What is the Children’s Choices project?

Each year 10,000 school children from different regions of the United States read and vote on the newly published children’s and young adults’ trade books that they like best. The Children’s Choices for 2003 list is the 29th in a series that first appeared as “Classroom Choices” in the November 1975 issue of The Reading Teacher (RT), a peer-reviewed journal for preschool, primary, and elementary levels published eight times a year by the International Reading Association (IRA). This list is designed for use not only by teachers, librarians, administrators, and booksellers, but also by parents, grandparents, caregivers, and everyone who wishes to encourage young people to read for pleasure.

Children’s Choices is a project of a joint committee supported by IRA and The Children’s Book Council (CBC). IRA is a nonprofit educational organization whose members include classroom and reading teachers, school administrators and supervisors, parents, college/university faculty, and others who are dedicated to improving reading instruction and promoting literacy worldwide.

The Children’s Book Council is the nonprofit professional association of U.S. publishers and packagers of books for young people. It encourages childhood literacy by sponsoring of national programs, including Young People’s Poetry Week and the 94-year-old annual observance of Children’s Book Week, as well as working cooperatively with other professional associations.

In 1969, IRA and CBC formed a liaison committee to explore areas of mutual interest to reading teachers and publishers. Among the committee’s initial charges was the development of a core selection of trade books for the classroom. This list of Children’s Choices has remained an important activity of the committee, which each year produces this child-selected bibliography identifying titles that can be used successfully in reading programs, can be related to the classroom curricula, and are known to engage children.
How are books selected and annotated?

Close to 700 books were evaluated by children for Children’s Choices for 2003. The books to be tested were selected by publishers from the books they published in 2002 and were sent to five review teams located in different regions of the United States. Each team consisted of a children’s literature specialist plus one or more classroom teachers who in turn worked with other classroom teachers, school librarians, and more than 2,000 children. Throughout the school year the books were in classrooms, being read to or by children.

Children’s votes were tabulated in March, and the top 103 titles for 2003 were announced at the annual International Reading Association convention in May. The review teams provided an annotation for each title on the list.

What bibliographic information is provided?

Books selected for the Children’s Choices list have been grouped by reading levels:

- Beginning readers (ages 5–6)
- Young readers (ages 6–8)
- Intermediate readers (ages 8–10)
- Advanced readers (ages 10–13)

Users should note that many books read easily by beginning readers are also enjoyed by more advanced readers, and many titles for advanced readers are accessible to intermediate and younger readers or can be read aloud in the classroom.

The title, author, illustrator, publisher, ISBN (International Standard Book Number), and price are provided for each book as well as a brief annotation prepared by a review team. All books listed are hardcover unless otherwise noted. Prices are accurate as of late spring 2003; they are subject to change without notice. These abbreviations are provided for easy reference:

- **Ill.** illustrator of the book
- **pp.** page count
- **ISBN** identifies books and facilitates purchasing titles from bookstores, wholesalers, or publishers
- **(library)** the ISBN, followed by the price, for the library edition of a book
- **(trade)** the ISBN, followed by the price, for the edition of the book available from booksellers

All books on this list should be available through your local library or a local bookseller.

Beginning Readers

The Bear on the Bed

*An uninvited bear “could have, should have” joined in group activities, but instead he destroys a little girl’s bed. The rhyming text is witty, and the illustrations are engaging. Kids will love the surprise the naughty bear left! (Team 4)*


Big Bad Wolf
Claire Masurel. Ill. Melissa Iwai.

*The wolf is always blamed when scary things happen to people. He doesn’t frighten his own cubs—they know him as a good father. This peephole book teaches us not to be frightened by what we don’t know. (Team 4)*


The Bugliest Bug
Carol Diggory Shields. Ill. Scott Nash.

*An observant damselfly saves her friends who would otherwise have been eaten at a bogus bug contest hosted by spiders in disguise. The playful poetry of the narrative will stimulate young imaginations, and the pictures help advance the plot. (Team 4)*


Busy Little Mouse

*In this primer on the sounds barnyard animals make, Mouse spends his day observing and listening. The story makes use of a simple rhyme pattern along with colorful dimensional clay illustrations that bring the reader into the setting. (Team 4)*


Can You Make a Piggy Giggle?

*In an attempt to make his pig giggle, a little boy gets all the other animals laughing a lot. Cute rhymes and fun pictures will keep younger readers coming back for more. (Team 3)*

Children’s Choices for 2003

Christmas Cricket  
Eve Bunting. Ill. Timothy Bush.  
A lonely cricket finds shelter and acceptance at Christmas as he learns that all creatures share the bond of joy in their creation. Young readers will delight in the large illustrations that evoke a warm and loving feeling of family. (Team 4)  

Cock-a-Moo-Moo  
Juliet Dallas-Conté. Ill. Alison Bartlett.  
One day, the rooster forgets how to crow. He spends the rest of the day trying out different sounds. That night, though, it doesn’t matter which one he uses as long as it scares away the fox! (Team 3)  

Don’t Eat the Teacher!  
Nick Ward. Ill. by the author.  
Sammy, a shark, is about to experience his first day at school. He gets too excited and eats the books, the paintings, the classroom, and the teacher. Children join in the refrain “Crunch” and identify with Sammy’s attempts to be good. (Team 2)  

Down by the Cool of the Pool  
Tony Mitton. Ill. Guy Parker-Rees.  
Frog’s exuberance beside the pool begins a chain reaction of joy as each animal does its own kind of dance. Differences are forgotten, and diversity abounds. The colorful drawings help add to children’s vocabulary skills. (Team 4)  

Duck on a Bike  
David Shannon. Ill. by the author.  
A delightful picture book tells the story of an adventuresome duck learning to ride a bicycle. The other barnyard animals join in the fun after some hesitation. The big, eye-catching illustrations help to teach the value of spontaneity. (Team 4)  

Franklin Says I Love You  
As his mother’s birthday approaches, Franklin is in a quandary about what to get her. He takes the suggestions of his friends and gives his mother a birthday she will always remember. Though fantasy, Franklin’s emotions strike a familiar chord with readers. (Team 5)  
TIPS FOR PARENTS, PRIMARY CAREGIVERS, AND EDUCATORS

Initial book activities
One of the easiest ways to begin telling the story of a book is through the use of illustrations. Most books for young children are illustrated in great detail, and noting important details related to the characters, plot, and setting will provide a wholesome first literacy activity.

• Set aside a regular time and place for books so that reading books becomes as natural as eating and sleeping.
• Browse through books to help the child become familiar with books and how they are handled.
• Read the story while the child points to the pictures. Adult and child can repeat interesting sounds, repetitive word patterns, and distinctive word features to the delight of both.
• Have the child tell the story using the illustrations, while the adult reinforces the telling. The two can predict outcomes, discuss how the characters feel, and relate the events to their own experiences.
• Read the book to the child and enjoy it together. Retell the story together and talk about the characters, setting, plot, and life experiences.
• Compare the similarities and differences of children’s books available as video productions.
• Have children make responses to the books read through art reproductions such as drawings or by using clay, papier-mâché, dioramas, or fingerpaints.
• Make regular trips to the library and attend storytelling sessions. Visit bookstores together to begin a personal library for a child.

Beginning reading-level activities
Children at this level should be encouraged to browse through books and pretend to read the story, an initial step toward becoming an independent reader. Children may tell the story to themselves or attempt to read frequently highlighted words.

• Read the story as the child points to the pictures on each page.
• Let the child pretend to read the story as the adult points to the pictures.
• Read alternate pages, ask each other questions, and discuss the story. The adult models what he or she thinks of when reading the page so the child gets a variety of perspectives on the ways words have different meanings.
• Use computer programs to expand a child’s interest in specific topics and to provide valuable information for later curriculum study.
• Compare and contrast video adaptations of children’s books for this and more advanced literacy levels.

Primary-grade book activities

• Continue to spend time reading with the child; set aside a specific time and place.
• Be familiar with Children’s Choices books and other high-quality children’s literature.
• Become aware of the interests of your children and books that extend life experiences so they know what happens in the world around them.
• Encourage children to share books read in school with parents and caregivers at home. Parents and caregivers should encourage children to share books they’ve read at home with their teachers and schoolmates.
• Continue to extend the information and knowledge bases through computer programs and other technology that capitalize on topics initiated through reading.

Independent reader activities

• Challenge readers to compare and contrast books.
• Encourage children to develop an interest in a variety of genres such as biography, historical fiction, and poetry.
• Encourage children to read books related to beginning career and vocational choices.
• Seek a balance between school book activities, home and school literature activities, and familiarity with newspapers, magazines, and other text media that address contemporary social, cultural, and civic issues.

Develop the desire to be a lifelong reader

• Have students bring what is read to bear on what is viewed on film, television, and computer and other media technologies.
• View technology in the reflection of the literature.
• Keep in mind that the most memorable conversations are often filled with anecdotes from literature.
• Relate what has been read to the solution of problems. By internalizing what has been read, we use knowledge and wisdom to solve personal problems, to make significant decisions related to career choices, to find solutions to community and social problems, and to develop healthy attitudes toward a positive world environment.

IRA/CBC Liaison Committee
Shari M. Furtwangler, 2002–2003 Cochair
Phoebe Yeh, 2002–2003 Cochair
**Hunter’s Best Friend at School**
Laura Malone Elliott. Ill. Lynn Munsinger.

_Hunter and Stripe do everything together because they are best friends. One day Stripe acts naughty at school and expects Hunter to join in. Hunter does, but regrets this choice. Children see being a friend means helping another be his best._ (Team 2)


**Little Brown Bear Won’t Take a Nap!**
Jane Dyer. Ill. by the author.

_Little Bear decides to follow the geese south for the winter, rather than hibernating. Is he ever surprised to discover that they travel by train instead of flying! By the time Little Bear makes it home, winter is almost over._ (Team 1)


**Little Buggy**
Kevin O’Malley. Ill by the author.

_Mother Ladybug teaches her child to fly. At first, there are many problems, mostly of the falling kind. Eventually, Buggy takes off successfully. Two slugs provide helpful and hilarious commentary as they observe mother and child. Readers will have a bug’s-eye view thanks to lush green illustrations._ (Team 5)


**The Magic Hat**
Mem Fox. Ill. Tricia Tusa.

_A magic hat transforms residents of a sleepy town into a gaggle of animals until a wizard returns them to normal. Fox’s rhythmic text will appeal to the preschool crowd. Watercolor illustrations vibrate with color, alerting readers to the fantastic elements of the story._ (Team 5)


**Man on the Moon (A Day in the Life of Bob)**
Simon Bartram. Ill. by the author.

_Bob is the man on the moon who cleans up, entertains tourists, and sells souvenirs all day. He returns to the earth at night and ignores the fact that aliens take over then. Children laugh at the absurd events and ridiculous images._ (Team 2)


**The Mud Monster’s Halloween**
Michael Rex. Ill. by the author.

_This humorous word-by-word first reader portrays a young boy’s misadventures on his way to a Halloween party. Beware—there’s a surprise ending!_ (Team 1)


**No, No Jack!**

_This lift-the-flap book poses questions for readers then provides the answers in the flip of a flap. Jack the dog hides objects in the closet. Readers are asked to guess what they will find when the closet door is “opened.”_ (Team 5)


**Oh My Gosh, Mrs. McNosh!**

_Mrs. McNosh’s dog, George, breaks his leash and escapes to chase a squirrel through the park. The refrain, “Oh, my gosh!” is repeated throughout the story as Mrs. McNosh catches everything except George._ (Team 1)


**Squeaky Clean**
Simon Puttock. Ill. Mary McQuillan.

_Clever Mama Pig turns dreaded bath time into so much fun that her three piglets look for ways to repeat the experience. There are lots of silly rhyming words and alliteration in this easy-to-read format._ (Team 4)


**Tatty Ratty**
Helen Cooper. Ill. by the author.

_To ease Molly’s worries about her missing toy rabbit, her parents help her imagine the wonderful adventures Tatty Ratty must be having. Fanciful illustrations help carry a story about love and trust with which children can relate._ (Team 4)

The Wolf Who Cried Boy
Bob Hartman. Ill. Tim Raglin.
Little wolf was tired of the food his mother served. He really wanted a “BOY.” Little wolf decided to play a trick on his parents. He played this trick again, and his parents found out. When a BOY actually came no one would believe him. (Team 2)

Young Readers

Alphabeasts
Wallace Edwards. Ill. by the author.
An elegant house is home to many common and exotic animals. Rhyming text and detailed illustrations explain how the various beasts spend their leisure time. (Team 1)

Arthur, It’s Only Rock ‘n’ Roll
Marc Brown. Ill. by the author.
Arthur faces quite a dilemma when Francine forms a rock-and-roll band. The Back Street Boys make a special appearance as Francine learns what it really means to be a member of a band. (Team 1)

The Bear: An American Folk Song
Kenneth J. Spengler. Ill. by the author.
The popular camp song has a new twist. As a little girl tries to escape a man-eating bear, she gets help from an unexpected source. Lyrics and musical arrangement included. (Team 3)

Betsy Who Cried Wolf
Gail Carson Levine. Ill. Scott Nash.
Betsy, the shepherd, cries wolf, and the townsfolk think she is faking. When they refuse to respond, she deals with the wolf alone by feeding him and making friends. Children see how to make a connection with others in their lives and reach out to solve a problem with ingenuity. (Team 2)

Cinderella
Retold by Ruth Sanderson.
This traditional version of Cinderella is enlivened by detailed “glittery” illustrations that mesmerize the reader and emphasize Cinderella’s true beauty, even when she is mistreated. An unusual but satisfying ending awaits the stepmother and sisters. (Team 1)

Cone Kong: The Scary Ice Cream Giant
Captain Handsome and his girlfriend Betty Beautiful pursue and capture Cone Kong. Kong escapes and heads back to Gull Island. Readers may not be familiar with the story of “King Kong,” but this parody is hilarious in its own right. (Team 5)

David Gets in Trouble
David Shannon. Ill. by the author.
It never seems to be David’s fault when a window breaks, he forgets to wear his pants to school, or that the dog ate his homework. When the lights go off David is very sorry and still loved by mom. Children can relate David’s troubles to real life. (Team 2)

Do Your Ears Hang Low?
Caroline Jayne Church. Ill. by the author.
Colorful drawings of two doggy pals (long-eared, of course) accompany the American Revolutionary War title song of the text. Suggested arm movements at the
end of the book help encourage children to join in and sing along with a partner. (Team 4)


Emergency
Margaret Mayo. Ill. Alex Ayliffe.
Various types of common and unusual emergency responses, from police cars to fire-fighting planes, are featured in this colorful book. A repeated refrain of “Help is coming. It’s on the way!” also entices young readers. (Team 1)


Epossomondas
Coleen Salley. Ill. Janet Stevens.
The author introduces us to the noodlehead tale of Epossomondas, the silliest and most muddleheaded possum in the south. Epossomondas takes everything literally and experiences one disaster after another. Children will be in stitches as they read. (Team 2)


I Invited a Dragon to Dinner: And Other Poems to Make You Laugh Out Loud
This collection of poems written by 23 new poets will tickle the funny bone of young children. We have poems such as “Detestable Vegetables,” “Outburst! Outburst!” and of course “I Invited a Dragon to Dinner.” Lots of wordplay and puns are included. (Team 2)


I Stink!
Kate McMullan. Ill. Jim McMullan.
McMullan shows us what it is like when the sun goes down and the garbage trucks come out. We are given a tour to learn what it is like to be a garbage truck. Children will realize what an important job they have. (Team 2)


If Dogs Ruled the World
A serious case of owner/pet role reversal is presented in an easy-to-read format. Young readers will be amused at humans guarding houses and playing in fenced-in backyards. The humorous illustrations provide clues to the vocabulary. (Team 4)


If I Had a Gorilla
Mercer Mayer. Ill. by the author.
Various animals might be able to come to the rescue of a small boy, at least in his daydreams. Fortunately, his big brother can do that in real life. Mayer’s text is simple, making this book accessible to beginning readers. (Team 5)


If You Take a Mouse to School
Laura Numeroff. Ill. Felicia Bond.
Here is the return of Laura Numeroff’s demanding mouse, as he goes to school for the first time. Readers will relate easily to the mouse’s classroom experiences, and the bold, colorful drawings will amuse them. (Team 4)


Laura Numeroff’s 10-Step Guide to Living With Your Monster
Laura Numeroff. Ill. Nate Evans.
Comical looking pet “monsters” and humorous tips for choosing and caring for them are included in this guidebook on monster care. Hints for naming, entertaining, grooming, and tucking them into bed at the end of an exhausting day are provided. (Team 1)

The Littlest Wolf
Larry Dane Brimner. Ill. Jose Aruego and Ariane Dewey.
The Littlest Wolf is very sad because he can’t roll straight, run fast, or pounce high. His wise father tells him “That is just as it should be.” Children will appreciate the fact that they are special no matter what. (Team 2)

Lucky Socks
Kevin is certain that his yellow socks bring him luck. He wears them and gets the starring role in the school play. When his lucky socks go missing, he is devastated. Can something else replace his luck? Bold, die-cut illustrations emphasize the gentle humor. (Team 5)

My First Animal Book
Ill. with photos.
The animals in this book are grouped into those with spots, stripes, feathers, spikes, wrinkles, and scales. Photos are large, and each animal is identified in bold print. Common and more exotic animals are included. (Team 5)

My Somebody Special
Sarah Weeks. Ill. Ashley Wolff.
Do you remember how worried you felt when you were the last child picked up from school? Young children will identify with this book’s theme as they enjoy the sketches of diverse parents and offspring relating to each other. (Team 4)

Playhouse
Robert Munsch. Ill. Michael Martchenko.
Renee wants not only a playhouse but also a play barn, play cow, play tractor, and play family. Her parents retaliate with a play daughter. Children realize sometimes the real thing is the best, even with its flaws. (Team 2)

The Princess and the Pizza
Mary Jane Auch. Ill. Herm Auch.
Paulina enters a contest to marry an eligible prince. She is stumped by the challenge of creating a meal of flour, yeast, water, tomatoes, and cheese. She discovers pizza. Children admire her quick thinking and strong sense of self. (Team 2)

The Princesses Have a Ball
Teresa Bateman. Ill. Lynne Cravath.
The “Twelve Dancing Princesses” have discovered basketball. Now instead of dancing all night, they play ball from dusk to dawn. With the help of a sharp shoemaker, they are able to bring their game out into the light of day. (Team 3)

Professor Wormbog in Search for the Zipperump-A-Zoo
Mercer Mayer. Ill. by the author.
Professor Wormbog has every monster from A to Y in his zoo, but what he really wants is a Zipperump-A-Zoo. He and his companions go on a search for the creature, but he can’t seem to find one. (Team 3)

The Secret of the North Pole
Arcadio Lobato. Ill. by the author.
Who is Santa Claus? A red hat launches a quest for the answer as Peter, the mature-feeling polar bear, learns about Christmas helpers and growing up. The childlike illustrations help youngsters focus attention on the story. (Team 4)

Spiders (Scholastic Science Readers)
Carolyn B. Otto. Ill. with photos.
Fascinating photos of many kinds of spiders as they go about the task of spinning webs, catching prey, and raising their young fill the pages of this nonfiction book. Interesting facts and hints for observing (but not touching) spiders are provided. (Team 1)
MORE ABOUT CHILDREN’S CHOICES

Who is on the IRA–CBC Joint Committee and who are members of the review teams?

Cochairing the 2002–2003 IRA–CBC Joint Committee were Shari M. Furtwangler, Lebanon, Oregon, and Phoebe Yeh, HarperCollins Children’s Books, New York, New York. Representing IRA on the committee were Barbara Fritz, Claudia Katz, Stuart Murphy, Melody Studer, and Shauna Tateoka; those representing CBC were Victoria Wells Arms, Lucy Del Priore, Kathleen Calhoun Nettleton, Deborah Wooten, Junko Yokota, and Judith Zylstra. CBC administrative staff coordinated the teams’ work.

The review teams described below coordinated the project at each of the following five test sites:

**Team 1:** Appling, Georgia, consisted of two suburban elementary schools, two rural elementary schools, and one inner-city magnet school with grades K–8. Team leaders: Cindy Beatty and Beth Pendergraft. Support team leaders: Fran Brewer, Kathleen Cassidy, Sherry Riner, Renee Chance, and Tasha Williams.

**Team 2:** Billerica, Massachusetts, consisted of three suburban elementary schools and one suburban middle school. Team leader: Marion DePierro. Support team leader: Janice Peterson.

**Team 3:** Madras, Oregon, consisted of three rural elementary schools, one rural middle school, and one elementary school on the Warm Springs Reservation. Team leaders: Joan Brinkley and Mary Hawes.

**Team 4:** Lima, Ohio, consisted of inner-city elementary and middle schools. Team leader: Rebecca Reese. Support team leaders: Andrea Ralston, Jane Backus, Jill Martin, Karen Stayonovich, Debra Jackson, Tracey Sloan, Vivian Hines, and Michelle Vandemark.

**Team 5:** Huntsville, Texas, consisted of two suburban and two rural elementary schools, one suburban intermediate school, and one suburban junior/senior high school. Team leader: Teri Lesesne.

How can I become a team leader?

Team leaders are selected by the IRA–CBC Joint Committee based upon numerous factors such as location within the United States; cooperation between team leaders, school administrators, and library media specialists; and ability to attend orientation sessions at the International Reading Association’s annual convention. For additional information about this project and a downloadable application form, visit CBC’s website at www.cbcbooks.org/Choices_Leader_Application.PDF.

How can I order copies of this list?

Offprints of this annotated 2003 Children’s Choices list (publication #9106) are available from the International Reading Association. Single copies are US$1.00 when you send a self-addressed 9” × 12” envelope to the attention of Department EG. Single copies of each choices list may also be downloaded as a PDF file at www.reading.org/choices/. To order bulk copies by telephone with a credit card, call (in the United States and Canada only) 800-336-READ, ext. 266; or send your order to Order Department, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 6021, Newark, DE 19714-6021, USA. Bulk copies are also available in lots of 10 at http://marketplace.reading.org.

Are other booklists available?

The International Reading Association prepares two additional annual booklists. Teachers’ Choices describes approximately 30 new trade books published for children and adolescents that teachers themselves have found to be exceptional in curriculum use. The list appears each year in the November issue of The Reading Teacher and is also available in bulk as a separate reprint and on the Association’s website at www.reading.org. Young Adults’ Choices lists approximately 30 new trade books that middle, junior high, and senior high school students have selected as being particularly appealing for their age group. This list appears each November in the International Reading Association publication Journal of Adolescent & Adult Literacy and is available as a separate reprint and on the Association’s website at www.reading.org.

Copies of either Teachers’ or Young Adults’ Choices lists are available from the International Reading Association, Attn: Dept. EG, 800 Barksdale Road, PO Box 8139, Newark, DE 19714-8139, USA. Prices for each annotated list are the same as those given for the Children’s Choices offprint. Prepaid orders for bulk copies should be sent to the Order Department as indicated for bulk copies above. To order bulk copies by telephone with a credit card, call (in the United States and Canada only) 800-336-READ, ext. 266.

Annual lists distributed by the Children’s Book Council (CBC) are Notable Social Studies Trade Books for Young People, a project of the National Council for the Social Studies–CBC Joint Committee, and Outstanding Science Trade Books for students K–12, a project of the National Science Teachers Association–CBC Joint Committee. For a single copy of the social studies list or science list, send US$2.00 and a self-addressed 6” × 9” envelope stamped with 83¢ U.S. postage to CBC, 12 W. 37th Street, 2nd Floor, New York, NY 10018-7840, USA; Attn: Social Studies List, or Attn: Science List. Multiple copy rates are available on the CBC website www.cbcbooks.org.
Storm Is Coming
Heather Tekavec. Ill. Margaret Spengler.
As a storm approaches, a farmer rounds up the livestock and sends them into the barn. All of the animals wonder about the identity of this “STORM.” What does he look like? Their fears are calmed because all of this is happening outside and the barn will protect them. (Team 5)

'Twas the Fright Before Christmas
Judy Sierra. Ill. Will Hillenbrand.
This “monstrous” parody of the original sports a zombie and a mummy among other creatures of the night. Combining elements of the cumulative tale, this story is one children will want to hear often. Tiny details in the illustrations add to the weird Christmas setting. (Team 5)

The Witch Who Wanted to Be a Princess
Bella yearns to be a princess. Unfortunately, she is a witch. When she reads an ad that Prince Frank of Styne is looking for a wife, she heads off in search of her dream. Beauty, readers learn, is in the eye of the beholder. (Team 5)
Intermediate Readers

The Adventures of Super Diaper Baby
Dav Pilkey. Ill. by the author.

The author of Captain Underpants brings intermediate readers lots of laughs in this comic book style adventure as a new hero is created. It features spelling errors, pages readers flip for an animated effect, and “potty” humor that kids enjoy. (Team 4)

Can You See What I See? Picture Puzzles to Search and Solve
Walter Wick. Ill. with photos.

Twelve sprawling double-page photographs contain hundreds of objects for readers to locate. Wooden blocks, die cuts, old toys, and kitchen equipment crowd each page, making this a visual feast as well as a complex search-and-find puzzle book. (Team 5)

The Hamster of the Baskervilles:
A Chet Gecko Mystery
Bruce Hale. Ill. by the author.

Fourth grader Chet Gecko and his partner Natalie Attired are back again. This time they are working for Mr. Ratnose and are on the trail of a “werehamster.” This detective story just drips with puns, sarcasm, and red herrings. (Team 3)

The Hershey’s Milk Chocolate Multiplication Book
Jerry Pallotta. Ill. Rob Bolster.

Children will experience the fun of multiplication by using the rectangles in a Hershey Milk Chocolate bar. Each page has a numerical problem, a word problem, and the Hershey Milk Chocolate rectangles for a visual. (Team 2)

Ice Cream
Jules Older. Ill. Lyn Severance.

An explanation of how ice cream was first made around the world, compared with how it is made today, captures the attention of the reader. Other interesting facts about this frozen treat along with cartoonlike illustrations add to the appeal. (Team 1)

If the World Were a Village: A Book About the World’s People
David J. Smith. Ill. by the author.

Words like millions and billions can be confusing for children. In this book, the author has reduced the world to a village of 100 people. He then uses this village to describe the world in numbers that children can understand. (Team 3)

Into the Air: The Story of the Wright Brothers’ First Flight

Presented in comic book fashion, this is an informative but engaging biography. The author engages the reader in the drama of aeronautical problem solving along with the Wright brothers. Readers will appreciate the imaginative use of detail in the illustrations. (Team 4)

Cover illustration © 2002 by Brad Weinman from The Hamster of the Baskervilles by Bruce Hale. Used with permission of Harcourt Inc. All rights reserved.
Judy Moody Saves the World
Megan McDonald. Ill. Peter Reynolds.

_Judy Moody decides to involve her family in recycling to save the rain forests. She tries everything, but they won’t cooperate. Her next step is to bring the recycling project to class by taking all the students’ pencils, and that is when the fun begins._ (Team 2)


Just One More
Wendi Silvano. Ill. Ricardo Gamboa.

_The repetitive story line in this book allows the young reader to easily follow along as more and more interesting people squeeze onto the bus until the bus comes to a surprising stop._ (Team 1)


Little Yau
Jannell Cannon. Ill. by the author.

_Little Yau desires to learn the medicine secrets of the Wise Ones from the mountains, but when her friend Trupp becomes seriously ill only she has the knowledge to heal him. Children will fall in love with the mythical fuzzheads._ (Team 1)


Mercedes and the Chocolate Pilot: A True Story of the Berlin Airlift and the Candy That Dropped From the Sky
Margot Theis Raven. Ill. Gijsbert van Frankenhuyzen.

_Through the eyes of Mercedes Wild, we meet Lt. Gail Halvorsen, the Chocolate Pilot. The Chocolate Pilot dropped tons of candy to the children in West Berlin during 1948–1949. Later Mercedes actually meets Lt. Halvorsen, to her delight._ (Team 2)


Palindromania!
Jon Agee. Ill. by the author.

_Jon Agee entertains his readers with words and phrases that read exactly the same forward as backward. The comic-style book entertains children with expressions such as “But Anita sat in a tub.” No one can do this as easily as Jon Agee can._ (Team 2)


Patrol: An American Soldier in Vietnam

_Myers and Grifalconi have combined their talents to create a book that is unusual, gripping, and fascinating. A young, scared soldier describes his feelings while on patrol in the jungles of Vietnam._ (Team 3)


Plantzilla

_Told in a series of letters by Mortimer, Mortimer’s mom, and Mr. Lester the science teacher, we learn about Plantzilla. Plantzilla comes to visit Mortimer for the summer and with love and care from the family starts to take on human qualities._ (Team 2)


Ricky Ricotta’s Mighty Robot vs. the Mechanimals From Mars
Dav Pilkey. Ill. Martin Ontiveros.

_Ricky and his robot are in trouble for wrecking the family minivan. They save the planet Earth and are rewarded with the money to repair all the damage. Children root for the youngster who saves the day._ (Team 2)


The Skull Alphabet Book
Jerry Pallotta. Ill. Ralph Masiello.

_Readers are given clues to the identity of the animal skulls included for each letter of the alphabet. Science concepts are reinforced as students examine the skulls of the many mammals included._ (Team 5)


The Spider and the Fly
Based on the poem by Mary Howitt. Ill. Tony DiTerlizzi.

_“Will you walk into my parlor?” the spider asks the fly (damsel, of course) in this “cautionary” Victorian tale, which teaches us to beware of dishonest flattery without preaching. The illustrations evoke a “film noir/Edward Gorey” feeling._ (Team 4)


Tales From the Dragon’s Cave...Peacemaking Stories for Everyone
Arlene Williams. Ill. by the author.
Through a series of short stories the author teaches students to resolve conflicts through peaceful means. Each story is entertaining in itself but can lead to deeper discussions about peace, cooperation, and self-esteem. (Team 3)

Under the Quilt of Night
This book is a first-person fictionalized account by a runaway slave of her experiences with the Underground Railroad. Facts and folklore are presented in a lyrical way with bold illustrations that help to carry the story. (Team 4)

Voladores (Legends of the Americas)
Patricia Petersen. Ill. Sheli Petersen.
In this tale of Mexican folklore, a young boy longs to become a Voladore like his uncle. He trades his treasured flute to the wind to save his village from the wrath of an angry volcano and jealous rain god. (Team 1)

A Week in the Woods
Andrew Clements. Ill. Brian Selznick.
Mark has just moved to rural New Hampshire. He decides not to make friends or do any work. This really bothers Mark’s science teacher, Mr. Maxwell. When Mark decides to go on the Week in the Woods the action really begins. (Team 2)

What Planet Are You From, Clarice Bean?
Lauren Child. Ill. by the author.
Clarice’s class is studying the environment and must do a project. When her brother decides to prevent a tree from being chopped down, Clarice joins in and becomes an eco-warrior. The text flows from every conceivable angle and direction but is easily followed by careful readers. (Team 5)

Will Rogers: An American Legend
Frank Keating. Ill. Mike Wimmer.
He never met a man he did not like. This homespun hero spoke quietly about the important things in life: freedom, community, and family. Keating’s biography is simple yet not simplistic. Wimmer’s illustrations make this legendary man glow with life. (Team 5)

The Woman Who Won Things
The Gaskitt family is back for another romp in this short chapter book. Mrs. Gaskitt wins several small contests, the substitute teacher might just be a thief, and Mr. Gaskitt cannot find a job that suits his unique talents. Illustrations heighten the humor and word play. (Team 5)

Advanced Readers

Among the Betrayed
Margaret Peterson Haddix.
Nina, a forbidden third child, is captured by the Population Police. She is told to expose who has kept her and others hidden but refuses and escapes. This third book in this futuristic series stands well on its own merits. (Team 5)

Ancient Egypt Revealed
Peter Crisp. Ill. with photos and prints.
Facts and details of ancient Egyptian life are packed into every chapter. Transparencies add interest and excitement. Children have the feeling of discovery and exploration as they move through the book and lift the flaps to see more. (Team 2)
**The Angel Factory**  
Terence Blacker.  
*Thomas Wisdom is the child of angels selected to save the earth. He rebels and chooses freedom over predetermined perfection. Children wanted to discuss both sides of the issue. (Team 2)*  

**Bad Girls in Love**  
Cynthia Voigt.  
*The interactions of junior high students are the backdrop for this book. Readers will empathize with “bad girls” Mikey and Margalo and discover that making mistakes is not a total waste of time and people often aren’t what they seem. (Team 4)*  

**Baseball Top 10**  
James Buckley, Jr. and David Fischer.  
*Baseball fans will be thrilled with facts and figures presented in baseball card format. Photographs of players past and present add a special visual impact to the text. Lists of every category imaginable related to baseball trivia are provided. (Team 1)*  

**Becoming Joe DiMaggio**  
Maria Testa. Ill. Scott Hunt.  
*A story told in verse of “Joltin’ Joe” DiMaggio gives hope to a grandson and his immigrant grandfather. In beautiful prose this story gives all of us permission to dream and have heroes. (Team 3)*  

**Code Breakers: From Hieroglyphics to Hackers**  
(DK Secret Worlds)  
Simon Adams. Ill. with photos and prints.  
*The mystery of codes and how they have been used throughout history is explained. Smoke signals, cipher machines, signal flags, computer codes, and DNA are just a few of the intriguing types of codes that are featured. (Team 1)*  

**Coraline**  
*This creepy and frightening fairy tale will keep you hooked till the end. The wonderful black line drawings add interest and intrigue to this unsettling but captivating ghost story. (Team 3)*  

**Crispin: The Cross of Lead**  
Avi.  
*A boy known only as Asta’s son flees for his life after the death of his mother. The true identity of his parents is still shrouded in mystery, a mystery that leads him across 14th-century feudal England in search of his real name. (Team 5)*  

**Fossil Fish Found Alive: Discovering the Coelacanth**  
Sally M. Walker. Ill. with photos.  
*In 1938, a fish once thought to be extinct was caught off the coast of South Africa. Students interested in prehistoric creatures will want to read about the discovery and research into this fascinating creature. (Team 3)*  
**Mammoths: Ice-Age Giants**
Dr. Larry D. Agenbroad and Lisa Nelson. Ill. with photos. 
*Young scientists explore the mystery of the extinct mammoth through an exciting history of the discovery of the first frozen mammoth to the more recent fossil finds and mummified corpses. Children will love the detailed photography of the mummified mammoths.* (Team 1)

**One Night**
Marsha Qualey.
*In a romantic adventure for older readers, 19-year-old Kelly Ray, a recovering heroin addict, has a chance meeting with the prince of a war-torn country. Kelly has one night to convince the prince to appear on her aunt’s radio show.* (Team 1)

**Parvana’s Journey**
Deborah Ellis. Ill. Pascal Milelli.
*Parvana is in Taliban-controlled Afghanistan and forced to leave the city of Kabul in search of her family. Along the way she helps three other children and proves how resilient children can be when faced with the horrors of war.* (Team 3)

**The Raging Dragon**
Len Lamensdorf. Ill. Bob Swingle.
*This dynamic adventure is set in Paris during the time of the Algerian Civil War. It offers a look at the sights of Paris while engaging us with another story of Willi and Louise in the Will to Conquer series.* (Team 3)

**Rat**
Jan Cheripko.
*Love basketball? This book offers lots of hoop action mixed with a tale of frankness and courage. A handicapped boy finds friendship in this action-packed story.* (Team 3)

**Robots Among Us: The Challenges and Promises of Robotics (New Century Technology series)**
Christopher W. Baker. Ill. with photos.
*We see robots in movies and read about them in science fiction, but what do we really know about today’s robots? In this book, students can learn what robots can do now and what the future holds for robots and humans.* (Team 3)

**Simply Alice**
Phyllis Reynolds Naylor.
*Alice is now a high school freshman in this 14th book in the series. She has broken off with her long-time boyfriend and is becoming more confident about herself and her place in the family and in her new school. Gentle good humor will make readers laugh along in recognition.* (Team 5)

**Soccer: The Ultimate Guide to the Beautiful Game**
Clive Gifford. Ill. with photos and digital artwork.
*This wonderful introduction to soccer will have kids lining up to borrow it. The book uses colored illustrations and computer-generated graphics to describe basic skills and explain soccer rules and regulations. Table of contents, glossary, and index are included.* (Team 3)

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**Children’s Choices for 2003**

Cover illustration by Uhl Studios from The Raging Dragon by Len Lamensdorf. Used with permission of the publisher, SeaScape Press.
Star Wars: Attack of the Clones: Incredible Cross Sections
Curtis Saxton. Ill. by Hans Jennssen and Richard Chasemore.

_Star Wars_ fans will enjoy this up-close look at the imaginary transports from the movie _Attack of the Clones_. Detailed cutaway illustrations of the various ships are included along with labels and explanatory text. (Team 3)


Swimming Upstream: Middle School Poems
Kristine O’Connell George. Ill. Debbie Tilley.

Poems about the trials and triumphs of being in the middle are celebrated in short poems. Topics range from librarians to “that film” to friends and family. Simple illustrations accompany the poems that capture the heart and soul of middle school. (Team 5)


Under the Ice
Kathy Conlan. Ill. with photos.

_Kathy Conlan will keep readers, young and old, enthralled with her Antarctic adventure. The first-person narrative is gripping. The photos and descriptions of life under the ice are fascinating._ (Team 3)


The Waterstone
Rebecca Rupp.

_Magic, little people, and attention to details bring us into a wonderful fantasy world. The results are an unforgettable adventure that will amaze and delight the reader._ (Team 3)


The Way the Universe Works
Robin Kerrod and Giles Sparrow. Ill. with photos.

_Clear photographs from space illuminate this text about how the universe works. Easy to follow directions for many different experiments readers can perform are included, making the reading more interactive than usual in a science book._ (Team 5)


Zzz... The Most Interesting Book You’ll Ever Read About Sleep
Trudee Romanek. Ill. Rose Cowles.

_Interesting facts about sleeping, sleepwalking, snoring, and the meanings of dreams are explained. Amusing incidents as well as hints for getting a good night’s sleep, getting rid of nightmares, and remembering dreams are included in the margins._ (Team 1)


The Children’s Book Council (CBC) is a nonprofit organization encouraging the use and enjoyment of books and related literacy materials for young people. CBC sponsors National Children’s Book Week each November and also prepares and sells display and informational materials to promote year-round reading. The Council cooperates on a variety of projects with the International Reading Association and with other national professional associations.

The International Reading Association is a nonprofit professional organization of classroom teachers, reading specialists, administrators, reading researchers, parents, librarians, and others interested in improving reading instruction. It encourages study of the reading process, research, and better teacher education. It promotes the development of reading proficiency to the limit of one’s ability, and awareness of the importance for reading.

*“Children’s Choices for 2003” has been reprinted from the October issue of The Reading Teacher, © 2003, a journal about preschool and elementary school reading published by the International Reading Association.*