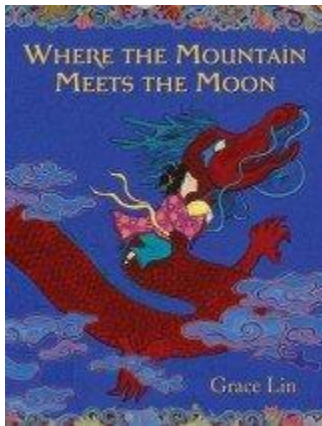


Books to challenge 4th readers

Exciting and relatable tales that will grasp your child's attention while helping them stretch their vocabulary and comprehension.

by: [S. Michele Fry](#)

[Print book list](#)



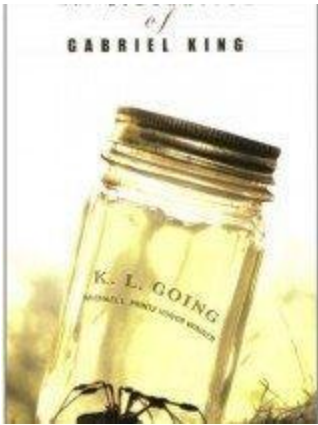
Where the Mountain Meets the Moon

by: *Grace Lin* - (Little, Brown Books for Young Readers, 2011) *304 pages*.

Minli lives with her family in the valley of the Fruitless Mountain. In the evenings, her father tells folktales, including one about the Old Man on the Moon, who holds everyone's destiny. Inspired by her father's tales, Minli decides to go on a journey to find the Old Man on the Moon to ask him to change her family's fortune. Along the way, Minli encounters magical creatures and makes new friends who accompany her on her adventure. Themes from Chinese folklore fuel this beautifully illustrated story.

Perfect for: Children who dream of mystical lands and epic journeys.

Find [Where the Mountain Meets the Moon](#) at your local library.



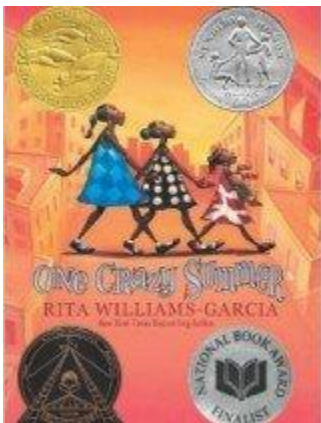
The Liberation of Gabriel King

by: *K.L. Going* - (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2005) 151 pages.

Frita Wilson works hard to help her friend Gabe to overcome the fear of bullies in fifth grade. This is an inspiring story about friendship and understanding between an African American girl and a white boy.

Perfect for: Kids who like realism.

Find [The Liberation of Gabriel King](#) at your local library.



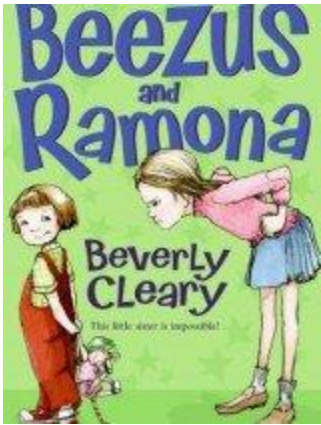
One Crazy Summer

by: *Rita Williams-Garcia* - (Amistad, 2010) 218 pages.

Delphine, 11, and her two younger sisters don't know what to expect when their dad puts them on plane to visit their mother, who abandoned the family years ago. It is 1968 and their mother is active in Oakland's Black Power movement. The girls hope to visit Disneyland, but instead, their mother sends them to a camp run by the Black Panthers. As the summer wears on, the sisters learn about themselves, their mother, and their country during a pivotal moment in African American history. Delphine both blames and longs for her mother, and in the end these two strong characters find a measure of reconciliation. If this is your child's first exposure to historical fiction, she may be hooked.

Perfect for: A glimpse of 1968 Oakland from a child's point of view.

Find [One Crazy Summer](#) at your local library.



Beezus and Ramona

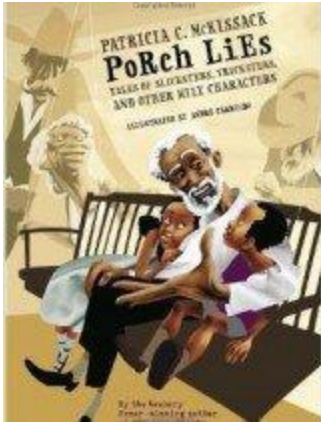
by: *Beverly Cleary*, illustrated by: *Arthur Dorros and Tracy Dockray* - (W. Morrow, 1955) 176 pages.

Nine-year-old Beezus is much too grown up to hang out with her little sister, Ramona, who does embarrassingly babyish things like wearing paper bunny ears and dragging around an imaginary pet lizard on a string. Beezus tries to be patient, but Ramona is impossible! This story is more than 50 years old, but today's kids will still crack up when Ramona powders her nose with a marshmallow and takes a single bite out of every apple in the house. And they'll sympathize with Beezus, who learns that while she'll always love her attention-getting little sister, that doesn't mean she always has like her.

Want to see the movie? Check out *Ramona and Beezus* (2010) starring Selena Gomez as Beezus, which adds elements from several books in the series to the *Beezus and Ramona* plot.

Perfect for: Kids with siblings, older and younger.

Find [*Beezus and Ramona*](#) at your local library.



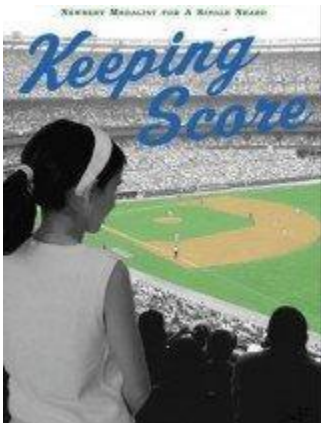
Porch Lies: Tales of Slicksters, Tricksters, and Other Wily Characters

by: *Patricia C. McKissack*, illustrated by: *Andre Carrilho* - (Random House, 2006) 160 pages.

Pour the lemonade, climb aboard the porch swing and prepare to pass the time listening to these nine original stories hung on the bones of the “slicksters, tricksters and other wily characters” the author came to know and love as a child growing up in the rural south. The storytelling cadence is just right; the characters are a colorful mix of guile and gumption; and the lessons vary from laugh-out-loud funny to touching. ... A thoroughly engaging collection handsomely presented: what more can you ask?

Perfect for: Kids who like myths and folktales.

Find [Porch Lies](#) at your local library.



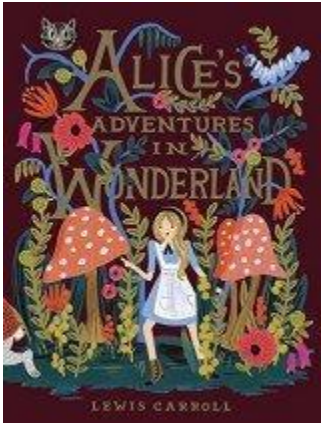
Keeping Score

by: *Linda Sue Park* - (Clarion Books, 2008) 208 pages.

Linda Sue Park is familiar to readers as the winner of the 2002 Newbery Medal for her book, *A Single Shard*. A daughter of Korean immigrants, Linda grew up outside of Chicago as an avid baseball fan. She wrote *Keeping Score*, about a girl living in Brooklyn during the Korean War, combining her passion for baseball with her own family’s past. Being a Brooklyn Dodgers fan in the early 1950s meant season after season of dashed hopes, but main character Maggie goes on rooting for the Dodgers. Against a background of major league baseball and the Korean War on the home front, Maggie looks for, and finds, a way to make a difference. A wonderful, heartwarming story that harkens back to the greatest children’s literature.

Perfect for: Kids who like historical fiction.

Find [Keeping Score](#) at your local library.



Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

by: *Lewis Carroll* - (Macmillan, 1865) 192 pages.

Curious Alice takes a tumble down a rabbit hole and finds herself in a topsy-turvy world of strange creatures, perplexing riddles, and madcap adventures. Most kids are familiar with Alice's journey and her run-ins with characters like the elusive White Rabbit, the Mad Hatter, and the malevolent Queen of Hearts. But there's no substitute for experiencing the silly rhymes and absurd illustrations of Lewis Carroll's original work firsthand. More hesitant readers may benefit from reading the tongue twisters aloud together.

Want to see the movie? Tweens may appreciate the manic 2010 version starring Johnny Depp as the Hatter.

Perfect for: Kids who delight in the silly.

Find [Alice's Adventures in Wonderland](#) at your local library.



The Secret Garden

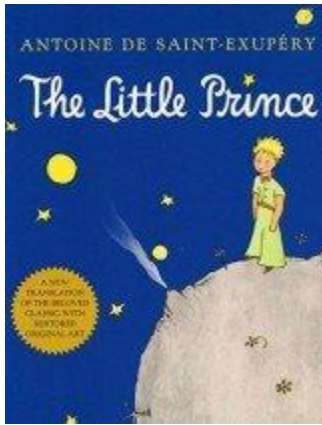
by: *Frances Hodgson Burnett* - (J.B. Lippincott Company, 1911) 288 pages.

Mary is an orphan who is angry at the world when she arrives at a forsaken mansion on the British moors. As she slowly discovers the secrets of the mansion, including an invalid cousin, an abandoned garden, and a family's sad history, she begins to hesitantly open her heart. She shows her cousin the garden and his ecstatic encounter with nature is as healing for him as it has been for Mary. The young people flourish along with the garden, as the lonely mansion becomes a loving home.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 1993 adaptation featuring Maggie Smith as Mrs. Medlock.

Perfect for: Kids who like classic stories.

Find [The Secret Garden](#) at your local library.



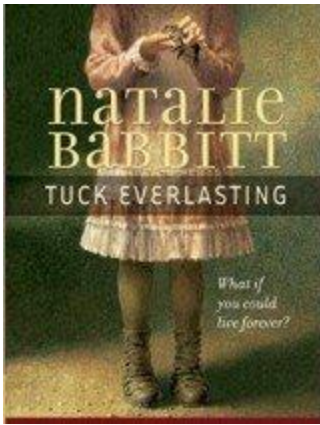
The Little Prince

by: *Antoine de Saint-Exupéry* - (Harcourt Brace, 1943) 96 pages.

A pilot crashes in the Sahara Desert. A thousand miles from any habitation, while attempting to fix his plane, he meets a strangely dressed little boy who seems to have come from nowhere, and who demands that he draw a sheep. “When a mystery is too overpowering, one dare not disobey,” so the pilot attempts to draw a sheep. Gradually the Little Prince reveals his story. He comes from a small asteroid, where he lives alone until a rose grows there. But the rose is demanding, and he is confused by his feelings about her. Eventually he decides to leave and journey to other planets in search of knowledge. After meeting many confusing adults, he eventually lands on Earth, where he befriends a snake and a fox. The fox helps him to understand the rose, and the snake offers to help him return to his planet — but at a price. Many adults look back on this book with a catch in the throat and have a special place for it in their hearts. This gentle picture book, concerned with the true “matters of consequence,” was as much a part of growing up for those of a certain age as *The Lord of the Rings* or the Beatles. There quite literally has never been anything like it, though others have certainly tried.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Little Prince](#) at your local library.



Tuck Everlasting

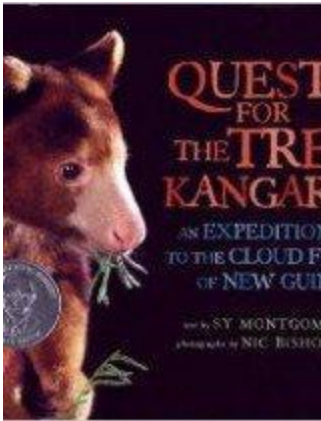
by: *Natalie Babbitt* - (Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1975) 139 pages.

When Winnie Foster is kidnapped she's terrified at first, but she soon realizes her kidnappers, the Tuck family, are kind people with an astonishing secret. The Tucks will never die, which turns out to be less of a blessing than one might think. The situation — and Winnie's choices — grows complicated when a stranger shows up, hoping to profit off of the spring water that made the Tucks immortal. A gentle but powerful reflection on mortality, and on what constitutes a meaningful life.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 2002 adaptation, in which the character Winnie is 15 instead of 10.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [Tuck Everlasting](#) at your local library.



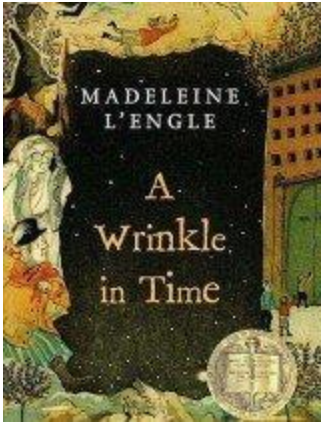
Quest for the Tree Kangaroo: An Expedition to the Cloud Forest of New Guinea

by: *Sy Montgomery*, illustrated by: *Nic Bishop* - (Houghton Mifflin, 2006) 79 pages.

The author and photographer accompanied scientist Lisa Dabek and her team on a trek through the remote forests of Papua New Guinea in search of the elusive Matschie's tree kangaroo. Little is known about this rare animal that looks like a bear, has a pocket like a kangaroo and lives in trees. The book is filled with wonderful photographs of the tree kangaroos, their lush forest habitat, and other exotic plants and animals. Information included about Dabek's background may be of special interest to aspiring young naturalists and biologists. None of her friends, family or teachers encouraged her in her passionate interest in animals when she was growing up, thinking it was strange, and she struggled with the challenge of asthma. This book provides fascinating information about a little-known place on Earth, a newly discovered species and how one woman overcame the odds to follow her dreams.

Perfect for: Kids who like nonfiction and animals.

Find [*Quest for the Tree Kangaroo*](#) at your local library.



A Wrinkle in Time

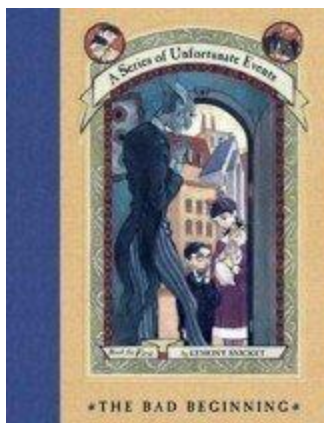
by: *Madeleine L'Engle* - (Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1962) 256 pages.

Meg, an awkward girl who doesn't quite fit in, has a lot to worry about. Her beloved father has suddenly disappeared, and neighbors are beginning to gossip that he's run off with another woman. It turns out that his disappearance is connected with his scientific work, and Meg, her brilliant little brother, and her friend Calvin set out to find him — a search that takes them on an exciting but dangerous galactic adventure.

Want to see the movie? Check out the 2006 adaptation, which dramatizes the struggle between good and evil, or the new release coming spring 2018.

Perfect for: Kids who like science fiction and fantasy.

Find [*A Wrinkle in Time*](#) at your local library.



A Series of Unfortunate Events

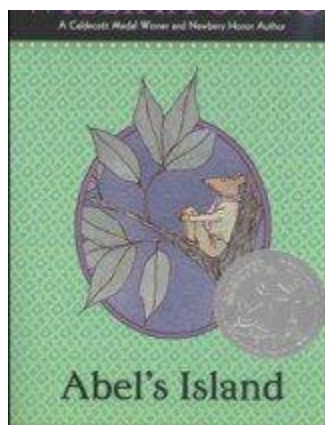
by: *Lemony Snicket* - (HarperCollins Publishers, 2009) 188 pages.

The hook: No child has ever endured more bad luck than the three Baudelaire waifs. Over the course of the 13-book series, they endure relentless misfortune at the hands of their vile uncle, the malevolent Count Olaf. At times, it makes for almost unbearable reading, but Snicket's tangy sense of humor and masterful command of three-dollar words keep you wanting more. Find [A Series of Unfortunate Events](#) at your local library.

Want to see the movie? *Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events* starring Jim Carrey comprises the first three books in the series.

Perfect for: Older kids who appreciate humor in evil adults, miserable orphans, and extravagant vocabularies.

Find **our favorites** at your local library: [The Bad Beginning](#), [The Reptile Room](#), [The Wide Window](#).



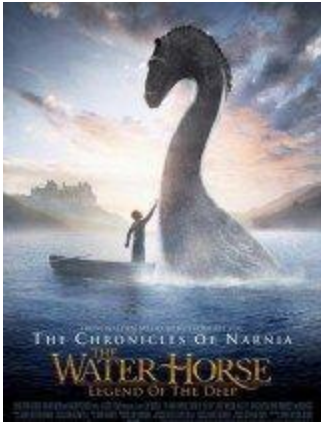
Abel's Island

by: *William Steig* - (Square Fish, 2007) 128 pages.

Abel and Amanda are newlywed, high-society mice enjoying a picnic in the forest. When a rainstorm strikes, Abel is swept away and marooned on a river island. The cultured rodent castaway survives here, a la Robinson Crusoe, adapting to nature with cheerful resourcefulness and utilizing the solitude to reexamine his life.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy and survival stories.

Find [Abel's Island](#) at your local library.



The Water Horse

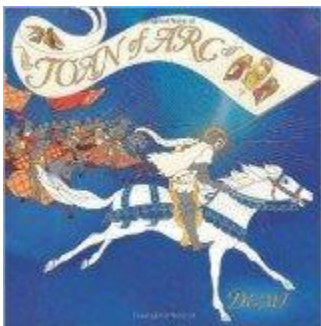
by: *Dick King-Smith*, illustrated by: *David Parkins* - (Crown Publishers, 1998) 118 pages.

The hook: Here is another sweet animal tale from the author of *Babe*. Aside from the Water Horse eating a swan, there is little to be concerned about here. Families who read this book could discuss the Loch Ness Monster. Do you think it could be real? Why or why not? How might a story like this have gotten started? Your children might be interested in doing a little research and seeing the supposed photos of the monster.

Want to see the movie? The 2007 adaptation, *The Water Horse: Legend of the Deep*, is loosely based on the book, but adds in a WWII plot line to lengthen the story.

Perfect for: Kids who like fantasy stories.

Find [The Water Horse](#) at your local library.



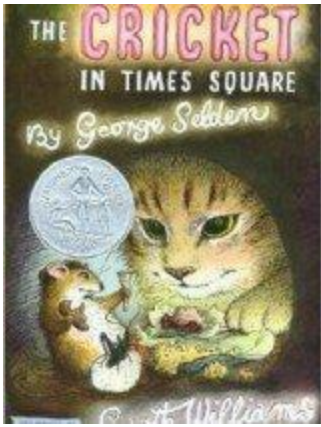
Joan of Arc

by: *Demi* - (Two Lions, 2011) 56 pages.

A pious 15th century French peasant girl, Joan heard the archangel Michael's voice and raised an army to lead a prince to his place on the throne. This lusciously illustrated biography shows and tells how she saved France. But when captured by enemies and convicted of heresy, the king abandoned her, and she was burned at the stake. Today, she's a patron saint of France and her miraculous life is heralded for courage and faith. The exquisite illustrations, influenced by medieval stained glass, paintings, architecture, and illuminated manuscripts, are the highlight of the book.

Perfect for: Born leaders.

Find [Joan of Arc](#) at your local library.



The Cricket in Times Square

by: *George Selden* - (Ariel Books, 1960) 144 pages.

The Cricket in Times Square has been initiating bookworms since 1960 and shows no sign of stopping. These days, fantasy-series books rule the bookshelves, yet this quiet tale of friendship endures. Chester Cricket, Tucker Mouse and Harry Cat meet at a newsstand in a New York subway station when a lonely little boy, Mario Bellini, finds the cricket in a pile of trash. He decides to keep Chester as a pet, and a series of adventures follow. Perfect for a quiet read on a long trip this summer.

Perfect for: Kids who like adventure stories.

Find [*The Cricket in Times Square*](#) at your local library.