

Animal Stories

Gooseberry Park by Cynthia Rylant. This charming story follows the adventures of a bat with a taste for junk food, a kind dog and a wise hermit crab as they try to save their friend Stumpy the Squirrel and her new babies. There is a sequel, **Gooseberry Park and the Master Plan**.

Little Dog Lost by Marion Dane Bauer. This is a novel written in verse. Three plot points: a boy who needs a dog, a dog who needs an owner and a neighbor who needs a friend come together in an extremely satisfying story. The story is heartfelt and engaging. There is a companion book, **Little Cat's Luck**, which is also highly recommended. When an indoor calico cat named Patches spots a golden autumn leaf fluttering past her window, she can't help but venture outside to chase it.

Birdbrain Amos by Michael Delaney. When Amos the Hippo hires a tick bird to eat the bugs off his back, he gets a bird like no other when it soon sets up a nest, lays three eggs, and entertains guests at a baby shower--all in full view of the other hippos! This book is hilarious. There is a sequel, **Birdbrain Amos, Mr. Fun**, in which Amos the hippopotamus takes his tick bird, Amoeba, and her family on what he hopes will be a fun vacation.

Lady Lollipop by Dick King-Smith. A spoiled princess chooses a pig for her eighth birthday present. During the pig's training the princess, herself gets a bit of a makeover. Also try the sequel, **Clever Lollipop**, or just about anything written by Dick King-Smith

Fantasy

Princess Cora and the Crocodile by Laura Amy Schlitz. Princess Cora is sick of boring lessons, but when she writes to her fairy godmother for help, she doesn't expect that help to come in the form of a crocodile. Funny illustrations make this a good first read aloud.

The Night Fairy by Laura Amy Schlitz. A fairy must get used to living in the sunlight and along the way exhibits bravery and ingenuity while befriendng other garden creature.

Firefly Hollow by Alison McGhee. Firefly, Cricket, Vole, and Peter, four creatures from four very different Nations, help one another find their ways in the world.

The Prairie Thief by Melissa Wiley. Louisa Brody's life on the Colorado prairie takes an unexpected turn when her father is locked away in jail and she is sent to live with the awful Smirch family. This is a fantastical twist for fans of "Little House" books.

The Tale of Despereaux and **The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane** or anything by Kate DiCamillo.

Other Cultures

The Great Cake Mystery: Precious Ramotswe's Very First Case by Andrew McCall Smith. Precious Ramotswe of the No. 1 Ladies' Detective Agency book series for grown-ups solved her very first case in Botswana when she was just a girl. When her friends' lunchtime treats go missing.

The Stories Julian Tells by Ann Cameron. Julian is great at telling stories. He can make people -- especially his younger brother, Huey -- believe just about anything. But some stories can lead to a heap of trouble.

Classics

My Fathers's Dragon, The Dragons of Blueland, and Elmer and the Dragon by Ruth Stiles Gannett. This classic boy-on-a-quest trilogy is my number one recommendation for a first chapter book read aloud.

Mrs. Piggle Wiggle by Betty Bard MacDonald.

Winnie the Pooh by A.A. Milne

Pippi Longstockings by Astrid Lindgren

Charlotte's Web and **The Trumpet of the Swan** by E. B. White

Mr. Popper's Penguins by Richard Atwater.

Little House on the Prairie books by Laurel Ingalls Wilder

The Mouse and the Motorcycle by Beverly Cleary

The Borrowers by Mary Norton

Fantastic Mr. Fox, George's Marvelous Medicine, and other books by Roald Dahl. Kids usually either love or hate Dahl's books. Consider your child's sensitivity before reading them aloud.