

# Great Books



## for Year-Round Giving

**Are you looking for the perfect gift to give to a child?  
May we suggest a book?**

The Youth Services Department staff has chosen the titles in this gift guide from books published over the past year. Each book has been selected for its timeless quality and lasting kid appeal. Each listing includes a summary of the book, the writer and/or illustrator, and the age range for which the book is most appropriate.

While we put the list out each year in time for holiday shopping, we hope you will refer to it year-round to help you decide which books to buy for birthdays, baby showers, and other occasions.

The guide is a wonderful tool to help you select books that will be read, re-read, and treasured by the children who receive them as gifts at any time of year!

Books make great gifts!

*- Youth Services Department Staff  
Warren-Trumbull County Public Library  
December 2020*



**Warren Library**  
444 Mahoning Ave. NW  
Warren, OH 44483  
(330) 399-8807

**Brookfield Library**  
7032 Grove St.  
Brookfield, OH 44403  
(330) 448-8134

**Cortland Library**  
578 Lakeview Dr.  
Cortland, OH 44410  
(330) 638-6335

**Howland Library**  
9095 East Market St.  
Warren, OH 44484  
(330) 856-2011

**Liberty Library**  
415 Churchill-Hubbard Rd.  
Youngstown, OH 44505  
(330) 759-2589

**Lordstown Library**  
1471 Salt Springs Rd.  
Warren, OH 44481  
(330) 824-2094

## **Picture Books**

### ***A is for Another Rabbit***

Hannah Betsel

For ages 4-8

This is not your usual ABC story with apples, bears, and cars. Instead, every letter incorporates rabbits in some creative way, which causes Owl to become increasingly frustrated as you turn each page. The hilarious back and forth between the rabbit-obsessed narrator and Owl will cause you and your little ones to laugh out loud while also learning lots of new words to build their vocabulary. You'll definitely be begged, "Read it again!"

*Recommended by Miss Crystal*

### ***The Barnabus Project***

The Fan Brothers

For ages 5-9

Barnabus is a cute little half mouse and half elephant laboratory creation who lives in a bell jar surrounded by other adorable projects. Deemed a failure by the men in green suits for not looking like a perfect pet, Barnabus and his friends hear tales of the outside world from Pip the cockroach. When he hears the imperfect pets are to be recycled, Barnabus decides to lead a daring escape to the outside world he's only dreamed of, leaving no "failures" behind. The story of Barnabus is an exciting read for older readers who are struggling to push against the idea of perfection and find acceptance in the world; younger readers will love to explore the Fan Brother's beautiful illustrations to find their favorite flawed pet. This story truly is a great gift for all!

*Recommended by Miss Crystal*

### ***The Blue House***

Phoebe Wahl

For ages 4-9

Leo and his dad live in their cozy blue house. When they learn that they will lose their beloved home due to neighborhood renovation, they experience immense anger and grief. The pair acknowledge and express their feelings creatively. While the pain does not subside immediately, they learn to cope with the change as they settle into a different house and find ways to remember the blue house. Filled with emotional validation and acceptance, readers who are struggling with change may find solace within these beautifully illustrated pages.

*Recommended by Miss Taylor*

### ***Ducks!***

Deborah Underwood; Illustrated by T.L. McBeth

For ages 2 - 5

A small duckling gets separated from its flock. Follow along with the duckling as it searches all over the city for its missing family. There are minimal words in this book with the repeating phrase, "Ducks? No Ducks!" Crisp, silly illustrations will make this a favorite for any child who enjoys funny stories!

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

### ***I Promise***

LeBron James; Illustrated by Nina Mata

For ages 5-10

Thanks to Ohio's own LeBron James for this inspiring book to share with children either at home or in the classroom, emphasizing the importance of community and other values. Makes a great teacher's gift!

*Recommended by Miss Trish*

***In a Jar***

Deborah Marcero

For ages 4-8

Llewellyn is a rabbit who collects things. He meets another rabbit, Evelyn, who is also an avid collector. Together they begin to amass the most marvelous collection of treasures. The shelves in Llewellyn's house are a sight to behold with wonder after wonder kept in glass jars. When Evelyn moves away, the two find a way to keep their friendship, and collection, going strong. Perfect for friends and collectors everywhere.

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

***Lift***

Minh Le; Art by Dan Santat

For ages 4-8

Iris loves nothing more than to push the elevator button in her apartment building. It's her job. She is a little put out, however, when her younger brother decides he wants the job, too. Iris is upset by this turn of events until a new magical button appears that has the ability to take her *anywhere* she wants to go. The only question that remains is, does she want to do it alone? This book is a joyous celebration of imagination, magic, and sibling love. The illustrations are beautiful and make you wish you had a magical button too. Give to anyone who needs a bit of a "lift."

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

***Lilah Tov Good Night***

Ben Gundersheimer; Illustrated by Noar Lee Naggan

For ages 3-5

A family of Jewish refugees flee their home by night. On their journey to safety, the small daughter bids "lilah tov" (good night in Hebrew) to the everyday wonders she witnesses, such as bears, stars, clouds, bats, fish, and mountains. This gentle, lyrical picture book shows that the beauty and serenity of the natural world exist even in dire circumstances.

*Recommended by Miss Taylor*

***A Little Bit Brave***

Nicola Kinnear

For ages 3-7

Logan was not very daring. In fact, this bunny's favorite place was his quiet burrow. It is not until he searches for his friend, Luna, that he realizes he is braver than he ever knew. Follow Logan on his exciting adventures to help a friend in need.

*Recommended by Miss Jill*

***One Little Bag***

Henry Cole

For ages 4-8

This wordless picture book takes readers on an amazing journey following the story of one little bag. As soon as you open the cover, you are pulled into how the bag came to be, and how such a simple thing becomes an important part of the life of one family. This story is one that lends itself to be told and retold different ways, as you look and study each page finding another piece to the story. A great book to explore as a family or to give to someone coming up on a big life event because it shows how the smallest thing contributes to a lifetime of memories. (P.S., it made me cry!)

*Recommended by Miss Crystal*

### **Smashy Town**

Andrea Zimmerman and David Clemesha: Illustrated by Dan Yaccarino

For ages 2 - 5

Break out your best read-aloud voice and get ready for lots of giggles with this construction story! Mr. Gilly and his trusty crane get to work on demolishing some old buildings so new buildings can be built. Look for sound effects in colorful "all caps" as the wrecking ball swings, smashes, and crashes. After every move the story asks the reader, "Is the demolition done?". This is the perfect book for any fans of construction or destruction!

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

## **Early and Middle Grade Fiction**

### **Camp Murderface**

Josh Berk & Sandra Mitchell

For ages 8-12

Authors Josh Berk and Sandra Mitchell set their story during 1983 at Camp Sweetwater in Ohio. Campers Corryn and Tez soon discover that the camp is actually a location of terror that dates back to when it originated in the 1700s under another much darker name. Readers will quickly be pulled into the story from the view of the two narrators as they rush to discover the cause of the frights with age-appropriate touches of gore and humor woven throughout. The authors also have a sequel planned making this a great series opener if your reader can handle the scares!

*Recommended by Miss Crystal*

### **Echo Mountain**

Lauren Wolk

For ages 10 and up

When Ellie and her family are forced to move to the mountain wilderness of Maine during the Great Depression, they each struggle to find their place in their new circumstances. Ellie's mother and sister resent the wildness around them, especially after a tragic accident throws their father into a coma, but Ellie seems to blossom in the freedom, friendships, and knowledge she finds in the woods. Through Ellie's journey, the reader is able to see the struggle we all eventually face of meeting the expectations of those around you while trying to stay true to yourself. In a year that seemed to take a lot out of everyone, this lovely novel serves as a reminder that life's unexpected tragic events can be world shattering, but there is always a way to have hope and find a sense of peace in your new normal.

*Recommended by Miss Crystal*

### **Fergus and Zeke and the Field Day Challenge**

Kate Messner; Illustrated by Heather Ross

For ages 5 - 8

Fergus and Zeke return in another book! These silly mice are the class pets in Ms. Maxwell's class, and they love joining in with the class. This time the two are faced with some big challenges as they try and compete in the class's field day event. Follow along as they try and adapt the children's fun-filled day into activities that fit their size! These books do well as stand-alones, and any book from this series would make a wonderful gift for new readers.

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

### **Frank and Bean**

Jamie Michalak; Illustrated by Bob Kolar

For ages 5-8

Frank is a hot dog who values his peace and quiet. He enjoys solitude and writing in his secret notebook. Bean is loud. He talks loudly and plays his instruments even louder. Yet, despite their differences, this pair manages to harmonize beautifully. This humorous beginning reader is divided into short chapters and is suited for new readers looking for something a bit longer. This is a funny look at the value of friendship in spite of differences and is a welcome addition to the easy reader bookshelf.

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

### ***Houndsley and Catina at the Library***

James Howes; Illustrated by Marie-Louise Gay

For ages 5 - 8

Another title in the "Houndsley and Catina" series! These two friends have been sharing sweet stories with early readers for years. Join them in this tale when their weekly library visit doesn't go as planned, and they find the library to be in jeopardy! A great gift for any young reader that loves going to the library or has dreams of becoming a librarian one day. (Who doesn't?!)

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

### ***The One and Only Bob***

Katherine Applegate

For ages 8 - 12

In this sequel to the Newbery Medal winning *The One and Only Ivan*, Bob, a small mutt with a big attitude, narrates the next chapter with his animal pals Ivan, a silverback gorilla, and Ruby, a young elephant. Bob now has a comfortable home with a human friend, and he still gets to see Ivan and Ruby at a nearby sanctuary, but something – no, *someone* – is missing. When a hurricane hits, Bob sets out on a dangerous journey to find his long-lost sister with the help of Ivan and Ruby. Told with humor and heart, this novel will have you rooting for scrappy little Bob!

*Recommended by Miss Lori*

### ***Our Friend Hedgehog: The Story of Us***

Lauren Castillo

For ages 5-9

This is the story of how a group of friends came to be. One day, Hedgehog loses her beloved friend, Mutt, in a storm. She goes on a journey to find him and meets several new endearing friends along the way. The charming illustrations perfectly complement the sweet story. A great read-aloud or beginning chapter book due to the short chapters and many pictures, this is a delightful story of friendship for any young reader.

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

### ***The Princess in Black and the Giant Problem***

Shannon Hale and Dean Hale; Illustrated by LeUyen Pham

For ages 5-8

The Princess in Black is at it again in the 8<sup>th</sup> installment of the series in which our heroine and her friends, The Goat Avenger and The Princess in Blankets, find themselves facing a destructive giant. Will they be able to get the situation under control or will reinforcements be needed? This volume has your favorite monster-fighting team plus the welcome addition of some new heroes. If you haven't read this series yet, DO! It is perfect for those just starting chapter books or for anyone who loves a fun read-aloud. The bright illustrations bring the story to life and the strong female characters turn the princess genre on its head!

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

### ***Ways to Make Sunshine***

Renee Watson

For ages 7 - 10

Fourth grader Ryan (her name means "king") wants to be a leader to live up to her name. But that's hard to do when you have to participate in a talent show, all of your friends seem to have a talent and you don't, *and* you suffer from stage fright. Plus her dad's new job pays less than the one he lost, so her family has to move into a smaller house, sell their second car, and can't even afford the good brand of ice cream anymore. As she faces these and other challenges, Ryan learns how to see the best in other people AND believe in herself. A warm family story with a relatable heroine.

*Recommended by Miss Lori*

## **Graphic Novels**

### ***Bug Boys***

Laura Knetzger

For ages 7-11

Inside Bug Village, Rhino-B and Stag-B live for knowledge and adventure! Join the pair of beetle pals on these humorous, heartwarming, and surprisingly existential episodic adventures. Fans of *Adventure Time* and *Bravest Warriors* will adore this middle-grade graphic novel.

*Recommended by Miss Taylor*

### ***City of Secrets***

Victoria Ying

For ages 10 – 12

A beautifully illustrated graphic novel for young steampunk fans! Ying's drawings are soft and delicate even though the story they are telling is harsh and dark. 12-year-old orphan, Ever Barnes, has been raised with the secret knowledge of a mechanical building. Things begin to go south when a young wealthy girl decides to befriend the boy. This story has assassins, secret societies, war, and much more!

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

### ***Snapdragon***

Kat Leyh

For ages 10-14

Fans of magical realism will find a charming story in this middle-grade graphic novel. Snapdragon has a problem and she believes Jacks (rumored to be the town witch) is the one to help her solve it. In exchange for her expertise, Jacks has Snapdragon assist her with her online roadkill taxidermy business. As the layers of Jacks' mysterious identity unfold, Snapdragon discovers tenderness and magic within, plus a surprising connection to her family. A wholesome, magical read with a diverse cast of characters.

*Recommended by Miss Taylor*

### ***The Weirn Books 1: Be Wary of the Silent Woods***

Svetlana Chmakova

For ages 10-12

This wonderfully illustrated graphic novel would make a great present for fantasy fans! It follows Ailis and Na'ya in an adventure revolving around their school for magical beings. Vampires, shape-shifters, mermaids, and weirns attend a special school in the Night Realm to hone their powers. These two weirns, similar to witches, find themselves in a spooky situation when they ignore the legend of the forbidden mansion in the Silent Woods!

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

## **Nonfiction**

### ***All the Birds in the World***

David Opie

For ages 3-8

Spending time in open spaces and observing wildlife might be just the calm we need during times of stress. Birdwatching is a great activity to do alone or as a family, and you'll find inspiration throughout these pages to make it a lifelong hobby!

*Recommended by Miss Trish*

***Dung for Dinner***

Christine Virnig; Illustrated by Korwin Briggs

For ages 10-14

Subtitled "A stomach-churning look at the animal poop, pee, vomit and secretions that people have eaten (and often still do)", this book is *not* for the weak-stomached reader! However, if you have a middle grade reader that loves gross and interesting history this is the book for them. Promising to elicit gasps, groans, and lots of laughs, this non-fiction book tells stories from Ancient Rome, Medieval and Colonial times, as well as more recent times when people have ingested unimaginable things - on purpose. Hilarious and educational - if yucky!

*Recommended by Miss Amber*

***Honeybee: The Busy Life of Apis Mellifera***

Candace Fleming; Illustrated by Eric Rohmann

For ages 6-9

This informational picture book takes a fascinating look at honeybees and all they do in their very short lives. The beautifully descriptive text explains that honeybees do so much more than fly from flower to flower collecting nectar and spreading pollen. The gorgeous oil painting illustrations give an up-close look at what happens inside a hive and beyond. A lovely way to learn about bees.

*Recommended by Miss Nicole*

***How to Be a Person***

Catherine Newman

For ages 10 and up

The tagline of this book got my attention: "65 hugely useful, super-important skills to learn before you're grown up." The recommended ages for this book are 10-14 years but I think it can go well beyond that age range. Great as a present for any holiday or high school graduation!

*Recommended by Miss Trish*

***Let's Play Outdoors: Exploring Nature for Children***

Catherine Ard; Illustrated by Carla McRae

For ages 5 and up

Do you want to go on an adventure? Discover simple ways to make that experience happen in your own neighborhood as you reconnect with nature. From crafts to campfire stories and outdoor safety, you'll undoubtedly become an outdoor enthusiast!

*Recommended by Miss Trish*

***On the Horizon***

Lois Lowry; Illustrated by Kenard Pak

For ages 11 - 13

A very moving and thought-provoking account written in verse that captures the human element of the events at Pearl Harbor and Hiroshima. The interweaving of the author's personal connections during these historical events is profound.

*Recommended by Miss Jill*

***On Wings of Words: The Extraordinary Life of Emily Dickinson***

Jennifer Berne; Illustrated by Becca Stadtlander

For ages 5-9

Gorgeous gouache and watercolor illustrations accompany Berne's chronicle of the life of poet Emily Dickinson. Follow Emily as she communes with nature, treasures friendship, experiences loss, and contemplates existence. This biographical picture book is a sweet and hopeful introduction to Dickinson's work.

*Recommended by Miss Taylor*

## **Books for Teens**

### ***Clap When You Land***

Elizabeth Acevedo

This stunning novel-in-verse explores finding solace and peace within the boundaries of tragedy. When two girls learn of their father's death – and each other – their lives are forever altered. Acevedo was the recipient of the 2020 Printz Award for Excellence in Young Adult Literature for *The Poet X*, and her latest is every bit as beautiful.

### ***Dragon Hoops***

Gene Luen Yang

At the high school where the New York Times' bestselling graphic novelist Gene Luen Yang teaches, all everyone talks about is basketball. And although he doesn't even like basketball, the men's varsity team is having such a great year that he just can't help but get swept up in the excitement. This non-fiction graphic novel is the perfect choice for those who love exciting non-fiction, graphic novels, or sports.

### ***Incendiary***

Zoraida Córdova

As a memory thief, Renata was used by the crown to carry out the King's Wrath, a siege that resulted in the deaths of thousands. Now she is one of the rebellious Whispers working against the crown. When her commander Dez is taken captive, Renata complete his mission herself. But upon returning to court, she uncovers a secret in her past that could change the fate of the entire kingdom. Inspired by Inquisition Spain, give this one to fans of Sarah Maas's *Throne of Glass* series and other fantasy lovers.

### ***The Mermaid, the Witch, and the Sea***

Maggie Tokua-Hall

Adventure on the high seas filled with intrigue, romance, and magic. The pirate Florian has always done whatever it takes to survive. Lady Evelyn is on her way to an arranged marriage. When the crew of the *Dove* enslaves the wealthy crew, Evelyn and Florian decide to take their fates into their own hands – no matter the cost.

### ***The Plain Janes***

Cecil Castellucci; Illustrated by Jim Rugg

When Jane Beckles moves from the city to a boring suburb, she by chance meets three other girls named Jane. Together, they form the Plain Janes, dedicated to using art to transform their lackluster existence and neighborhood. Originally published in 2006, this beautiful new edition boasts brand new art and the complete collection, with the inclusion of a new story. A must-read for all who love graphic novels.

### ***We Are the Wildcats***

Siobhan Vivian

Tomorrow, they'll be playing the only team they lost to all season. But that's tomorrow. Tonight is the varsity team sleepover. Told through the perspectives of six different girls on the field hockey team, *We Are the Wildcats* takes place over twenty-four hours filled with laughter, pranks, and all of what makes a team, a team. For anyone who loves a good story of friendship and fun.

*All teen books recommended by Sarah*