

BOOKS EVERY CHILD SHOULD OWN*

**and tips for making the most of each*

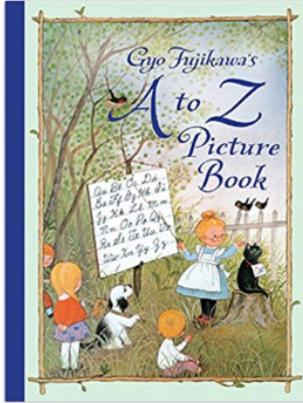
-----BABIES-----

As a parent, grandparent, and elementary school librarian, I've read thousands of children's picture books. Frankly, I don't understand how some were ever published—inane stories, babyish language, bland illustrations, characters modeling behaviors I don't want kids to emulate. Thankfully, many others are treasures that enrich children's lives over and over in myriad ways. This report points out the jewels among the treasures.

So what makes a book a keeper? A great story and compelling illustrations, sure—top of my list. But I also look for rich language and rhetorical techniques such as alliteration or metaphor. I want books that help children expand their horizons and embrace other cultures. The most outstanding books spur questioning and develop critical and creative thinking skills. Children's books should be laugh-out-loud funny or provoke a discussion about why it's important to be kind or should dazzle with information about the stars. Finally, books should beg to be extended through the arts.

For babies just learning to talk, repetition and rhyme focus attention on the sounds of language. Bright colors and patterns evoke interest, and pop-ups, flaps, and sliders draw children through the narrative and allow them to predict what will happen next.

My children, grandchildren, students, and I have loved these books.



Gyo Fujikawa's A to Z Picture Book by Gyo Fujikawa

Best ABC book EVER.

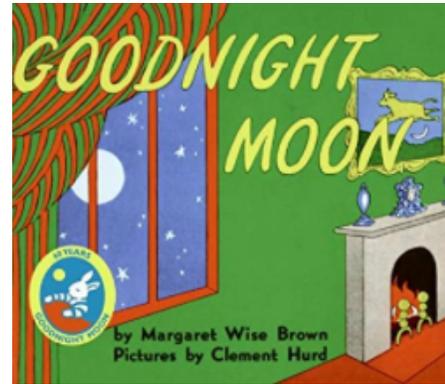
This is the one book I give to new parents, and the one kids choose over and over for years. Fujikawa's charming, delicate drawings comprise a range of topics, vocabulary, and emotions. Every page is full of wonders, and you can discuss something new each time. The trick is to point out increasingly complex concepts and language as your child grows. For example, the first time you look at the Q page, you might notice the queen. Then, discuss the meaning of "quarrel." Later, point out the queue.

My kids and grandkids loved the vegetables page. We had fun scooping up different veggies and eating them: "I love zucchini." "I'm going to eat the Brussels sprouts" [pretend gagging and choking followed by crazy laughter]. They also liked the busy babies page. Here, my questions fostered development of critical thinking skills. For example, when the kids were little, I had them scan for specific items: "Which baby is putting on her socks?" Later, they had to associate pictures with concepts: "Which baby is messy?" Then my questions asked them to infer: "Why is that baby crying?"

The dreams page is another kid favorite. They love laughing at the baby with his ice cream bowl on his head, talking about monsters and nightmares, and dreaming about when they become ballerinas.

To extend this book, have your child choose a letter and cut out and paste pictures of objects that begin with it. Or, choose an object and make up a story about it. Play music and ask your child which object on the page might use it as a theme song. Ask what objects are missing from any given page. From the vegetables page, let your child select a new one to try for dinner.

Goodnight Moon
by Margaret Wise Brown

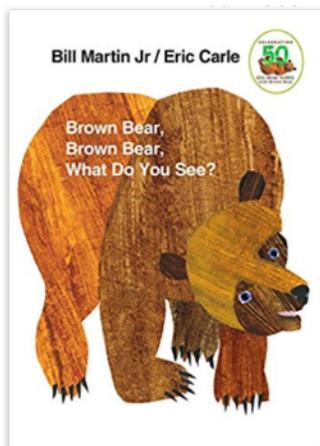


Millions of babies have been lulled to sleep by the quiet poetry of a bunny saying good night to all the items in his room. The bold, limited color palette is instantly appealing, and the detail in the illustrations offers many opportunities for discussion, extending the life of the story beyond the toddler years.

A soothing, timeless bedtime story.

Tailor your questions to the age and maturity of your child. Begin with simple questions like “Where is the mouse?” Move on to “What colors are the curtains?” Finally, ask for critical and creative thinking: “Why are socks and mittens drying on a rack?” “What are the kittens’ names?” “Where did the bunny get the red balloon?”

To extend, have your child say good night to items in her own room. Make up a verse about each item.



**A favorite read-aloud
—I must have read it
a thousand times.**

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

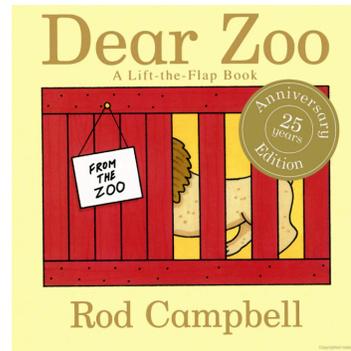
by Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle

Carle's striking primary colors and collage technique would delight even if the book had no words. But it does, and they are perfect in the simplicity of their repetition and rhythm: "Brown bear, brown bear, what do you see? I see a red bird looking at me. Red bird, red bird, what do you see? I see a yellow duck looking at me."

The key to making sure this title is requested again and again is to create a voice for each animal. Make the bear growl, the red bird tweet, the horse neigh: "Blue horse, blue horse, what do you see? I-I-I-I see-e a gre-e-e-n fro-o-og lo-o-king at me." Ask your child to help you read the story by doing one of the parts, either the "... what do you see?" or making up her own voices for the animal answers.

Hone memory skills by having your child predict which animal is next on each page. Have your child select two animals and make up a conversation between them. For an art project, have kids paint sheets of paper in various shades of colors—for example, the blue page could comprise sky blue, turquoise, royal blue, navy. Then cut the colors into shapes for kids to arrange into their own collage animals.

Dear Zoo
by Rod Campbell

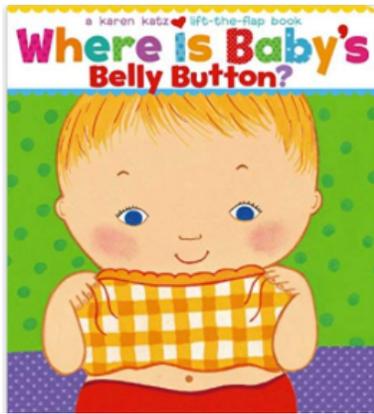


Dear Zoo is a simple narrative with lots of repetition. The pictures are engaging, and each animal comes in a different crate, making it fun for children to predict which animal is inside.

A fun peek-a-boo book!

Make each animal's sound as you read, and talk about the colors of critters and crates. Can your child guess which animal is in each crate before lifting the flaps? Which pet would she have kept? Is a snake really scary? Maybe she would like the jumpy frog. What makes a good pet?

To extend, cut slits in a cookie or cereal box to resemble one of the crates. Put a stuffed or plastic animal inside. Make up the narrative for that page of the book. Make up a song using the book lyrics.



Help your child learn the names for parts of the body.

Where is Baby's Belly Button?

by Karen Katz

Another straightforward narrative with repetition as children lift the flaps to find the hidden body parts. Katz's charming, diverse babies make you giggle just looking at them. And the clothing and background colors and patterns are busy enough to be interesting and useful without cluttering the pages.

As you read, ask your child to point to her own body parts. Ask him to identify patterns: "What color are the polka dots?" To extend, collect items used in the book to cover the body parts and act the pages out with your child. He will love playing peek-a-boo, uncovering his eyes, his feet...