonstrates that African American history is worth sharing all year.

Water Is Water

by Miranda Paul

Water takes different forms during each season of the year which readers see as young siblings share a year. Together they experience the fog and rain of autumn, winter’s snow and ice and more. Realistic watercolors illustrate the fun and the weather in this lyrical introduction to the water cycle. Back matter provides more specific information.

Whale Trails

by Lisa Cline-Ransome

A girl is the first mate on her father’s whale-watching boat, the Cuffee, effectively contrasting whale beliefs and traditions between “Now” and “Before Now”. Illustrations in sepia tones depict earlier times while full-color illustrations show the contemporary. An author’s note explains the inspiration for the book and provides additional whale information.

Where’s the Baboon?

by Michael Escoffier

Playing with words is fun in this spirited combination of word and image as both hold the answer to the questions asked. For example, the double page spread on which “Who bought the apple?” is asked, the arm of an ape can be seen. The letters in the answer are in a different color as well for the more text oriented in this fresh and fun book.

Who Done It?

by Olivier Tallec

Only one in a large, good-humored cast of cartoon human and animal characters enacts the answers to questions posed such as “Who didn’t get enough sleep?” and “Who ate all the jam?” Careful examination is needed but sure to result in chuckles and lots of re-readings.



Books for children 9-12 years old

Astounding Broccoli Boy

by Frank Cottrell Boyce

Strange and humorous adventures begin when Rory and his nemesis, Tommy-Lee, are placed in a secret isolation ward when they turn bright green from a strange ailment. Rory's understated narration reveals likeable, quirky characters in unlikely but engaging circumstances.

Book Scavenger

by Jennifer Chambliss Bertman

Emily doesn't mind her family's annual move because San Francisco is home to Garrison Griswold, book publisher. But there's a nefarious plot against Griswold, creator of Book Scavenger. How will Emily and her new friend, James, solve the mystery? Find out in this fast-paced, often funny, sometimes tense mystery-adventure.

Confessions of an Imaginary Friend: A Memoir

by Michelle Cuevas

Eight year old Jacque Papier wonders why he is ignored by everyone; is it because they dislike him? However, he learns that he isn't quite real. Does an imaginary friend exist if no one imagines him? Readers will certainly find Jacque, his imaginary associates as well as the more tangible characters authentic in this gentle and wise "memoir."

The Curious World of Calpurnia Tate

by Jacqueline Kelly

Even though Calpurnia (aka Callie Vee) is in a new century, things for the spunky, bright, and science-loving 13-year old haven't changed. It seems that only her younger brother Travis who brings home stray animals and Granddaddy support Callie's interests in spite of the period and place in which they live. The characters first introduced in *The Evolution of Calpurnia Tate* (2009) are just as engaging in this stand-alone sequel.

The Death of the Hat: A Brief History of Poetry in 50 Objects

selected by Paul Janeczko

An introduction presents an overview of the collection's unique perspective: poetry from different historical periods connected by poems about objects. A range of poets and places are presented, each illustrated by loose watercolor illustrations. An opening poem by Eloise Greenfield entitled "Things" provides a lively start to this appealing collection.

The Doldrums

by Nicolas Cannon

Since his grandparents disappeared on an iceberg, Archer's mother won't let the well-mannered boy out of the museum-like house. Still, he finds unique adventures and companionship in this fast-paced, charming, witty and well written novel presented in a handsomely illustrated format.

Fish in a Tree

by Lynda Mullaly Hunt

Even though she's a math whiz, Ally struggles to make sense of words on a page – that is until she meets Mr. Daniels. This teacher is studying for a degree in helping children learn to read using different techniques – which open Ally's world in many ways. Based on the author's own experiences, Ally's voice is successfully used to create a realistic and touching novel.

Frank Einstein and the Brain Turbo

by Jon Scieszka

Boy genius, Frank Einstein, and friends explore energy and other science topics as they relate to their everyday interests. The latest in the series is filled with wordplay, science ideas and additional silliness to engage even the most reluctant readers. The heavily illustrated book will not disappoint Frank Einstein fans.

Gone Crazy in Alabama

by Rita Williams-Garcia

The Gaither sisters, Delphine, Vonetta, and Fern, first introduced in *One Crazy Summer* (2010) and *P.S. Be Eleven* (2013) are back and each with her own distinct personality. While visiting their grandmother, great grandmother and other relatives, they are reminded that Alabama in 1969 is not like their home in Brooklyn. Humor and tension make this last story about the Gaither girls plausible and memorable.

Hiawatha and the Peacemaker

by Robbie Robertson

The author retells the saga of Hiawatha who with the Peacemaker was instrumental in creating the federation of tribes, known as the Great Iroquois Nation. Dramatic illustrations evoke mystery and drama to complement the straightforward narration. An author's note concludes this sophisticated, unique and handsome book.

The Imaginary

by A.F. Harrold

Rudger, Amanda's imaginary friend, and Amanda, a human girl share adventure (and alternate telling the story) of their everyday adventures – and how they thwart an evil plot to rid the world of all imaginaries. Tension builds in this well-paced, inventive novel enhanced by evocative black/white illustrations.

The Inker's Shadow

by Allen Say

Caldecott medalist, Allen Say, recounts his teenage years after moving to California from his native Japan. Original art, comics, photographs and an informal narration reveal the artist's sometimes isolated, often lonely teenage years. This companion to Say's *Drawing From Memory* (2011) continues his story but stands alone.

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More books for children 9-12 years old

Jump Back, Paul: The Life and Poems of Paul Laurence Dunbar

by Sally Derby

The informal narrative detailing the life of 19th century African American poet, Paul Laurence Dunbar, is interspersed with his poetry. Both dialectic and formal poetry is presented to illuminate the writer, his work and the times in which he lived. Back matter includes a timeline, booklist, and sources used. Line drawings further enhance the presentation.

Kid Athletes: True Tales of Childhood of Sports Legends

by David Stabler

Glimpse stories from the childhoods of well-known athletes from a variety of sports. People range from Babe Ruth to Yao Ming, Julie Krone to Tiger Woods with lots in between. Cartoon illustrations are sprinkled throughout for an inviting package that ends with a bibliography and an index.

Mesmerized: How Ben Franklin Solved a Mystery that Baffled All of France

by Mara Rockliff

This episode details the time when Benjamin Franklin was in France and how he explained the mysterious cures proffered by Dr. Franz Mesmer. The light touch in a format reminiscent of a graphic novel makes the snippet of history accessible and appealing. Source notes complete the book.

Mission: Wolf Rescue

by Kitson Janyinka with Daniel Raven-Ellison

Join National Geographic Explorer, Daniel Raven-Ellison, as he takes a comprehensive look at wolves and what individuals can do to help their survival in the wild. Handsome full color photographs are interspersed with text for an appealing format in this informative and empowering presentation.

Rhythm Ride: A Road Trip Through the Motown Sound

by Andrea Davis Pinkney

Listen to the "groove" as readers make their way through the history of Motown, the people who made and performed it, and the times in which it was performed. The history of Motown is inextricably tied to the history of African Americans in the U.S. and is presented here in vivacious narrative and extended by images of the time. Source notes and other back matter complete the riveting portrait.

Spidermania: Friends on the Web

by Alexandra Siy and Dennis Kunkle

In order "To know a spider you must first look into its eyes" – literally! Readers can do so in this fascinating look at a variety of spiders through a series of close up, full color photographs and lucid text to describe the characteristics of spiders. Even those with arachnophobia will appreciate the unusual but thorough approach to these creatures.

Terrible Typhoid Mary: A True Story of the Deadliest Cook in America

by Susan Campbell Bartoletti

Poor Mary Mallon did not realize that she carried a disease that might (and sometimes did) kill the families for whom she cooked. How the early 20th century medical mystery was solved is presented in a well-researched, spellbinding narrative. In addition, Gail Jarrow's *Fatal Fever: Typhoid Mary* (Calkins Creek) focuses on those responsible for tracing Mary.

Why'd They Wear That? Fashion as the Mirror of History

by Sarah Albee

How the times in which people live is reflected in what they wear is presented in a crisp text and loads of illustration. Readers travel through time beginning with fashions seen in hieroglyphics to the space age. Well organized and engaging, this is sure to inform as well as intrigue – and perhaps inspire further exploration of history or fashion.



Audiobooks to share with kids of all ages

Hiawatha and the Peacemaker

by Robbie Robertson, narrated by Piter Marek

Sophisticated listeners will appreciate the reading of the story of Hiawatha who with the Peacemaker brings the Iroquois nations together. Be sure to listen with the handsomely illustrated book as one reading is with page turn signals.

H.O.R.S.E.: A Game of Imagination and Basketball

by Christopher Myers, narrated by Dion Graham

The fun of friends playing a game of basketball comes to life.

Josephine: The Dazzling Life of Josephine Baker

by Patricia Hruby Powell

Josephine Baker's life and struggles of this performer and activist comes to life.

The Penderwicks in Spring

by Jeanne Birdsall, narrated by Susan Denaker

Spring holds many surprises for each of the Penderwicks in this latest adventure.

Revolution

by Deborah Wiles

A full cast voices this production which brings to life the summer of 1964 and the changes that were taking place in Greenwood, Mississippi.