Reading Rockets 2016 Holiday Buying Guide

Books as Gifts

There’s nothing better on a chilly winter day than to curl up with a book. In this collection, you’ll find stories filled with high adventure, biographies, historical fiction and real life events, Greek myths, stories about kids from around the world, books about all kinds of science (from animals to weather), graphic novels, and so much more. All are made to share. So pick up a book, share a story, learn something new — and enjoy the season!

Books for children 0-3 years old

Aerospace Engineering and Quarks
(Baby Loves series)
by Ruth Spiro
There is plenty to engage young children in these simple books (part of the Baby Loves series) that introduce basic science ideas and science vocabulary. The book titles are probably more for the adults than the young children for whom these board books are intended!

Black Cat and White Cat
by Claire Garralon
White Cat lives in a black home while Black Cat lives in a white one. They disappear when they visit the other, but find a colorful answer to their dilemma.

Cityblock
by Christopher Franceschelli
Each page turn reveals a particular part of the city. From shoes in which people walk around to a good story at the bookstore, readers can look closely at a vibrant city.

Everyone Says Goodnight
by Hiroyuki Arai
Split pages reveal animals and children, first awake and then asleep, until all are cozily tucked in with a turn of a page. Simple, appealing illustrations and straightforward text complete this bedtime package.

Goose on the Farm
by Laura Wall
Before going on a school trip, Sophie and Goose start with a book, have lunch, then travel to the farm. There they meet fluffy chicks, muddy pigs, and more before returning home. Colorful illustrations use simple line on plain backgrounds and simple language.

My Car/Mi carro
by Byron Barton
Sam is the man who takes good care of his car, driving it to work as a bus driver. In this bilingual version of the book, Sam’s simple saga is presented in Spanish and English, equally charming in both languages.

A Number Slumber
by Suzanne Bloom
Different animals have different rituals before bed. From “ten terribly tired tigers” to “one weary wombat” — alliterative language counts down to sleep. The cozy countdown is illustrated with soft lines and comforting colors for a sweet bedtime book.

Sing with Me
by Naoko Stoop
Adults may need to be reminded of standard songs to share with young children all of which are just right to encourage the youngest singer. Imaginative illustrations cover each double page spread in this engaging volume.

Touch Think Learn: ABC
by Xavier Deneux
Feel the raised letters; see where they fit in on the opposing page. Enjoy the bright images as you go through the alphabet accompanied by boldly colored objects that start with each letter.

Whose Shoes: A Shoe for Every Job
by Stephen Swinburne
Some people don’t wear any shoes at all. Other people wear special shoes for their work. Take a close look to see if you can identify who wears those shoes! Clear photographs and simple text introduce the notion of special footwear.
Animals in Winter
by Jenny F. VanVoorst
What do animals do in winter? In simple language and color photographs animal habits are examined. New readers will find the introduction in this series accessible and may use it as a springboard to explore topics in greater depth.

Before Morning
by Joyce Sidman
Scratchboard illustrations accompany an invocation, a poem that invites something to happen. Here a girl wants the world to slow down just a bit so her pilot mother doesn't have to leave. What happens before morning? A huge snowfall slows everything down.

Best in Snow
by April Pulley Sayre
Lyrical rhymes and gorgeous color photographs capture the magic of winter. The combination of image and word also explores the water cycle and animals in the winter.

Emma and Julia Love Ballet
by Barbara McClintock
Julia is a professional dancer; Emma is a young girl taking ballet lessons. Their training and performances parallel until the two meet backstage for a hug after Julia performs on stage. Ballet lovers of all ages will enjoy the detailed illustrations and portraits of two dancers.

Esquivel! Space-Age Sound Artist
by Susan Wood
Meet Juan García Esquivel whose contributions to music can still be heard. From his early days in Mexico, Juan experimented to find just the right sounds for his music. More information is included at the end of this lively picture book biography.

Every Color
by Erin Eitter Kono
A passing seagull gives a polar bear a rainbow in a letter written by a faraway girl. When the polar bear continues to feel sad, he joins up with the girl and together they travel the world, seeing colors all around. The duo is welcomed home by the colors of the aurora borealis and the warmth of friendship from the other animals.

First Snow
by Bomi Park
A young child hears something outside — “pit; pit; pit against the window.” It’s the first snow! She dons her clothes and goes out to play. In a dreamlike sequence, she and other children make snowmen before the girl returns to her own backyard.

The Friend Ship
by Kat Yeh
Lonely Hedgehog builds a boat to look for the elusive friendship. As Hedgehog travels, other animals fill the boat. A wise elephant teaches Hedgehog and the others that friendship was on board all the time.

Giant Squid
by Candace Fleming
Dramatic illustrations and an equally dramatic narration combine to present the giant squid. Just as quickly as the squid emerges from its dark world to feed, it is gone. The stunning images and rich language to move this intriguing book quickly, swimmingly along.

Grumbles from the Town: Mother Goose Voices with a Twist
by Jane Yolen and Rebecca Kai Dotlich
Children familiar with traditional rhymes will enjoy these take-offs, while those who don't know them will enjoy the sound of the poetry read aloud. Humorous illustrations echo the tone of the poetry in this playful collection.

A Hat for Mrs. Goldman
by Michelle Edwards
When Sophie was born, her neighbor made Sophie a hat. Now that Sophie is big, she makes pom-poms for Mrs. Goldman’s hats. Sophie then makes a very special hat for Mrs. Goldman especially for when they walk the dog, Fifi. Hat-making instructions are included in this charming story of friendship.

Hotel Bruce
by Ryan Higgins
Bruce the bear and parent to four young geese returns from his migration trip ready to rest at home. He’s not ready, however, for his den to turn into Hotel Bruce, filled with animals of all types and stripes. Equally funny as the first book, Mother Bruce, this is sure to delight adults and children.

Imagine a City
by Elise Hurst
Join a mother and her children on an imaginative journey to places where bears ride bicycles and wear scarves, lions read books, and buses are fish that fly through the clouds. Highly detailed, inventive black and white illustrations with splashes of red move the journey along until the very satisfying conclusion.

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**Little Penguins**  
by Cynthia Rylant  
When the little penguins see snowflakes, they wonder how many? There are many! They dress for the weather and go play in the snow, tired and content when it’s time for bed. This is a charming, whimsical, wintery tale.

**Sound of Silence**  
by Katrina Goldsaito  
When Yoshio opens his door, the sounds of Tokyo surround him. Where would he find silence? Not at home or in school or in the forest. No, Yoshio finds silence “between and underneath every sound.” Detailed illustrations show the contemporary Japanese city.

**Look Up!**  
by Jung Jin-Ho  
Look over the ledge with the child watching other kids play far below. What does she see? When they look up and see her, she is joins them below with the promise of friendship. Aerial views and limited text make this visual experience memorable, especially when we see the child who watched from above; her wheelchair does not impede her at all.

**There Is a Tribe of Kids**  
by Lane Smith  
A colony of penguins, a pod of whales, a formation of rocks, and other groups of animate and inanimate things bring a lonely child to his own group. The joyful reunion creates a family. Stylized illustrations are rich with humor and liveliness, deserving of many readings.

**Madeline Finn and the Library Dog**  
by Lisa Papp  
Madeline Finn likes many things but reading aloud is not one of them. That is until she meets a big white dog named Bonnie at the library. Reading to Bonnie helps Madeline to read aloud capably in front of her classroom. Soft pastel illustrations depict a timid reader and a patient dog and how the mild canine boosts Madeline’s confidence and gives her a surprise.

**Who What Where?**  
by Olivier Tallec  
A question is asked on each horizontal page; the answer is on the next page — but a keen eye is needed to figure it out by looking carefully at a line-up of suspects. The characters are comical in recognizable situations. (Happily, a key to the right answers appears at the very end.)

**Marta! Big and Small**  
by Jen Arena  
Marta is a little girl who is learning that it’s all in how you look at things! To a roaring lion, “Marta is tranquila. Quiet. Very quiet.” But “To a rabbit, Marta is ruidosa! Loud. Very loud.” Opposites are presented in simple English and Spanish.

**A Unicorn Named Sparkle**  
by Amy Young  
The unicorn that Lucy got for 25 cents isn’t the special Sparkle she had envisioned. This unicorn resembles a speckled goat plus he’s got fleas and is quite naughty. Lucy considers returning Sparkle but discovers that she loves him in spite of his peculiarities.

**Mister Pip**  
by Thereza Rowe  
After a busy night in the neighborhood, Mr. Pip, the cat, tries to find a quiet place to sleep. That’s easier said than done! Vacuum cleaners, canoodlers, and more make noises that keep the poor feline awake! Stylized illustrations in rich colors and lots of alliterative language create an irresistible tale.

**Rudas: Niño’s Horrendous Hermanitas**  
by Yuyi Morales  
Niño is back and is hard to defeat — except when the horrible little girls don’t play by the rules! Almost surreal illustrations add humor and surprise as they roll across the pages to a cozy conclusion. Spanish and English are used throughout for a vivacious romp.
Antsy Ansel: Ansel Adams, a Life in Nature
by Cindy Jenson-Elliott
The best thing to calm Ansel down was the outdoors. The story of how a fidgety boy evolved into a celebrated nature photographer is told in textured collages and lively text. Additional information about Adams and some of his iconic photographs conclude this engaging book.

Coyote Moon
by Maria Gianferrari
She's a coyote looking to feed her cubs as she travels across a recognizable landscape: a golf course and suburban houses. As the sun rise, before she heads back to feed her cubs, she looks up to see a child watching her from the safety of his bedroom. Luminous illustrations from varied perspectives heighten the drama of the coyote's journey.

The Deadliest Creature in the World
by Brenda Guiberson
Spectacular, realistic illustrations accompany a chatty and surprisingly nonthreatening description of deadly creatures from around the globe. Which is the deadliest? Is it the toxin-changing geographic cone snail or could it be a short-tailed shrew that delivers venom through grooved teeth? Readers of all ages will be fascinated by this book from the same team who gave us The Most Amazing Creature in the Sea.

Dining with Dinosaurs: A Tasty Guide to Mesozoic Munching
by Hannah Bonner
Lots of different types of “vores” lived during the Mesozoic era: insectivores, piscivores, even dinovores. The names suggest what each type of creature ate in this informal look at the different types of eating habits. Cartoon illustrations make this an informative, entertaining first look at the period and its inhabitants.

Fascinating: The Life of Leonard Nimoy
by Richard Michelson
Leonard Nimoy's friend, an author and poet, presents a biography of the Star Trek hero for young readers. Young Leonard, known as Lenny, aspired to become an actor. His father told him that actors starve; musicians will always eat. The straightforward text concludes with an author’s note and a photo of the writer and his friend.

Hippopotamister
by John Patrick Green
“The old City Zoo was falling apart.” So Red Panda and his friend, Hippo, get jobs among humans. Hippo excels at all of his work as Hippopotamister, but he finds he's happiest when he can be himself! This graphic novel is fresh and funny and sure to engage young readers.

Lucy
by Randy Cecil
The story of a small dog, the girl who loves her, and the girl's struggling father come together in four acts. Detailed, black and white illustrations that appear as though in a spotlight effectively convey the daily intersections of these lives.

Mad Scientist Academy: The Weather Disaster
by Matthew McElligott
Factual information about weather and the water cycle is embedded in the comic graphic novel. Welcome to the Mad Scientist Academy, where slapstick humor and fast-paced action come together in a silly but engaging romp.

Miss Paul and the President: The Creative Campaign for Women's Right to Vote
by Dean Robbins
In 1918, young woman named Alice Paul and the National Women's Party convinced President Woodrow Wilson to support women's right to vote. Still, women would not get the vote for two more years! Alice's story is told for younger readers in translucent watercolors and a lighthearted narrative.

Penguin Problems
by Jory John
A dour little penguin has problems. He doesn't like snow (it's too bright). He can't fly. And he's hungry. A wise walrus reminds him of the beauty all around … but does this appease the penguin? Understated humor in simple, textured illustrations and the penguin's narration create a sophisticated and very funny book.

Piper Green and the Fairy Tree: The Sea Pony
by Ellen Potter
Piper Green lives off the coast of Maine on Peek-a-Boo Island. Could it be the fairy tree that grows in her front yard that brings her the pony? This latest story about Piper and her life on the island is as satisfying as the others in the cheery series but can be read as a stand-alone.

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A Poem for Peter: the Story of Ezra Jack Keats and the Creation of The Snowy Day
by Andrea Davis Pinkney
Ezra Jack Keats may be best known as the creator of the 1963 Caldecott Medal winning The Snowy Day which featured a little brown boy named Peter. In lyrical language, Keats' life and inspirations are revealed, complemented by lush collage and acrylic illustrations that evoke Keats' work. Included on selected pages are images of the real Peter and paintings by Keats. An author's note completes the homage to Keats and his legacy.

Preaching to the Chickens: the Story of Young John Lewis
by Jabari Asim
As a child, John Lewis always practiced his deep religious convictions, even with his much loved chickens. Based on the childhood of the Civil Rights exemplar and U.S. Congressman, this story of faith and intelligence comes to life in dramatic, light-filled watercolors and poetic text.

The Real Poop on Pigeons
by Kevin McCloskey
When a couple complains about pigeons in the park, two children in pigeon costumes come to give them the real story about pigeons. Done in an open comic book format, this easier-to-read book is sure to entertain as well as inform.

Rockets
by Jenny Fretlad VanVoorst
In this Space Explorers series, topics of interest to younger readers are introduced in clear color photographs and accessible, logically presented text. “Activities and Tools” to extend each subject are included in an index, along with suggestions for finding additional information.

Six Dots: A Story of Young Louis Braille
by Jen Bryant
This fictionalized account of how young Louis Braille lost his eyesight is told through his voice. It is realistic but with lighter touches as well as insight into what inspired him to invent a way for blind people to read. Illustrations augment the information and tone to engage and enlighten readers.

Solar Power
by Rebecca Pettiford
In this Green Planet series, topics of interest to younger readers are introduced in clear color photographs and accessible, logically presented text. “Activities and Tools” to extend each subject are included as is an index and where to go for additional information.

They All Saw a Cat
by Brendan Wenzel
As a cat walked through the world, “with its whiskers, ears, and paws…” a child, a mouse, a dog, and others see the cat — each from its own unique perspective: the mouse sees all claws and teeth, the worm sees echoes in the ground, and so on. The repeating refrain combines with original and stunning illustrations to create a book to examine multiple times.

The Three Lucys
by Hayan Charara
While visiting relatives in Beirut, the 2006 war begins between Hezbollah and Israel. Luli and his family are displaced by the constant month-long bombings, unable to return to their home. When they do, their house is in ruins and Luli’s cats are missing. Lucy the Fat and Lucy the Skinny find their way back, but there is comfort only in the memory of Lucy Lucy. Though a story of war, this personal and hopeful story will resonate with young readers.

A Voyage in the Clouds: The (Mostly) True Story of the First International Flight by Balloon in 1785
by Matthew Olshan
Imagine flying between countries in a hot air balloon. What would you take? What would you leave behind when it becomes too dangerous to hold onto everything? Might you discard even your clothing? Join the English Dr. John Jeffries and his French pilot, Jean-Pierre Blanchard, for just such a trip. Humor and hijinks make their unforgettable trip positively joyful.

Wonderful Winter: All Kinds of Winter Facts and Fun
by Bruce Goldstone
Winter is a season of questions and of waiting. How do animals live during the cold winter? How do snowflakes form? What is it we wait for in the winter? But all the waiting and wondering come to an end and “wonderful winter makes way for … spectacular spring.” Photographs and an informal text plus a few activities just right for the season make this a cozy book.
Apollo: The Brilliant One (Olympians series)
by George O’Connor
The Greek muse, Polyhmnia, invites readers into a story of the gods of Olympus focusing on the flawed hero, Apollo. Dramatic sequential art and rich language are used in this retelling of Apollo’s successes and failures. Back matter completes this attractive and compelling addition to the series.

As Brave As You
by Jason Reynolds
11-year-old Genie and his soon-to-be-14-year-old brother, Ernie, travel from their home in Brooklyn to spend the summer in rural Virginia with their grandparents. The boys are in for lots of surprises; they learn that their grandfather is blind, that there is no Internet, and more. Characters are distinct and vividly depicted as Genie narrates his satisfying story.

Beetle Boy
by M.G. Leonard
When Darkus’ entomologist father disappears, the boy moves in with eccentric Uncle Max. There, Darkus meets an extraordinary rhinoceros beetle (who he names Max), foils a plot by the evil Lucretia Cutter and her inept minions, and forges friendships. The fast pace unfolds with humor, ends with an entomologists’ dictionary, and will ultimately continue in another book.

Best Man
by Richard Peck
Archer has been in two weddings. He looks back on the first one — a disaster for the then six-year old boy. At least Archer met Lynette Stanley, starting a friendship that has stuck. Now in 6th grade, Archer confronts bullies and what it means to be a man as he matures. Quirky characters combine with poignant and laugh-out-loud scenes in this memorable and ultimately touching novel.

Brave Like My Brother
by Marc Tyler Nobleman
Charlie writes to his older brother, Joe, who is a soldier during World War II. Though Cleveland, Ohio, feels like a long way from the war, there are things in common. Action and activities on both sides of the Atlantic are revealed through the brothers’ letters and provide an accessible introduction.

Full of Beans
by Jennifer Holm
Times are tough for Beans and his family in Key West during the Great Depression. Can Beans and his friends trust the New Dealers who say that they have come to Florida to make their small, poor town a tourist destination? Bean’s saga is both humorous and poignant in his satisfying story.

It Ain’t So Awful, Falafel
by Firoozeh Dumas
Zomorod Yousefzadeh prefers to be called “Cindy” (as in one of the Brady Bunch). She lives with her Iranian-born family in California where her father works. Their life, however, changes when a group of Iranian students take over the U.S. Embassy in Tehran. The issues of the 1970s come into sharp focus (and are surprisingly timely) through Cindy’s often funny, sometimes insightful, always plausible narration.

Jason and the Argonauts: The First Great Quest in Greek Mythology
by Robert Byrd
There is just no pleasing all of the ancient Greek gods. When Jason gathers 50 men on a quest to find the Golden Fleece and regain his throne, he does so with the help of Medea ... but not without consequences. An accessible retelling in a large format with detailed illustrations makes an exhilarating version of an old myth.

The Land of Forgotten Girls
by Erin E. Kelly
Soledad and Ming have migrated to Louisiana from the Philippines. Their father has returned to their homeland leaving the girls with Vea, the girls’ unhappy, mean-spirited stepmother. As their world expands and fact and fantasy collide, the real world, friendships, and understanding also expand.

Let Your Voice Be Heard: The Life and Times of Pete Seeger
by Anita Silvey
Pete Seeger lived a long life sharing his music and his convictions about equality with literally millions of people all over the world. He is presented here in well-researched, clearly documented and understandable language punctuated with photographs. Seeger’s life presents a glimpse at the history of the United States, ranging from Civil Rights to workers’ rights.

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Misunderstood: Why the Humble Rat May Be Your Best Pet Ever
by Rachel Toor
“For three and a half years, I was in love with someone the size of a hot dog bun [named Iris]. She was a rat.” Literally, a rodent. Part memoir, part science, this look at life with a pet domesticated rat, their habits and more are presented in chatty text. From the charming cover to the informative text, even the most skeptical reader will recognize the humble rat’s worth (and character).

Moo: A Novel
by Sharon Creech
Reena, her younger brother Luke and their parents leave New York City behind for a new life in Maine. The first summer in their new home, the siblings are asked to help old Mrs. Falala and her animals. Both the old lady and each of her four-legged charges have distinct personalities with unanticipated results for the children and parents. Humor and more serious topics unfold in gentle verse in an open format.

The Music in George’s Head: George Gershwin Creates Rhapsody in Blue
by Suzanne Slade
Illustrations in blues and grays combine with words to flow across the pages of this handsome look into the music and life of an American artist. Fully researched and creatively presented, this is a brief glimpse at the life and contributions of a musical great.

One Half from the East
by Nadia Hashimi
Obeyda becomes a *bacha posh* (a girl who assumes the role of a boy) named Obeyd when she and her family leave Kabul to be nearer to family in the country. As *bacha posh*, Obeyd has much more freedom and is sure to bring luck to the family since her policeman father could no longer support his family after he lost a leg in a car bombing. This story of contemporary Afghanistan is compelling and illuminating.

The School the Aztec Eagles Built: A Tribute to Mexico’s World War II Fighters
by Dorinda M. Nicholson
A little known history of the Aztec Eagles, the Mexican Expeditionary Air Force created during World War II, is presented in photographs and crisp text. It is also the story of Sargent Ángel Bocanegra del Castillo who made certain that a school was built in his hometown in Mexico. This is a unique and well-presented bit of history sure to inspire and inform.

Secret Coders
by Gene Luen Yang and Mike Holmes
Hopper’s new school, Stately Academy, is more creepy than scholarly as the 12-year-old girl soon learns. But with her new friends, they discover the school’s secrets and address them through computer coding. The adventures of this multicultural cast of kids continue in *Paths and Portals* as the series goes on.

Shakespeare Retold
by E. Nesbit
Handsome illustrations accompany English writer E. Nesbit’s (Edith Nesbit Bland) dramatic retellings of seven plays by William Shakespeare. While the narratives introduce the plays, they read aloud well as sophisticated short stories. Additional information about Shakespeare and the times in which he lived are included.

Some Writer! The Story of E.B. White
by Melissa Sweet
Charlotte, the spider, wrote of her porcine friend Wilber, “SOME PIG.” The life of the creator of *Charlotte’s Web*, E.B. White, is presented in an enthralling format featuring watercolor and collage illustrations. The readable text makes this handsome, authorized biography of White — who was truly “SOME WRITER” — worth examining again and again.

Ugly
by Robert Hoge
When he was born, he had a face that even his mother had trouble loving. But Hoge eventually came home, survived multiple operations, and gained a strong sense of self. This is a touching, true story told by the Australian who has gone on to lead a successful and full life. It is told with humor, pathos, and an appreciation of what is truly important.

Ultimate Explorer Field Guide: Rocks and Minerals
by Nancy Honovich
Look closely: you may see goethite, limonite, fluorite … they can be quite beautiful and each has an interesting story to tell. But what differentiates minerals and rocks? Why explore them? What are the tools of a rock hunter? This accessible and attractive pocket-sized handbook will appeal regardless of wherever rocks are explored.

When Mischief Came to Town
by Katrina Nannestad
Inge Maria leaves her beloved Copenhagen to live with Dizzy, her seemingly stern grandmother. But Inge Maria brings mischief, laughter, and warmth to Bornholm, her new island home. The tale unfolds through Inge Maria’s naïve and good-natured voice.
The Case of the Weird Blue Chicken: The Next Misadventure (The Chicken Squad, Book 2)
by Doreen Cronin, narrated by Adam Grupper and Michele O. Medlin
The Chicken Squad is back, here for another funny mystery just right for younger listeners.

Clementine
by Sara Pennypacker, narrated by Jessica Almasy
Meet Clementine, a 3rd grader with enough energy to land her into trouble with great frequency. Her everyday adventures continue in other books.

Ghost
by Jason Reynolds, narrated by Guy Lockard
Sophisticated listeners will enjoy the story of a track-running boy and his new team with runners from very different backgrounds.

The Princess in Black Takes a Vacation (Princess in Black, Book 4)
by Shannon Hale and Dean Hale, narrated by Julia Whelan
Younger children will enjoy the latest adventure of the mask wearing, monster fighting princess who attempts to take a restful vacation.

When the Sea Turned to Silver
by Grace Lin, narrated by Kim Mai Guest
Children of all ages will enjoy the story of Pinmei and her quest to find her grandmother, the storyteller. Inspired by Chinese folklore, this stand-alone tale is a companion to the author’s Where the Mountain Meets the Moon and Starry River of the Sky.

Find many more booklists on our website: www.ReadingRockets.org