



50 Books All Kids Should Read Before They're 12

From picture books to graphic novels, fantasy to family fun, these must-read books have the power to hook both boys and girls. Some are cultural touchstones that belong in every kid's library. Others open kids' minds to worlds beyond their own. And some are modern releases that have the timeless quality of classics — the kinds that get handed down to siblings and passed around classrooms. Whether you have a reluctant reader or budding bookworm, check out these sure-fire titles all hand selected by Common Sense Media experts.

age 2+

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus Silliness that appeals to preschoolers.

Goodnight, Goodnight, Construction Site Charming bedtime book is magic for truck lovers.

Goodnight Moon The ultimate going-to-bed book.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar Carle brings humor to caterpillar's development.

Where the Wild Things Are Classic all-ages masterpiece has a wild imagination.

age 3+

Harold and the Purple Crayon Imagination reigns in timeless classic about drawing boy.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit **Beatrix** Potter's first and one of her best.

age 4+

The Cat in the Hat A kids' classic that put Dr. Seuss on the map.

Frog and Toad Are Friends Engaging stories spotlight charming, relatable characters.

Madeline Rhyming classic is a sure winner with kids.

age 5+

The Complete Tales & Poems of Winnie-the-Pooh Beloved, classic stories and poems in one volume.

Mercy Watson to the Rescue: Mercy Watson, Book 1 Funny, silly pig story great for early readers.

age 6+

Charlie and the Chocolate Factory Classic morality tale is highly entertaining.

Ivy + Bean: Book 1 A sure hit with kids starting chapter books.

Stuart Little Excellent bridge from chapter books to novels.

Where the Sidewalk Ends Irresistible collection of clever, hilarious poems.

age 7+

Charlotte's Web Gentle, much-loved classic delights all ages.

Ramon the Pest Ramona tale helps young kids build empathy.

✓ age 8+

Coraline Strange, surreal tale sure to creep kids out.

Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone Magical start of bestselling Potter phenomenon.

The Lion, The Witch, and the Wardrobe:

The Chronicles of Narnia, Book 1 Classic Narnia tale has exciting battles, Christian themes.

The Tale of Despereaux: Being the Story of a Mouse, a Princess, Some Soup, and a Spool of Thread Brave mouse adventure a modern classic; great read-aloud.

✓ age 9+

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland A classic that both adults and kids love.

Anne of Green Gables Beloved classic features lovable, imaginative heroine.

The Bad Beginning: A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book 1 A cliff-hanging adventure wrapped in black humor.

Big Nate: In a Class by Himself: Big Nate, Book 1 Milder than Wimpy Kid, and a sure hit with boys.

Bridge to Terabithia Honest, moving story of friendship and loss.

Bud, Not Buddy Well-crafted tale of an orphan's search for home.

Diary of a Wimpy Kid Laugh-out-loud-funny series start tucks lessons in stories.

The Hobbit Brilliantly written, inventive pre-LOTR tale.

The Lightning Thief: Percy Jackson and the Olympians, Book 1 Modernized Greek myths meet fast-paced adventure.

Little House in the Big Woods Classic view of pioneer life through a little girl's eyes.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing Toddler antics bug brother, amuse readers in 1st Fudge book.

A Wrinkle in Time Classic sci-fi story still inspires and gets kids thinking.

✓ age 10+

Esperanza Rising Historical fiction at its best in book on '30s farmworkers.

Hold Fast Touching story of resourceful girl solving a family mystery.

I Am Malala: How One Girl Stood Up for Education and Changed the World Inspiring memoir of teen Nobel laureate shot by Taliban.

Inside Out and Back Again Inspiring, educational immigrant story told in free verse.

My Side of the Mountain Gripping, inspiring wilderness-survival adventure.

Revolution Is Not a Dinner Party Gripping story, great intro to China's Cultural Revolution.

Walk Two Moons Dramatic, complex tale has rich characters, emotional depth.

✓ age 11+

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl Inspiring wartime journal reveals teen's inner life.

Wonder Moving, uplifting tale of disfigured boy with inner beauty.

✓ age 12+

Ender's Game Boy genius trains to crush alien invasion in sci-fi classic.

The Fellowship of the Ring Spectacular fantasy classic is where Frodo's journey begins.

The Hunger Games, Book 1 Exciting, provocative tale of lethal reality show.

Legend, Book 1 Stylish dystopian thriller in a not-so-future Los Angeles.

March: Book One Powerful graphic novel captures spirit of desegregation.

The Outsiders Story of ostracized kid a timeless fave of teens, preteens.

To Kill a Mockingbird Stunning classic examines racism — and justice.