What Is the Children’s Choices Project?

Each year 12,500 school children from different regions of the United States read newly published children’s and young adults’ trade books and vote for the ones they like best. These Children’s Choices, selected from more than 500 titles, can be counted on as books children really enjoy reading. This list, a project of a joint committee supported by IRA and The Children’s Book Council (CBC), 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.

See page 15 for the Children’s Choices 2012 Reading List bookmark!
**Bailey**
Harry Bliss. Scholastic.

Bliss’s expressive, cartoonish illustrations are highly inviting to young readers as Bailey the dog heads to school. Children enjoyed Bailey using his tail as a paintbrush and when he really truly sunk his teeth into math!

**Bear’s Loose Tooth**

Bear’s story continues with a loose tooth. Bear is dismayed but pushes the tooth out. He’s chagrined to discover another loose tooth. Some rhymes are tired, but children losing teeth will enjoy the outcome and what the tooth fairy brings.

**Because**

Why is the dog wearing a cape? “Because,” Jack answers. Why did you cover yourself with band-aids? “Because,” Jack answers. While his mom disagrees, Jack thinks “because” is a good answer to her questions. Kids chuckle at this story.

**Blue Chicken**
Deborah Freedman. Viking Juvenile.

In the midst of completing a peaceful farm scene, one chicken’s curiosity about painting tips over the blue paint, splashing across the page and other farm animals. The chain reaction calamity that ensues comes full circle in a “clean ending.”
Detective Blue
Steve Metzger. Ill. by Tedd Arnold. Orchard.
Detective Blue, alias Little Boy Blue, leaves the old neighborhood to start a detective agency. His days are filled with hilarious crime solving adventures as he encounters a multitude of characters from other familiar nursery rhymes.

Dinosaurs Don’t, Dinosaurs Do
Steve Björkman. Holiday House.
A great introduction to manners and behavior, kids love learning that dinosaurs don’t take, take, take, but they share, share, share. They don’t hit but they talk things over.

*Dot
Patricia Intriago. Farrar, Straus and Giroux.
Children can easily relate to the different relationships in this clever book about dots. Some dots are loud; some are quiet. Some are happy; some are sad.

Every Cowgirl Needs Dancing Boots
Rebecca Janni. Ill. by Lynne Avril. Dutton Juvenile.
Nellie Sue wants to two-step in her new dancing boots but the glitter girls dance ballet. Can a cowgirl make friends with pirouetting ballerinas? Children will enjoy this two-stepping hoedown story of girls twirling their way into friendship.

Gibbus Moony Wants to Bite You!
Finally Gibbus Mooney has grown-up fangs, but he’s not certain what he should sink his teeth into! Kids enjoyed as a humorous read.

Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet
Children immediately identify with Gilbert the Goldfish’s dreams to have his very own pet. Gilbert’s expressive, bubbly eyes mirror the reader’s excitement and disappointment on the journey to discovering the perfect pet. The unpredictable, satisfying ending will leave kids giggling!

Goldie and the Three Hares
Chased by the three bears, Goldie falls smack dab into the Hares’ comfy-cozy rabbit hole. Not the best houseguest, the Hares have to find a way to get her to leave. Kids suggest ways to get Goldie to vamoose!

Happy Birthday Hamster
Cynthia Lord. Ill. by Derek Anderson. Scholastic.
Taking place on Hamster’s birthday, this rhyming book is a follow up to Hot Rod Hamster and just as fun to read. Children enjoy the flow of the text and cheerful illustrations along with a lively ending.

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If You Give a Dog a Donut
Laura Numeroff. Ill. by Felicia Bond. Balzer & Bray.

Cute and playful illustrations accompany this simple yet interactive text. Students in K–3 will enjoy predicting what the dog will do next. The dog plays baseball, flies a kite, and pretends to be a pirate.

The Little Red Pen

A take-off on “The Little Red Hen,” Little Red Pen has to correct a mountain of homework. None of the other school supplies will help her. Children suggest ways to resolve her dilemma with the help of the pet hamster.

Otis and the Tornado
Loren Long. Philomel.

A suspenseful account of a brave little tractor named Otis who must rescue his barnyard friends and a big scary bull when a tornado sweeps through their farm. Full-page illustrations complement the text.

Pete the Cat: Rocking in My School Shoes

Part song, part story, Litwin’s tale follows Pete the cat as he travels along and perpetually puts his beautiful white shoes into one bright color after another. A terrific book to help kindergartners and first graders make predictions.

Pirate Boy

Danny and his mom read a pirate book together. If he went with the pirates would she rescue him when he needed her? The story leaves the child with the message that mom would make everything work out just right.

*Pirates Don’t Take Baths
John Segal. Philomel.

The baby pig doesn’t want to take a bath. He wants to be like a pirate or a cowboy or an astronaut or whoever else doesn’t have to bathe. Children will find humor in his excuses and in mother’s creative solution.

Pirates of the Sea!
Brandon Dorman. Greenwillow.

Aye, me ‘hearties! Battle sharks, sea monsters, and storms with this unfortunate band of pirates on the quest for treasure. Children love the hidden messages and hilarious eye-popping illustrations. This unpredictable, rhyming tale will leave readers laughing out loud!
**Press Here**
Hervé Tullet. Chronicle.

A stunning response to digital pages, Press Here invites the reader to press, shake, or turn the book to make a single dot perform magic. The dot changes color and even multiplies!

**Pumpkin Cat**

When Cat asks how pumpkins grow, Mouse takes the two of them on a gardening journey through the seasons. The illustrations are beautiful and informative, supporting young readers’ understanding of how plants grow.

**Purple Little Bird**

Foley gives us a delightful story of a Purple Little Bird working very hard to keep everything perfect in his purple house. Children will enjoy learning about color and the new friends Purple Little Bird makes during his travels.

**Rapunzel: Based on the Original Story by the Brothers Grimm**

The classic Brothers Grimm story of the beautiful Rapunzel is picturesquely retold. Children will delight in the classic line of “Rapunzel, Rapunzel, let down your golden hair,” and be drawn into the adventures of the enchanted forest.

**RRRalph**
Lois Ehlert. Beach Lane.

RRRalph is about a fun, loveable talking dog. The story is told through questions from a narrator, whom the dog answers with words like “roof” and “bark.” Kids love the jokes and bright illustrations.

**Shoe-la-la!**
Karen Beaumont. Ill. by LeUyen Pham. Scholastic.

Fresh rhymes tell the story of four little girls’ need for party shoes. They spend the day at a store trying on, and rejecting, dozens of pairs. Ultimately the girls decide to custom decorate shoes they already own.

**Silverlicious**

Children will enjoy this new Pinkalicious story. Pinkalicious steals a chocolate cookie from her brother but when she takes a bite, her sweet tooth falls out! Children will laugh at the creative notes between Pinkalicious and her tooth fairy, Tootheetina.

**The Sleepless Little Vampire**

The little vampire cannot sleep and listens to the night noises. Creatures of the night are booing and clacking. Spiders are spitting, and bats are flitting. The whimsical, rhythmic alliteration gives young readers’ ticklish delight and a surprise ending.
Splish, Splash, Splat!

“Water is horrible,” grumbles Splat. Together Splat and Spike face the scary pool and find a friend in each other. Children will have fun reading how two cats overcome their fear of water and become friends.

Squish Rabbit
Katherine Battersby. Viking Juvenile.

No one notices, listens to, or pays any attention to Squish Rabbit. Out of frustration he throws a tantrum and unbeknownst to him someone does notice. The friendship that follows between squirrel and rabbit is a perfect match.

Suryia and Roscoe: The True Story of an Unlikely Friendship

An information book told in story narrative about the relationship between an orangutan (Suryia) and a dog (Roscoe). Suryia and Roscoe form a close friendship full of play and care. Photographs such as Suryia riding atop an elephant capture young readers’ attention immediately.

Ten Little Caterpillars
Bill Martin, Jr. Ill. by Lois Ehlert. Beach Lane.

Ten different kinds of caterpillars crawl and climb and swim in this colorful rhyming book. The large print and page-filling illustrations make this suitable for read alouds. An illustrated appendix details each caterpillar.

*Three Hens and a Peacock

A peacock shows up at the farm and lures visitors to the farm stand. The hens get jealous so hound dog suggests they swap duties. The peacock and the hens find the tasks more difficult than they thought.

*Zombie in Love

Mortimer is lonely and searching for a date to Cupid’s Ball. Just when he is ready to give up, his match arrives. Expressive illustrations that could independently tell the story provide rich context for the essential prose.
Army: Civilian to Soldier
Meish Goldish. Bearport.

Kids enjoy learning about training to become a soldier and the equipment soldiers have to use. The color photos share details of today’s modern army.

Babymouse #14: Mad Scientist
Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm. Random House for Young Readers.

BabyMouse dreams of discovering something important or going to the moon. Instead, she learns how to grow mold on bread. BabyMouse meets Squish, her new amoeba friend. This is another great BabyMouse book with an interesting science twist.

*Bad Kitty Meets the Baby
Nick Bruel. Roaring Brook.

Bad Kitty is back and not pleased with the new addition to the household. Children enjoy the fast-paced, graphic novel feel of this series along with the humorous situations Bad Kitty finds herself in. Includes tips for pet cats.

Bake Sale
Sara Varon. First Second.

In this graphic novel, middle-grade readers are introduced and enticed into a world of edible characters. Cupcake (a living cupcake) is on the hunt for new recipes. The adventure includes recipes along the way that may prompt readers to try a little baking.
**Bun Bun Button**
Patricia Polacco. Putnam Juvenile.
Paige Darling loves the stuffed rabbit her grandmother made for her, but when Paige ties a helium-filled balloon to the toy it gets loose and floats away on an adventure. Only luck and love will bring Bun Bun home.

**Cairn Terrier: Hero of Oz**
Duncan Searl. Bearport.
Animal-loving children will enjoy reading about Terry, a Cairn terrier, who earned a place in movie history by playing Dorothy’s faithful companion in *The Wizard of Oz*. This engaging book explains the Cairn terrier’s history, temperament, and physical appearance.

**Color-Changing Animals**
Valerie Yaw. Bearport.
Part of the Animals With Super Powers series, this informational book highlights unique animals, from gray tree frogs to goldenrod crab spiders, that transform colors. The realistic and colorful photographs are sure to capture readers’ attentions from the very beginning.

**Desk Stories**
Kevin O’Malley. Albert Whitman & Company.
Students are sure to laugh while reading six short stories that document the unusual and entertaining adventures of students and their desks. The comic format changes with each story to keep students engaged.

**Disgusting Food Invaders**
Ruth Owen. Bearport.
Microscopic images of creatures found on food provide strong evidence for washing our vegetables and carefully looking over fruits, cheeses, and cereals prior to eating. Convincing rationale for washing hands with soap before and after handling food is shared too.

**Drew Brees and the New Orleans Saints**
Michael Sandler gives a heart-warming rendition of Drew Brees’s Super Bowl XLIV battle against Colts quarterback Peyton Manning. Stories about Drew Brees give a personal touch to the competitive Super Bowl showdown giving New Orleans its first Super Bowl win.
*A Funeral in the Bathroom: And Other School Bathroom Poems*

Forty-one poems about real and imagined encounters in the elementary school bathroom. Children are exposed to a variety of poetic forms and can find humor in comical illustrations that accentuate the text.

**Glow-in-the-Dark Animals**
Natalie Lunis. Bearport.

The fascination for fireflies has captured people across the globe. How this luminous wonder occurs is shared along with seven other peculiar animals: jellyfish, anglerfish, fireworms, dinoflagellates, cucujo, railroad worms, and New Zealand glowworms.

**The Great Race**
Kevin O’Malley. Walker Childrens.

A new take on the race between the tortoise and the hare. The hare’s over-the-top self-confidence and diva antics lead to his demise and remind readers to stay grounded.

**The Hole in the Middle**

Morgan was born with a hole in his middle. This caused constant anxiety. Even his best friend Yumi could not cure his empty feeling. When Yumi gets sick and Morgan focuses on how he can cheer her up, the hole disappears.

**LEGO Harry Potter: Building the Magical World**
DK Publishing.

LEGOs are extremely popular with third and fourth graders. No wonder the kids loved this book based on the Harry Potter version of LEGO, complete with Hogwarts.

**LEGO Ideas Book**
DK Publishing.

Six stunning chapters give detailed directions and illustrations for building creative projects. Children will enjoy finding out how to build hot air balloons, golf carts, castles, rockets, spaceships, and other activities. This book successfully brings math, reading, and imagination together.

*The Monstrous Book of Monsters*

A lift-the-flap pop-up book that is full of the gross and bizarre traits of monsters. Fashioned as a playful information book, there are some images that may frighten younger children. Info-kids will spend hours with it.
**National Geographic Kids Ultimate Weird but True**
National Geographic Children's Books.
All ages will enjoy reading about real and zany facts and unusual animals such as a blobfish. There is also weird trivia information about weather and Earth's greatest unsolved mysteries to explore in this ultimate weird and true book.

**Painter and Ugly**
Robert J. Blake. Philomel.
The day Painter and Ugly first met they became inseparable. They did everything together, including earning lead dog positions. Eventually they were sold to different owners, but their longing for each other never changed in this exciting Junior Iditarod Race.

**A Pet for Miss Wright**
Judy Young. Ill. by Andrea Wesson. Sleeping Bear.
Miss Wright is a writer, so her office is quiet and lonely. She decides she needs a pet, but finding the perfect pet is not easy. Miss Wright does find the perfect pet and a perfect helpmate to her work.

**Play Ball, Jackie!**
Stephen Krensky. Ill. by Joe Morse. Millbrook.
In 1947, young Matty and his father see Jackie Robinson’s first game with the Brooklyn Dodgers. Through their conversations, the game action, fan behaviors, and illustrations, the author depicts a country on the verge of including African Americans.

**Razzle-Dazzle Ruby**
Masha D’yans. Scholastic.
Ruby turns a snowy winter’s day into a magical one when she transforms herself into a Snow Queen. Of course, snow queens ice skate, make snowballs, and angels in the snow—all of which kids loved to imitate!

**Saving Audie: A Pit Bull Puppy Gets a Second Chance**
When Michael Vick’s dog-fighting ring was broken up, Audie, a pit bull puppy, was rescued and rehabilitated to live a normal dog’s life. His story tugs at children’s heartstrings.
**Sheila Says We’re Weird**  

Sheila constantly comments on her neighbors’ energy-saving habits, like using a clothesline to dry their clothes instead of a dryer and using a push mower instead of a gas mower, but she likes their homegrown vegetables.

**Sidekicks**  
Dan Santat. Arthur A. Levine.

In this graphic novel, Captain Amazing is in search of a sidekick to help him in his twilight years as a superhero. He turns to his pets for a possible answer. A dog, a hamster, and a chameleon all vie for the position. A fun, relaxed read.

**Squish #1: Super Amoeba**  
Jennifer L. Holm and Matthew Holm. Random House for Young Readers.

From the makers of Babymouse comes a likeable new character, Squish! This comic-book format story follows Squish, a young amoeba, who is navigating the world of elementary school complete with bullies and friendships.

**Take Me Out to the Ball Game**  

This book gives a new and fun spin to the classic rendition of rooting for the home team. Children will want to break out the cracker jacks reading this book and listening to the song performed by Carly Simon.

**Vincent van Gogh and the Colors of the Wind**  
Chiara Lossani. Ill. by Octavia Monaco. Eerdmans Books for Young Readers.

This is a creative, semibiographical story of the life of van Gogh. The images integrate some of van Gogh’s work while the story relies on original letters sent between the artist and his brother. The narrative is lyrical, and a mystical wind plies the artist with questions and a quest to find his passion.

**Weird but True 3**  
National Geographic Children’s Books.

This book is filled with outrageous facts. Did you know that an eagle’s nest can stretch wider than your sofa, or that some people can hear their eyeballs moving? “Apples float but pears sink,” is another interesting fact.
Advanced Readers (Grades 5–6)

*Bad Island*
Doug TenNapel. Graphix.

In this adventurous graphic novel, Reese unwillingly goes on a family vacation. When the family is shipwrecked on an island, they must survive an alien creature stalking them. Young readers will be spellbound with the graphics and storyline.

**BONE: Quest for the Spark**
Tom Sniegoski. Ill. by Jeff Smith. Graphix.

A new adventure for Percival Bone and his nephew and niece. A new hero, Tom Elm, must battle the insidious evil and save the world in this fast-paced graphic novel.

Charlie Joe Jackson’s Guide to Not Reading
Tommy Greenwald. Ill. by J.P. Coover. Roaring Brook.

Charlie Joe Jackson hates reading. Charlie Joe might have met his match with a book he might like. The humorous rules and woes of Charlie make reading this novel fun. The theme resonates with many recalcitrant male readers.

**Cursed Grounds**
Steven L. Stern. Bearport.

Discover what makes some places scary and doomed like the Chicago Cubs’ Wrigley Field, a haunted highway in Utah, or the Potomac River in Washington, DC. These cursed places have been causing injury, disaster, and even death.
Dork Diaries 3: Tales From a Not-So-Talented Pop Star
Rachel Renée Russell. Aladdin.

Young girls will gravitate to Nikki Maxwell’s dilemmas of environmental lip gloss and major crush-itis. The graphic novel brings to life all the girl drama and secrets along with typical school-girl misunderstandings and mishaps that can occur in school.

Ghostly Alcatraz Island
Stephen Person. Bearport.

Interesting facts about Alcatraz Island mixed with chilling stories about ghosts and tales about famous inmates like the BirdMan will keep students wanting to read more. Learn what prison life was like at Alcatraz Federal Penitentiary.

*How to Survive Anything

This unique, colorful, easy-to-read format offers tips on how to survive everything from braces to volcanic eruptions. The edgy, young voice speaks directly to the reader and clearly relates to the “what if” questions lingering in young minds.

*Lost & Found

Advanced readers have an immediate interest in this book because of the pictures that help to teach mature lessons about life. The students easily make connections to characters in this book based on their similar experiences.

Okay for Now
Gary D. Schmidt. Clarion.

Children connect to the main character in this book because of his far-from-perfect life. The realistic situations of this character become an instant hit with readers.

Prince of Dorkness: More Notes From a Totally Lame Vampire
Tim Collins. Ill. by Andrew Pinder. Aladdin.

The totally lame vampire’s diary recounts his daily adventures with family, high school, girls, and werewolves. His everyday struggles and sarcastic wit will resonate with many children.

Quarterback Season
Fred Bowen. Peachtree.

A clever boy-focused story about middle-grade Matt playing for a football team. The story is clever because it integrates the trials of playing a sport through a boy’s journal and e-mail messages. Football is the hook, and the journal provides authenticity.
*Racing in the Rain: My Life as a Dog*


The family struggles of a race car driver are described by his caring dog, Enzo. An insightful story that touches on separation, love, hope, death, and rebirth.

**Saving Zasha**

Randi Barrow. Scholastic.

A family works together in post WWII Russia to hide a rescued German shepherd from soldiers and thieves intent on killing or catching her. A story filled with suspense, danger, courage, and ultimately joy attracts the reader.

**Sound Bender**

Lin Oliver and Theo Baker. Scholastic.

Leo discovers he can hear the stories of long ago when he puts his ear to any antique object. He uncovers a mystery in a box his father sent him for his 13th birthday.

**Stickman Odyssey**

Christopher Ford. Philomel.

This comical graphic novel interlaces Greek mythology with a wild imagination from the main character, Zozimos. Personal ego and literally taken advice gets him into deeper trouble bumbling one escape after another with the aid of unexpected characters.

**Stir It Up: A Novel**

Ramin Ganeshram. Scholastic.

Anjali wants to win the Super Chef Kid’s contest, but her audition is at the same time as her high school entrance exam. The story recounts her success, dishonesty, and disappointment while highlighting her family’s passion for Caribbean cooking and their eventual recognition of her true gift.

**Storm Runners**

Roland Smith. Scholastic.

Three friends survive a category 5 hurricane only to find themselves taking shelter in the same place as a circus. Some of the animals have escaped their cages, putting the kids in extreme danger. This adventure keeps readers on the edge of their seats and is informative as well.

**Ten**

Lauren Myracle. Dutton Juvenile.

This story is a prequel to the Winnie Perry series and follows month through month of Winnie’s last year in elementary school. The narrative is playful and witty and will draw all Winnie Perry fans.

**Titanic #1: Unsinkable**

Gordon Korman. Scholastic.

This page-turning first book in the trilogy involves an unlikely circle of friends: a stowaway, an underage employee, a suffragette’s daughter, and a royal heiress. Their bond involves a murderer out to kill one or all of them.
**The Unwanteds**  
Lisa McMann. Aladdin.  
Twins Alex and Aaron live in the fantasy world of Quill where children are divided into the wanted, who go to college, and unwanteds, who are artistic. Aaron is declared a wanted while Alex suffers the fate of being an unwanted.

**Wonderstruck**  
Brian Selznick. Scholastic.  
Once again Selznick has provided a visually stunning and layered narrative. Ben has lost his mother and wonders what happened to his father. Rose’s story is told in pictures and 50 years separated from Ben’s. Readers will be caught up in their desperate journeys and their ultimate connectivity.

**Worst-Case Scenario: Survive-o-Pedia Junior Edition**  
More than 60 hair-raising scenarios are presented in this book. Each scenario provides no-nonsense factual characteristics of the scenario along with useful how to steps to survive, avoid, or find help when faced with a potential crisis.

**Zita the Spacegirl**  
Ben Hatke. First Second.  
As Zita and her friend, Joseph, are exploring a Meteoroid crater, a portal opens up and abducts Joseph. Zita leaps to the rescue and finds herself involved in a fast-paced adventure to save her friend.

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*Books that received the highest Children’s Choices team votes.*
More About Children's Choices

Thank you to the 2011–2012 IRA-CBC Joint Committee and review teams. The committee members were Stan F. Steiner (cochair), Sherilyn J. Bennett (cochair), Pamela Farris, Michele Svihovec, Philip Tucker, and David Ward.

- David Ward, Oregon—Area 1
- Philip Tucker, Pennsylvania—Area 2
- Sherilyn J. Bennett, Arkansas—Area 3
- Michele Svihovec, North Dakota—Area 4
- Pamela Farris, Illinois—Area 5

For more information on the CBC and IRA, or on how to become involved in the IRA/CBC Children's Choices project, visit www.cbcbooks.org/readinglists.php?page=childrenschoices or www.reading.org/resources/booklists/childrenschoices.aspx.

*Books that received the highest Children's Choices team votes.

For over 50 years, the International Reading Association has been the trusted provider of ongoing professional development for teachers. IRA is committed to advancing worldwide literacy by improving reading instruction, disseminating research and information about reading, and encouraging the lifetime reading habit. Additional information about IRA can be found at www.reading.org.