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**Parents' Guide to  
CAT Results**





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## I. What is CAT?

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**Canadian Achievement Tests (CAT)** measures achievement in the basic skills generally taught in schools across Canada. CAT is a set of tests of reading, mathematics, language, writing and spelling. Students tested with CAT can have their results compared with those obtained from large, representative samples of students from across Canada. Their results can also be compared to curriculum expectations. CAT is the only major Canadian owned and Canadian designed national test. In addition to its use by schools, part of CAT has been chosen by Statistics Canada as the basis for tracking achievement over time.

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## II. What do CAT test results mean?

**N**orm-referenced test results are reported to parents in one or more of the following ways: national percentile (NP), national stanine (NS) and grade equivalent (GE).

### National Percentile (NP)

The national percentile ranking (NP) places students on a scale of 1 to 99, where 99 is high. An NP score of 99 means the student performs better than 99 per cent of the national sample of the population at that grade level. For example, Helena, at the beginning of grade four, has a national percentile of 45 in Spelling. This means that Helena performed better than approximately 45 per cent of young Canadians at her grade level. It does not mean that she got 45 per cent of the items correct. A national percentile of 50 means that one is average for one's grade level.

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### National Stanine (NS)

The national stanine (NS) places scores into nine divisions (1 to 9) called stanines. The higher the stanine the better the performance. Many more students fall in stanines 4, 5 and 6 than in either 7, 8 and 9 (high) or 1, 2 and 3 (low). A student attaining stanines 8 and 9 consistently is considered by many school systems for placement in an enriched, accelerated or gifted program.

### Grade Equivalent (GE)

The grade equivalent provides a comparison of achievement by students from different grades on a common set of questions. Let us take the example of two students at the end of Grade 7 (7.9 or after the ninth month of the grade 7 year). Ken's test score in Language is 7.3. This means that his performance is

what you would expect from a student after three months of grade 7, that is, slightly below where he should be. Naomi, in the same class, scores 9.5 in Total Mathematics. This means that she is doing as well as a student after five months of grade 9 would

do on this test. However, this does not mean that Naomi is doing grade 9 work and should be moved up to the grade 9 program.

All three ways of reporting scores have advantages and disadvantages. The national percentile shows how a student is performing in comparison with others at the same grade level. On the other hand, the national percentile is so compact around the middle range that variations are bound to occur, partly due to chance. A change from national percentile 45 to 40 may seem greater than it really is. Furthermore, the national percentile does not allow us to gauge progress children make over time. It is possible for a student to be between 40 and 50 (NP) in all tests from grade two to grade twelve, despite working hard and making regular progress. In the same way, a student may be an average runner in grade ten, just as she was in grade six, but may complete 100 metres in 13 seconds instead of 15.

The national stanine provides quick and simple information. High numbers (stanines 7 to 9) indicate very strong achievement and low numbers indicate weak achievement. Five represents average performance and most students fall between 3 and 7. However, the simplicity means that a student may make tremendous efforts and actually improve, without moving up a stanine, or stop working without it showing for a while. Imagine if there were only three weight categories: overweight, normal and underweight. A person fifteen kilograms above the normal level might diet and exercise for ten years, becoming quite fit and still remain within the overweight category. So it could be with the student who starts out at the low end of stanine 4 who works hard, yet remains in stanine 4.

The advantage of the grade equivalent (GE) is that it shows students' progress from year to year. For example, with a GE of 3.8 at the end of grade three, Jason is average but by the end of grade four, in which

he misses a lot of time, his score has only increased to 4.5. Jason has an excellent year in grade five and his average GE is now 6.0. On the other hand, the grade equivalent can be confusing. If Jason's score is 6.5 at the end of grade five (better than many grade six students), then he may think he should be moved directly to grade seven, almost certainly not a good idea. The grade equivalent reflects relative performance on the curriculum measured. Jason's performance was measured on the grade five curriculum, not the grade seven curriculum. One can have no confidence in how well Jason would perform in grade 7 because he has probably not been taught the concepts and skills of the grade 7 curriculum. Similarly, a sixth grade girl may be at the ninth grade level in Reading without having the maturity to tackle adult books. Students more than a year below their grade level should be receiving special help. Those two years above grade level in Language and Reading or one year above in Mathematics are candidates for advanced instruction.

	<b>National Percentile (NP)</b>	<b>National Stanine (NS)</b>	<b>Grade Equivalent (GE)</b>
<b>What it is</b>	<i>Places students on a scale of 1 to 99, where 99 is high</i>	<i>Places scores into nine divisions (1 to 9) called stanines. The higher the stanine, the better the performance</i>	<i>Compares a student's performance with that of students in other grades</i>
<b>Why it is useful</b>	<i>Shows precisely how a student is performing in comparison with others at the same grade level</i>	<i>Provides quick and simple information</i>	<i>Shows a child's progress from year to year</i>
<b>Why it can be confusing</b>	<i>It appears so precise that variations are bound to occur, partly from chance</i>	<i>Simplicity means that a student may make tremendous efforts and actually improve, without moving up a stanine, or stop working without it showing for a while</i>	<i>Grade equivalent does not indicate that the student should be moved up or down to another grade</i>

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### III. How can test results help parents, students and teachers?

#### 1. Parents

CAT results help parents by providing them with an independent measure of achievement to compare with their own and the school's assessments.

There is little point in asking whether parent, teacher, or student is right. Parents know their children better than do teachers or tests, but that does not mean they fully understand their child's behaviour or progress in school. In the same way, teachers understand and interpret students' academic progress better than does a set of tests, but that does not mean they have a perfect sense of students' skill performance in comparison with a national standard. Parents, teachers and test results give three different views of the student.

CAT provides certain kinds of information. Reading, mathematics, language and writing are areas of high priority for most people, but they are not the only important areas of academic achievement. As well as academic achievement, there are other areas of development such as character, artistic expression, sports and life skills, to which parents give differing priorities.

Careful examination of CAT results, particularly over time, helps parents understand two important things. They gain a better understanding of the problems which are worth worrying about. Secondly, they acquire a basis for setting reasonable academic goals for their children.

*... tests are a good measure of the actual skill level of the student. However, they do not measure whether a student works hard, completes his/her assignments and hands in homework.*

There is no simple way to decide what is a problem and whether parents should do something about it. Some students achieve very consistent scores on all tests, with

teachers agreeing they are strong, weak or average students. Others show marked variations. In such cases, some parents like to encourage and build on strengths; others focus on correcting the weaknesses.

Before trying to correct a problem, parents should try to understand it. This means talking to teachers and the person most concerned, the student. If results of an aptitude test are available, they should also be compared with the CAT achievement results. The *Canadian Test of Cognitive Skills* (CTCS) is an aptitude test used by some school districts for this purpose. School system psychologists also test some students for learning aptitude. In general, the aptitude test tells more about the basic abilities of the student (affected considerably by life outside school), whereas CAT tells more about the level of skill achieved (for which the school has more direct responsibility). If the level of aptitude (stanine 4, for example) is higher than the level of achievement (stanine 2), then there is reason to believe that special attention is needed. On the other hand, if the aptitude (stanine 1) is lower than the level of achievement (stanine 2), parents should be careful not to put heavy pressure on the student, who is likely trying hard. Constructive help is always useful.

It is sensible to understand both the actual level of achievement and the reasons why it may be lower than expected. The reasons may be simple (for example, poor hearing or sight) or complex (a combination of low aptitude, a physical disability and an emotional problem). Fortunately, the best treatment is often the same: patient, step-by-step instruction.

Sometimes, teachers, parents and tests provide information that is or seems to be contradictory. One possible explanation is that the different sources of information are based on different facts.

For example, tests are a good measure of the actual skill level of the student. However, they do not measure whether a student works hard, completes

his/her assignments and hands in homework. A teacher cannot assess work that is not done and a student who is absent a great deal or who simply does not get much done is likely to get lower grades than a student who is hard working and conscientious. A very conscientious student may get a higher mark from the teacher than from tests, whereas a student who is untidy and unreliable may get a lower mark. The teacher's assessments may also be higher for the entire class than the test's (if the class is weak) or lower (if the class is strong).

If there is unresolved conflict, it may be necessary to seek further advice. In such cases, additional tests could be administered or the problem could be referred to an educational psychologist.

As young people move through adolescence, they and their parents consider their goals and expectations for the future. Test results are one part of the information helpful in making informed decisions.

About 85 per cent of Canadian young people graduate from high school by the time they are twenty-five (many drop out of school and return part-time later). About 15 per cent of the eighteen-year-old age group go on to community college and about 20 per cent to university.

That does not mean that eighth graders below the 15<sup>th</sup> percentile on CAT will not graduate or that those below the 80<sup>th</sup> percentile will not go to university. Obviously, there are many other factors that affect students' success in and after school, including ambition, determination, effort, values, choices and parental assistance.

Even so, if Sean, a grade seven student, is achieving consistently around the 30<sup>th</sup> percentile on CAT, it would be unduly optimistic for him to believe he has a good chance of being accepted by a university without some major change in behaviour and achievement over the following few years.

## 2. Students

CAT helps students by giving them an independent picture of their level of achievement in the basic skills.

Young people often have a good understanding of themselves, their strengths and limitations. However, they also have blind spots. Some do not recognize abilities they have, seeing pressure and criticism from parents and teachers as a negative assessment. Others believe they are doing better than they really are, perhaps because they think encouragement from their parents and teachers is a sign that all is well.

By the age of ten, young people are beginning to get some sense of themselves as persons, with strengths and weaknesses to be built on or overcome. How much information should be given students is a sensitive

matter to be determined by teachers and parents. By grade five or six, teachers generally find that it is possible to communicate precise, objective information to most students individually, confidentially and in a constructive manner. There are special situations when the information is of no possible value to the student, but those are usually situations when the student should not have taken the test. For example, a person who speaks no English or has a severe disability affecting communication skills may or may not have some of the skills tested, but the test results will not reveal the level of skill, because the lack of English or the disability forms a barrier to valid testing.

Ideally, the student, the parent and the teacher will have similar understandings of the student's performance, strengths and weaknesses. They will agree on a workable routine to improve basic skills, involving both home and school.

## 3. Teachers

CAT results provide teachers with external scores to be compared with their own assessments.



Teachers may compare their students' scores in various skill areas with those of other classes. They can compare their students' individual achievement with their scores in earlier grades. They can check how this year's class results compare with results from the same grade previously. They may also check for differences in performance on various skill areas, some of which they may have emphasized more than others.

No two classes are alike; experienced teachers know that there are variations from year to year. They look for confirmation of their own assessment and for pleasant or unpleasant surprises.

Teachers are at least as interested in the performance of individuals and groups as they are in the class as a whole. They may check the performance of their most advanced readers, to see improvement over the year and to see if there are other students achieving well who would benefit from additional challenge. They will check their weakest students, to see if they are catching up or falling further behind. They may well spend most of their time looking at individual performance, to check for strengths and weaknesses of which they were previously unaware.

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## **IV. What can parents do to improve test results?**

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**Parents can provide a home background that encourages, expects and supports academic success.**

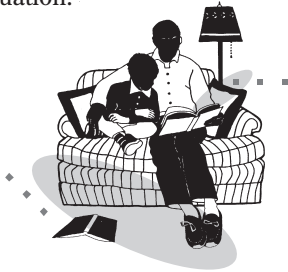
This is the most important influence on students' learning. Homes which produce academically successful children have the following characteristics:

1. Parents provide help, encouragement and support.
2. Parents stimulate ideas and involve the family in out-of-school activities.
3. Parents use language carefully for genuine, caring communication.
4. Parents have high expectations of their children in all areas of life and encourage high but realistic expectations for the future.
5. Parents and their children practise good work habits.
6. Parents provide their children with help in the basic skills.



### 1. Parents provide help, encouragement and support.

- They check regularly if there is a problem, to ensure that homework is properly completed, neatly and carefully.
- They talk about school work; they listen to their children, but give them their ideas too.
- They talk to their adolescent children about different jobs they may like to consider. They listen to their ideas, suggest others and are helpful in suggesting and helping discover other sources of information. They find out the educational requirements for different jobs. They discuss educational opportunities after high school graduation.



- They talk about their children's interests and hobbies, particularly academic interests. They support healthy interests that they themselves may not share. They see that activities are maintained.
- They support independent activity. They do not assume their children will fulfil their parents' ambitions or have their parents' abilities and disabilities.

### 2. Parents stimulate ideas and involve the family in out-of-school activities.

- They involve young children in mental and physical activities, such as reading, games, puzzles, skating, swimming as well as other competitive and non-competitive sports.
- They share their daily experiences and problems (within reason, taking into account the children's maturity) and invite openness from their children. They discuss local, national and international events, treating differing points of view seriously.

### 3. Parents use language carefully for genuine, caring communication.

- They share rather than dominate discussion. Joking and humour are used for everyone's enjoyment, not for humiliation, with all family members being prepared to laugh at themselves on occasion.
- They care about good use of language, not allowing swearing, prejudice and abuse. They set time aside to read, have books and references in the house and use the local library.

### 4. Parents have high expectations of their children in all areas of life and encourage high but realistic expectations for the future.



- They set high standards for school work. They ask, "Did you do your best?" They compare current achievement with their children's ambitions and hopes for the future. They expect their children to try hard and complete every activity they undertake. They make sure the standards of the home are clearly established and reject the standard of "what everyone else is doing." They model the standards they set.

### 5. Parents and their children practise good work habits.

- The home is well managed and there are routines for eating, working and leisure. Work around the home is fairly shared. School work is given a high priority, even if it sometimes interferes with parents' personal plans.



### 6. Parents provide their children with help in the basic skills.

- Help can be provided in several different ways:  
Parents do it themselves;  
Older brothers and sisters or relatives do it;  
A tutor is paid to do it;  
Arrangements are made with the school for special help.

Whichever method is chosen (as usual, doing something yourself is the best way to see it gets done), a regular routine, clear objectives and a firm, peaceful and helpful atmosphere are important.

- Reading is the single most important skill. There are four key aspects of reading:
  - i) Being read to regularly for enjoyment and education;
  - ii) The basic skill of beginning reading;
  - iii) Reading for understanding;
  - iv) Reading to obtain particular kinds of information.

**i) Young children should be read to as a regular routine.**



Young children (as soon as they are able) should also read their own books regularly and all young people should read for pleasure. This *Parents' Guide* is accompanied by a list of books both to read to children and for young people to read to themselves. Perhaps the single most important thing parents can do to help their children do well in school is instil in them a love of reading, beginning in very early childhood. A regular reading time before bed is ideal.

As children increasingly select books for themselves, the parents' job is to ensure that they do not stick at a particular level, but keep moving to more challenging material. Reading by itself does not improve reading skill; the level of the material read must get higher and higher, using more vocabulary, developing more complex ideas and more difficult kinds of expression.

If possible, have children develop their own book collection. It is more difficult to influence adolescents, but a regular habit of reading is likely to continue through adolescence if it is nurtured by example and opportunity.

**ii) Nearly all children can and should learn to read by the age of seven.**



Particularly if they have difficulty, they should learn word sounds by simple phonics, starting with beginning consonants, then final consonants and then vowels. Have them memorize simple words such as "the," "house" and "school." Have them read simple sentences, "Bob the cat sits on the mat." Move to "I can read" books, always sounding out the words they cannot read. Read the story to the child; have the child read the story aloud. Practise. Correct errors kindly but firmly.

**iii) It is valuable for children to discuss what they read with an adult, preferably one who has read the story or book.**



Even young children should be asked questions. Ask factual questions and always correct wrong answers. Go back and read the correct answer. Ask questions of understanding and inference. Sometimes there will be a correct answer, sometimes more than one possible answer. Encourage them to think of more than one answer. Discuss different answers

Do not make it a chore or a test; ask interesting questions. Ask them at times to relate events to their own experience. Ask them also about others' feelings and thoughts. The same plan should be continued with older children. For example, parents may have read the books brought home by their twelve-year-old and ideas can be shared. Many sixteen-year-olds read some of the same books, articles and newspaper reports as their parents and common reading should be grounds for discussion and healthy argument. It is important for adolescents to learn to disagree in a reasonable and calm way.

**iv) From about the age of eight, it becomes increasingly important for children to learn to use information from dictionaries, encyclopedias, books, magazines and electronic media.**



Parents should make it as easy as possible for their children to do the right thing. Teach them a way to obtain information from a chapter. Read the chapter title, the introduction, the conclusion and skim the headings; find the useful sections; make notes under headings of questions to be answered; put the answer together in a clear, logical way. Fiction (for serious discussion and analysis in school) should be read carefully, chapter by chapter, but notes should be made in the same way under headings. Make access

to books at home easy; provide a place to work. Offer to take children to the library if necessary. Children, particularly adolescents, should not have to continually ask for help.

Spelling is easily reinforced at home. Some children bring lists from school. Parents may borrow or buy a spelling text. Words should be learned regularly. It is important to look at words in different forms. For example, by grade four or five, the word “like” should be understood as a noun and verb (without their having to know the grammatical terms) and in such forms as “likes,” “liking,” “liked,” “dislike” and “unlike.” The use of a word should always be discussed at the same time as its spelling.

Language and creative writing are areas in which it is much more difficult for many parents to provide support. Some parents can help by discussing the ideas of an essay or report. They can also check the sequence and paragraphing. Those who are really ambitious in these areas may wish to purchase (or borrow from the school) the *CAT-3 Teacher Resource Manual* intended as a resource guide for teachers.

In general, however, language and writing, like reading and mathematics, are best built up gradually, step-by-step; sentences before paragraphs, paragraphs before essays. Even good writers will make some spelling and language errors, so parents who are good writers themselves should not expect their fourteen-year-old to be perfect; the current level should not be accepted as it is, but the push is for one step forward, not ten leaps.

Mathematics is the second most important skill, a skill increasingly in demand in the workplace. Usually, a good textbook is the most important aid. Parents confident of their own math will be able to help their children move through the text sequentially, following the school’s program. Others will find a tutor or obtain help from the school. Here, too, the *CAT-3 Teacher Resource Manual* may be of help to the ambitious parent. Sometimes, children get the impression that their parents’ admitted weakness (in math or science or English) is a licence for them not to care. While it makes sense to admit one’s disabilities, it also makes sense to avoid passing them on to one’s children.

It is not a reasonable conclusion from this section that parents should feel guilty if they are not teaching their children themselves. Most young people become reasonably independent if the home is supportive of

education and school. If parents can provide the kind of supportive home environment described in the first part of this section, they will probably have little need to provide much direct instruction themselves.

There is one important exception to that statement and that is the area of reading. Most school-age children spend time doing mathematics, science and other

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subjects at school, doing homework and doing projects after school. They typically do not spend much of their own free time on the academic subjects (except for scheduled homework). Reading is a very different matter. Some twelve-year-olds spend ten or more hours a week reading for pleasure besides their school work. Some spend none. It makes sense to encourage children to read from the earliest age. There is no more important skill.

Educational research is definite on one thing. Although the quality of teaching and the school is important, the most important factor affecting academic progress is the child’s learning environment at home.

### **Conclusion**

There are many reasons why parents are unable or unwilling to follow the advice provided here. After all, there are many other things in parents’ and children’s lives besides academic success. People make very different choices in life for all manner of reasons.

Even so, consider the extreme scenario where a family practises none of the activities associated with success in school. The parents in this situation might ignore their children’s school work and interests. Children may be left alone, spending their time watching poor television programs, listening to a limited choice of music and not participating in any mentally stimulating activities. Poor language, prejudice and abuse may dominate family discussions. Humour is used against one another, perhaps with one child as the butt of family jokes, even humiliated. There is a lack of interest shown in children’s futures. There might be a lack of regular responsibility or routine in daily life. It would be unreasonable to put blame on the school for a low level of academic achievement among children from these homes.

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# The CTC Guide to Children's Reading

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**T**his guide is intended to help parents select books to read to their children and for their children to read to themselves. Most children enjoy being read books well above their own reading level. Many children, even into their teens, still enjoy being read a good story in a family setting. Readers should be encouraged to move gradually to more difficult books.

Within each section of the guide, books are arranged in approximate order of difficulty. If a chosen book is too difficult, move up the list towards the beginning; if it is too easy, move down the list.

Public libraries will have many of these books. Good bookstores stock selections of children's books and will order all but the cheapest paperbacks on request. All the listed books were available when the guide was revised in 1997.

Many of the most popular books are published in paperback, costing less than ten dollars – symbol \$. Books between ten and twenty dollars are shown thus – \$\$ and over twenty dollars – \$\$\$\$. The price of other books by the same author may be different. Few presents have as much lasting value as books. Developing a personal collection of books helps establish the value of reading.

The brief notes are intended to help parents choose books they think will appeal to their child. Books that are out of print have been omitted, as have books that may offend large numbers of parents. Even so, parents' values do vary and it is part of a child's education to have their parents help and encourage them in their choice of reading.



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## Books to read to four- to six-year-olds

### Keats, Ezra Jack

- *The Snowy Day* \$ Viking. This beautifully illustrated book describes the solitary play of a small child. Also:
- *Whistle for Willie*
- *The Little Drummer Boy*
- *Dreams*

### Stinson, Kathy

- *Red is Best* \$ Annick. This story brings out a child's love of the colour red. Also:
- *Big or Little?*
- *Those Green Things*
- *Mom and Dad Don't Live Together Any More*

### McCloskey, Robert

- *Make Way for Ducklings* \$ Viking. With police help, Mr. and Mrs. Mallard waddle through busy Boston. Also:
- *Blueberries for Sal*
- *Time of Wonder*

### Potter, Beatrix

- *The Tale of Peter Rabbit* \$ Puffin. Peter disobeys and almost ends up as rabbit pie. Many others in series (some longer and more difficult).

### Zolotow, Charlotte

- *The Sleepy Book* \$ Harper & Row. The book tells where animals sleep. Also:
- *Some Things Go Together*
- *Peter and the Pigeons*
- *Mister Rabbit and the Lovely Present*

### Bogart, Jo Ellen

- *Two too Many* \$\$ Scholastic. This is a very attractive rhyming book. Also:
- *Gifts*
- *Mama's Bed*

### Simard, Rémy

- *The Magic Book* \$\$ Annick Press. This fairy tale has an Italian connection.

### Lerner, Harriet and Holdhor, Susan

- *What's So Terrible about Swallowing an Apple Seed?* \$\$ Harper Collins. An older sister carries her teasing a little too far.

### Beddoes, Eric

- *Rooster's Gift* \$\$ Groundwood. The tale tells of a rooster who believed he made the sun rise.

### Canon, Ann Edwards

- *I Know What You Do When I Go to School* \$\$ Peregrine Smith Books, Gibbs Smith. The book will amuse kindergarten children with younger siblings.

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**Tregobov, Rhea**

- *The Big Storm* \$\$ Kids Can Press. One stormy night, Jeanette and Kitty Doyle have an adventure they will never forget.

**Hughes Shirley**

- *Out and About* \$\$ Douglas & McIntyre. The verse is beautifully illustrated. Also:
- *The Snow Lady*

**Bemelmans, Ludwig**

- *Madeline* \$ Puffin. This tale in rhyming verse is set in a girls' school in Paris. (Series of six).

**Sendak, Maurice**

- *Where the Wild Things Are* \$ Fitzhenry. Max sails off into a forest where the animals make him king. Also:
- *In the Night Kitchen*
- *We are All in the Dumps with Jack and Guy*

**Ormerod, Jan**

- *Moonlight* \$ Penguin. It is bedtime for a small girl.

**Gilman, Phoebe**

- *Jillian Jiggs* (set of three) \$ (each) Scholastic. Jillian's antics are described in rhyme. Also:
- *Little Blue Ben*

**Kraus, Robert**

- *Whose Mouse Are You?* \$ Collier. Problems with a new baby brother are presented. Many other books are available by this author.

**Young, Ed**

- *Lon Po Po* \$\$ Philomel. This is the story of a Chinese Red Riding Hood.

**Little, Jean**

- *Revenge of the Small* \$ Puffin. Patsy teaches her elder siblings a lesson in a wry way.

**Atwood, Margaret**

- *Princess Prunella and the Purple Peanut* \$\$ Key Porter Kids. A selfish princess is portrayed in a wonderful fairy tale.

**Carle, Eric**

- *The Very Busy Spider* \$\$ Philomel. One of a series of beautifully illustrated insect books. Also:
- *The Very Busy Cricket*
- *The Very Lonely Firefly*

**de Regniers, Beatrice Schenk**

- *May I Bring a Friend?* \$ Atheneum. An invitation to tea with the king is written in rhyming verse. Also:
- *How Joe the Bear and Sam the Mouse Got Together*

**Reid, Barbara**

- *Two by Two* \$\$ Scholastic. This counting book tells the tale of Noah.

**Wildsmith, Brian**

- *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes* \$\$ Oxford. These rhymes are beautifully illustrated. Also:
- *What the Moon Saw*
- *Seasons*

**Aska, Warabé**

- *Seasons* \$\$ Doubleday. The seasons are illustrated by lovely paintings. Also:
- *Who Hides in the Park?*

**Mayo, Margaret**

- *The Book of Magical Tales* \$\$\$ Oxford. The selection of stories is excellent.

**Lawson, Julie**

- *Kate's Castle* \$\$ Oxford. Fine language describes Kate's real and imaginary sandcastles. Also:
- *The Dragon's Pearl*

**Tololwa, M. Mollé**

- *Big Boy* \$\$ Stoddart. A traditional African theme is given a contemporary setting. The author has written several other books using African themes.

**Books to read to six- to eight-year-olds****Cooper, Susan**

- *Matthew's Dragon* \$ Collier Macmillan. Matthew embarks on an enchanted journey at bedtime. Also:
- *Silver Cow*
- *The Selkie Girl*

**Sendak, Maurice**

- *Dear Milli* \$\$ Collins. This is a long-lost tale from Grimm.

**Wilder, Laura Ingalls**

- *Little House in the Big Woods* \$ Harper. This is one of a charming pioneer series, set in Wisconsin. Some are easier.

**Cleaver, Elizabeth**

- *The Loon's Necklace* \$ Oxford. This is a Canadian legend.

**Sanderson, Ruth**

- *The Enchanted Wood* \$\$ Little, Brown. This is a fairy tale. Also:
- *Twelve Dancing Princesses*

**Lester, Alison**

- *Imagine* \$\$ Houghton Mifflin. The story contains stimulating vocabulary and good illustrations. There are many other books by the same author.

**Lopez, Barry**

- *Crow and Weasel* \$\$\$ Random House. The story brings out spiritual relationships to the land and respect for different cultures and one another.

**Lottridge, Celia**

- *Ten Small Tales* \$\$ Groundwood. These are finely crafted tales told with spirit and humour.

**Lewis, Naomi**

- *Classic Fairy Tales to Read Aloud* \$\$\$ Kingfisher. The book provides a fine selection.

**Mark, Jan**

- *The Oxford Book of Children's Stories* \$\$\$ Oxford. This and also the next are excellent selections.

**Pepper, Dennis**

- *The Oxford Book of Animal Stories* \$\$\$ Oxford.



## Books for six- to eight-year-olds to read by themselves

Easy, beginning to read books (with or without help)

Books marked with an asterisk are also recommended for older children at a beginning reader level.

### Minarik, Else Holmelund

- *Little Bear* \$ Harper Trophy. This is one of a charming series of six about an understanding mother and her young bear.

### Dr. Seuss

- *Cat in the Hat*\* (each \$) Random. This famous book and the ones that follow provide excellent practice of letter sounds. Also:
  - *Cat in the Hat Comes Back*\*
  - *Fox in Socks*
  - *Dr. Seuss's ABC*
  - *Green Eggs and Ham*
  - *One Fish, Two Fish, Red Fish, Blue Fish*
  - *The Five Hundred Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins*\*

### Eastman, P.D.

- *Go Dog Go!*\* \$ Random. It contains simple, repetitive text. Also:
  - *Are You My Mother?*

### Lobel, Arnold

- *Owl At Home* \$ Harper Crest.
- *Frog and Toad Are Friends* (series)
- *Mouse Tales* (series)

### Van Leeuwen, Jean

- *Amanda Pig and Her Big Brother Oliver* (series) \$\$ Dial . Also:
  - *Oliver Pig at School* (series) \$



Books for readers

### Minarik, Else Holmelund

- *No Fighting, No Biting!* \$\$ Harper & Row.

### Bourgeois, Paulette

- *Franklin in the Dark* \$ Kids Can Press. In this tale, one of a series, Franklin the turtle learns to deal with many problems.

### Steig, William

- *The Amazing Bone* \$ Sunburst. A magic talking bone becomes Pearl's friend. Also:
  - *CDC?*

### Osbourne, Mary Pope

- *Magic Tree House*\* \$ Scholastic. This book, in which we find if Jack and Annie discover buried treasure, is one of a series.

### Zolotow, Charlotte

- *The Quarreling Book* \$ Harper & Row. This book is good for adult/child discussion.

### Munsch, Robert

- *The Paper Bag Princess* \$ Firefly. A modern princess rescues a preppy prince.

### Alderson, Sue Ann

- *Bonnie McSmithers, You're Driving Me Dithers* \$ Tree Frog Press. This is one of a series concerning an exasperated mother and her daughter.

### Wallace, Ian

- *Chin Chiang and the Dragon's Dance* \$\$ Macmillan. A nervous boy prepares for his first dragon dance. Also:
  - *Morgan the Magnificent*

### Zemach, Harve and Margot

- *The Princess and Froggie* \$ Sunburst. This is a fairy tale. Also:
  - *The Little Red Hen: An Old Story*
  - *The Judge: An Untrue Tale*

### Lear, Edward

- *The Owl and the Pussycat* \$ Clarion. These nonsense verses are fun to read.

### Alexander, Lloyd

- *The Fortune-Tellers*\* \$\$ Dutton. This humorous tale is set in Cameroon.

### Ardizzone, Edward

- *Tim to the Lighthouse* \$ Penguin. Shy Tim learns to be competent and brave, in this one of a series.

### Goffstein, M.B.

- *Goldie the Doll Maker* \$ Collins. This touching story tells of a girl living alone in a forest.

### Ness, Evaline

- *Sam, Bangs and Moonshine* \$\$ Holt. Sam learns to distinguish moonshine from reality.

### Lee, Dennis

- *The Ice Cream Store* \$\$ Scholastic. The story is written in amusing verse.

### Bonnars, Susan

- *The Wooden Doll*\* \$\$ Lothrop, Lee and Shepard. Stephanie's grandparents' doll unravels the mystery that links her with her past.

### Lindgren, Astrid

- *Pippi Longstocking*\* (series) \$ Penguin. Self-confident, energetic and imaginative Pippi is liberating for boys and girls.

### Cleary, Beverly

- *Ramona*\* (series) \$ Gage. The books describe Ramona's humorous adventures. Also:
  - *Henry Huggins*\* (series)
  - *Ralph S. Mouse*\* (series)

### Kleitsch, Christel

- *It Happened at Pickle Lake* \$\$ Dutton. Rachel has to give up TV and Disney World for a vacation at Pickle Lake.

**Dadey, Debbie and Jones, Marcia Thornton**

- *Bailey School Kids* (series) § Scholastic.

**Warner, Gertrude Chandler**

- *Boxcar Children Series* § Scholastic. This is a mystery series.

**Leblanc, Louise**

- *Maddie Wants Music* § Formac. This is a lesson in honesty.

**Lowry, Lois**

- *One and Only Anastasia* (series) § Dell. The stories are lively and funny.

**Hoffman, Mary**

- *Amazing Grace* § Dial. Grace finds she can do many things if she tries. She may be the first black Peter Pan.

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Challenging books

**Takashima, Shizuye**

- *A Child in Prison Camp* § Tundra. The story tells of Japanese-Canadian internment during World War II.

**Andrews, Jan**

- *Very Last First Time* §§ Douglas. In an eerie, dreamlike atmosphere, an Inuit girl walks the sea bottom gathering mussels.

**McFarlane, Sheryl**

- *Waiting for the Whales* §§ Orca.

**Lear, Edward**

- *The Complete Nonsense Book* § Dodd. The nonsense is written in verse. Also:
  - *Of Pelicans and Pussycats: Poems and Limericks*

**Estes, Eleanor**

- *The Hundred Dresses* § Academic. After teasing Wanda, Maddie has a conscience. Also:
  - *The Moffats*

**Gardiner, John Reynolds**

- *Stone Fox*\* § Fitzhenry. Willie's attempt to save the farm is exciting.

**Hughes, Ted**

- *The Iron Giant*\* § Harper Collins. Hogart befriends a giant robot.



**Books for eight- to eleven-year-olds to read by themselves**

Easy books

Many books read by some children at an earlier age are good for beginning readers over eight. The books and series marked with an asterisk in the six to eight section are particularly recommended. More mature children who find the easier books that follow too juvenile should try the books listed as easy books for those eleven to fourteen.

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Books for readers

**Danziger, Paula**

- *Amber Brown Goes Fourth* § Scholastic. Can Amber go to grade four without a friend?

**White, E.B.**

- *Charlotte's Web* § Harper & Row. Wilbur, the silly pig and Charlotte, the spider, are well-loved characters. Also:
  - *Stuart Little*
  - *The Trumpet of the Swan*

**Anderson, C.W.**

- *Blaze* (series) § Macmillan. This series is recommended in particular to horse-lovers.

**Norton, Mary**

- *The Borrowers* (series) § Harbrace. This is a tale of a small family living under a kitchen floor.

**Richler, Mordecai**

- *Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang* § Bantam. Jacob unmasks the soft-hearted Hooded Fang. Also:
  - *Jacob Two-Two and the Dinosaur*

**Little, Jean**

- *Lost and Found* § Penguin. In a story about honesty, a lonely little girl finds a lost dog. Also:
  - *From Anna*

**Dahl, Roald**

- *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* § Puffin. Children like Dahl's lively stories in which children are often oppressed and adults are mean. Also:
  - *James and the Giant Peach*

**McCloskey, Robert**

- *Homer Price* § Viking. In this hilarious story, Homer catches burglars with his skunk.

**Byars, Betsy Cromer**

- *The Midnight Fox* § Scholastic. Tommy forms a mysterious bond with a fox and its cub. Also:
  - *The Summer of the Swans*

**Garfield, James B.**

- *Follow My Leader* §§ Viking. The story deals with blindness.

**Fairman, Tony**

- *Bury My Bones, but Keep My Words* \$\$\$ Henry Holt. The book contains thirteen traditional and contemporary African tales.

**Henry, Marguerite**

- *Misty of Chincoteague* § Macmillan. This tale of a wild horse is one of a series of horse stories.

**Mowat, Farley**

- *Owls in the Family* § Bantam. A boy and his friends adopt two owls. Also:
  - *The Dog Who Wouldn't Be*

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**Lowry, Lois**

- *Number the Stars* \$ Houghton Mifflin. Annemarie aids the Danish resistance.

**Raskin, Ellen**

- *The Mysterious Disappearance of Leon (I mean Noel)* \$ Fitzhenry. This is a good detective story.

**Farley, Walter**

- *The Black Stallion* \$\$ Knopf. This is a boxed set of three horse stories.

**Orgel, Doris**

- *The Devil in Vienna* \$ Puffin. The story portrays a friendship between a Jewish girl and the daughter of a Nazi officer.

**Banks, Lynne Reid**

- *The Indian in the Cupboard* \$ Doubleday. Omri's plastic Indian comes to life in a thoughtful story, which is one of a series.

**Fox, Paula**

- *One Eyed Cat: A Novel* \$ Collier. Did Ned shoot the cat with the forbidden rifle?

**Rauls, Wilson**

- *Where the Red Fern Grows* \$ Bantam. A boy and his two dogs have an exciting adventure.

**Korman, Gordon**

- *This Can't Be Happening at MacDonald Hall* \$ Scholastic. This is one of many humorous stories written by the author about life in boarding schools.

**Ure, Jean**

- *The Dancing Dreams* \$ Red Fox. This is one of a series of books appealing to those who love dancing.

**Young, Scott**

- *Scrubs on Skates* \$ McClelland & Stewart. This appeals to hockey lovers. Also:
- *Boy on Defence*
- *A Boy at Leafs' Camp*

**Wilson, Eric**

- *The Inuk Mountie Adventure* \$\$ Harper Collins. This is the latest of the Tom and Liz Austen mystery series, each set in a different part of Canada.

**Little, Jean**

- *Mama's Going to Buy You a Mockingbird* \$ Viking. Jeremy must face up to his father's lingering death from cancer in this touching story. Also:
- *One to Grow On*
- *Look through My Window*

**Houston, James**

- *River Runners: A Tale of Hardship and Bravery* \$ Puffin. The book illustrates life in the north at the height of the fur trade.

**Aiken, Joan**

- *Cold Shoulder Road* \$\$ Delacourt. The story of the Twite family is continued in an irresistible web of historical fantasy. Also:
- *Wolves of Willoughby Chase*
- *Eliza's Daughter*
- *Midnight is a Place*

**Lewis, C.S.**

- *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* \$ Macmillan. Lucy, her brothers and sister go through the wardrobe into a magic kingdom. Part of the Narnia series.

**Montgomery, L.M.**

- *Anne of Green Gables* \$ Bantam. A high-spirited orphan is the central character of the famous series set on Prince Edward Island. Some of her later books are more difficult.

**Enright, Elizabeth**

- *The Saturdays* \$ Holt Rinehart. Tired of wasting Saturdays, the Melendy children pool resources to give one another a good outing.

**Hunter, Mollie**

- *The Mermaid Summer* \$ Harper & Row. This is a well-written fantasy by an outstanding writer.

**George, Jean Craighead**

- *Julie of the Wolves* \$ Harper & Trophy. How can Julie reconcile the old Eskimo ways with a more modern life? Also:
- *Julie*

**Bennett, William J.**

- *The Book of Virtues: A Treasury of Great Moral Stories* \$\$\$ Simon and Schuster. An interesting and varied collection of verse and prose probably best read aloud. Many selections make for excellent discussion.

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**Challenging books****L'Engle, Madeleine**

- *A Wrinkle in Time* \$ Dell. This is the first of a science fiction series.

**Cooper, Susan**

- *Dawn of Fear* \$ Academic. A young boy experiences the London blitz.

**Nesbit, E.**

- *Five Children and It* \$ BBC Books. The adventures of five children are chronicled in a utopian future. Also:
- *The Story of Amulet*

**Paterson, Katherine**

- *Bridge to Terabithia* \$ Harper Crest. This is a moving and thought-provoking story.

**Lunn, Janet**

- *The Root Cellar* \$ Penguin. This historical novel is set in Canada during the American Civil War.

**Hunter, Mollie**

- *A Stranger Came Ashore* \$ Harper & Row. This Scottish legend is full of suspense. Also:
- *The Walking Stones*
- *The Stronghold*
- *The Smartest Man in Ireland*

**Seton, Ernest Thompson**

- *Lobo, the Wolf* \$\$ Ink W.A. These tough, realistic animal stories are excellent for reading aloud, including to those with poor reading skills. Also:
- *The Biography of a Grizzly*

**Sutcliff, Rosemary**

- *Tristan and Iseult* \$ Oxford. This is a memorable retelling of the romantic tragedy. There are many other historical novels by this fine writer.

**Nelson, O.T.**

- *The Girl Who Owned a City* \$ Dell. After the death of all adults, Lise owns a city; it is excellent for bright twelve-year-olds.

**McEwan, Ian**

- *The Daydreamer* \$ Red Fox. Problems arise when a boy spends his life in a daydream.



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**Alexander, Lloyd**

- *The Book of Three* (each \$) Dell. This book and the four listed follow Taran in the mythical Kingdom of Pyrdain.
- *The Black Cauldron*
- *The Castle of Llyr*
- *Taran Wanderer*
- *The High King*

**Downing, Charles**

- *Russian Tales and Legends* \$\$\$ Oxford. These splendid stories are excellent for reading aloud. Also:
- *Armenian Folk Tales*

**Books for eleven- to fourteen-year-olds**

## Easy books

**Cleary, Beverly**

- *Dear Mr. Henshaw* \$ Gage. This is a wise and funny book about finding one's place in the world.

**Godfrey, Martyn**

- *The Great Science Fair Disaster* \$ Collier Macmillan. This is one of the author's fast-moving, high-interest stories. Also:
- *Please Remove Your Elbow from My Ear*
- *It Seemed Like a Good Idea at the Time*

**Choyce, Lesley**

- *Wrong Time, Wrong Place* \$ Formac. The story deals with racial tension in Halifax's Africville. Also:
- *Skateboard Shakedown*
- *Full Tilt*

**Hinton, S. E.**

- *Rumble Fish* \$\$ Laurel-Leaf. The world falls apart for a tough teen after an explosive chain of events. Also:
- *The Outsiders*
- *Tex*
- *That Was Then, This is Now*

**Armstrong, William Howard**

- *Souder* \$ Harper Collins. This is a haunting tale of sharecropper's family.

**Korman, Gordon**

- *Don't Care High* \$ Scholastic. The story is fast-moving and funny. Also:
- *Losing Joe's Place*
- *The Twinkie Squad*

**MacGregor, Roy**

- *Screech Owl Series* \$ McClelland & Stewart. The series is for hockey fans, boys and girls.

## Books for readers

**Mayne, William**

- *A Year and a Day* \$\$ Peter Smith. This haunting story is set in nineteenth century England. Also:
- *Drift*
- *Earthfasts*

**Bell William**

- *Forbidden City: A Novel* \$ Bantam. This story of contemporary teenagers is recommended for those over thirteen.

**O'Keefe, Frank**

- *It's Only a Game* \$\$ Beach Home. This hockey story also involves relationships with the opposite sex. Also:
- *Guppy Love*
- *The Day the Fish Tank Exploded*
- *There's a Cow in My Swimming Pool*

**Fox, Paula**

- *The Slave Dancer* \$ Dell. This is a horrifying story of the slave trade. The author has written many books for this age range.

**Holm, Anne**

- *I Am David* \$ Harbrace. This thoughtful story is excellent for discussion.

**Kjelgaard, James Arthur**

- *Big Red* \$ Bantam. Danny and the Irish setter are devoted to each other. Also:
- *Outlaw Red: Son of Big Red*
- *Snow Dog*
- *Stormy*

**Serrailier, Ian**

- *The Silver Sword* \$\$ Phillips. Ruth protects her brother and sister in war-torn Poland.

**Lowry, Lois**

- *A Summer to Die* \$ Bantam. Meg deals with the illness and death of her pretty sister.

**Katz, Welwyn Wilton**

- *False Face* \$\$ Douglas & McIntyre. This is a North American Indian tale by an author who has written several books for this age range.

**Voigt, Cynthia**

- *Dacey's Song* \$ Aladdin. Dacey is left to support her younger siblings.

**Doyle, Brian**

- *You Can Pick Me up at Peggy's Cove* \$ Greenwood. The story deals with the affection and tension of family life.

**Howe, James**

- *A Night Without Stars* \$ Aladdin. The theme is the fear before an operation.

**Paulsen, Gary**

- *Dogsong* \$ Puffin. The story deals with adventure and survival with gritty realism. Also:
- *Hatchet*
- *The Winter Room*
- *The Foxman*

**Halvorsen, Marilyn**

- *But Cows Can't Fly and Other Stories* \$ Dell. These are lively stories with a Canadian setting, recommended for those over thirteen. Also:
- *Cowboys Don't Cry*

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**Walsh, Jill Paton**

- *Fireweed* \$\$ Penguin. Runaway teenagers try to survive during the London blitz. Also:
- *Gaffer Samson's Luck*
- *The Wyndham Case*
- *The Golden Grove*

**Quirk, Yvonne Coppard**

- *Hide and Seek*. \$\$ Bodley Head. This is a powerful novel. Also:
- *Bully*
- *Copper's Kid*

**Richmond, Sandra**

- *Wheels for Walking* \$ Dutton. The story portrays shock and anguish after a teenager becomes a quadriplegic.

**Houston, James**

- *The White Archer* \$ Macmillan. This is an Inuit-Eskimo legend.

**Conly, Jane Leslie**

- *Trout Summer* \$\$ Henry Holt. A riveting story about trust and change.

**Matas, Carol**

- *Lisa's War* \$ Harper Collins. The story tells of Danish resistance to German occupation in World War II.

**Johnston, Julie**

- *Hero of Lesser Causes* \$ Lester. Keely believes her destiny is to fight for great causes.

**Pearson, Kit**

- *The Sky is Falling* \$\$ Viking. Norah and Gavin are well characterized as two war-guests from England. Also:
- *Looking at the Moon*
- *The Lights Go on Again*

**Lawson, Julie**

- *White Jade Tiger* \$\$ Beach Holme. On a field trip to Vancouver, Jasmine's adventure begins.

**Wilson, Budge**

- *The Dandelion Garden and Other Stories* \$\$ Stoddart. The ten stories explore complex relationships. Also:
- *Cordelia Clark*
- *The Leaving*

**Pearce, Philippa**

- *Tom's Midnight Garden* \$ Penguin. This fantasy is an exhilarating tale of time-shift.

**Hobbs, Will**

- *Bearstone* \$\$ Avon. The story involves a boy and an old man.

**Peyton, K.M.**

- *Flambards* \$ Peter Smith. The series describe the life of orphaned Christina, from childhood to middle age and the house Flambards. Also:
- *The Edge of the Cloud*
- *Flambards in Summer*

**Hunter, Mollie**

- *A Sound of Chariots* \$\$ Harper & Row. Birdie's life is shattered when her father dies suddenly.

**Voigt, Cynthia**

- *A Solitary Blue* \$ Scholastic. Jeff is abandoned by his mother and problems arise when she wants to renew their relationship. Also:
- *Sons from Afar*
- *Jackaroo*
- *The Runner*
- *The Wings of a Falcon*

**Twain, Mark**

- *The Adventures of Tom Sawyer* \$ Penguin. Tom's famous misadventures involve Aunt Polly, Huck and his disreputable father

**Cooper, Susan**

- *The Grey King* \$\$ Scholastic. One of *The Dark is Rising* series. These glorious novels combine courage and adventure with superb storytelling.

**Bond, Nancy**

- *Another Shore* \$\$ Macmillan. Lynn is thrown back to Louisbourg, Nova Scotia in 1744 in a vivid, absorbing story. Also:
- *A String in the Harp*
- *The Voyage Begun*

**Oppel, Kenneth**

- *Dead Water Zone* \$\$ Little. This is a good science fiction story. Also:
- *The Live Forever Machine*

**Ellis, Sarah**

- *Back of Beyond* \$\$ Groundwood. These short stories capture the heart of everyday reality. Also:
- *Out of the Blue*
- *Pick up Sticks*

**Crook, Connie Brunnel**

- *Nellie L.* \$\$ Stoddart. One of a series depicting the lives of famous Canadian women. Also:
- *Flight*
- *Laura's Choice*
- *Meyer's Creek*

**Hughes, Monica**

- *Golden Aquarians* \$ General. Walt is pitted against his technology-obsessed father in a race against life and death. It encourages young people to believe in themselves. Also:
- *The Promise*
- *Hunter in the Dark*
- *Invitation to the Game*

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**Challenging books****London, Jack**

- *White Fang* \$ Puffin. The story portrays the bond between man and dog in the north. Also:
- *The Call of the Wild.*

**Katz, Welwyn Wilton**

- *Come Like Shadows* \$\$ Penguin. Kinny McNeil uses a magic mirror to time-travel with the real Macbeth.

**Alcott, Louisa May**

- *Little Women* \$ Puffin. High-spirited Jo and her sisters remain popular today. First in a series.

**Twain, Mark**

- *Huckleberry Finn* \$ Penguin. Huck and an escaped slave raft down the Mississippi in an unforgettable adventure.

**Tolkien, J.R.R.**

- *The Hobbit* \$\$ Houghton Mifflin. Humour and action make this a compelling fantasy. Also:
- *The Lord of the Rings*

**Sutcliff, Rosemary**

- *The Sword and the Circle* \$ Oxford. This is a retelling of an old tale.

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**Wyndham, John**

- *The Day of the Triffids* \$ Carroll and Graf. This is a science fiction classic. Also:
- *Stowaway to Mars*
- *The Midwich Cuckoos*
- *The Chrysalids*

**Brandis, Marianne**

- *Rebellion* \$\$\$ Porcupine Quill. The growing maturity of an adolescent is shown in this Canadian historical novel.

**Yolden, Janice**

- *Dragon's Blood* \$ Harcourt Brace. This is the first book in the astonishing fantasy series, *The Pit Dragon Trilogy*.

**Wynne-Jones, Tim**

- *The Maestro* \$\$ Groundwood. Burl Crow is a powerful hero. Also:
- *Some of the Kinder Planets*

**Bedard, Michael**

- *Redwood* \$\$ Stoddart. Fantasy and history are persuasively woven together.

**Pullman, Philip**

- *The Golden Compass* \$\$\$ Knopf. This is the first volume of a proposed three, with a convincing combination of fantasy, drama and intense emotion. Also:
- *The Ruby in the Snow*
- *Shadow in the North*
- *Tiger in the Wall*

**Jacques, Brian**

- *The Pearls of Lutra* \$\$\$ Hutchinson. Part of *The Redwall Series*. Badger lords, fighting hares, Gabool (King of the Sea Rats) and four comrades combine to make a gripping and adventurous saga. Also:
- *Redwall*
- *Moss Flower*
- *Muttimeo*











**Canadian Test Centre**

100 Leek Crescent, Bureaux 10  
Richmond Hill, (Ont.) L4B 3E6

**[canadiantestcentre.com](http://canadiantestcentre.com)**

Tél. : 905.513.6636 / Téléc. : 905.513.6639  
courriel : [info@canadiantestcentre.com](mailto:info@canadiantestcentre.com)

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