

SEVENTH EDITION

# Children's Literature, BRIEFLY



Terrell A. Young | Gregory Bryan  
James S. Jacobs | Michael O. Tunnell



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# About the Authors

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Terrell A. Young is professor of children's literature and associate chair of the Department of Teacher Education at Brigham Young University. He has published numerous articles and has coauthored/coedited several books including *Deepening Students' Mathematical Understanding with Children's Literature* (National Council of Teachers of Mathematics, 2018). Terry has served as president of the International Literacy Association Children's Literature and Books Special Interest Group, the National Council of Teachers of English Children's Literature Assembly, and the United States Board on Books for Young People. He has served on numerous book award selection committees including the John Newbery Medal, the most prestigious American book prize.



Gregory Bryan completed his Ph.D. at the University of British Columbia. He is a member of the faculty of education at the University of Manitoba, Canada, where he teaches children's literature and early and middle years literacy courses. Greg was born and raised in Australia and returns home as often as possible. His published books include biographies of his favorite writer, Henry Lawson, and his favorite picture book illustrator, Paul Goble. *Mates: The Friendship that Sustained Henry Lawson* is an authoritative dual biography of two Federation-era Australian writers. Greg won the Midwest Independent Publishing Association 2018 Book Award for the best biography for the book *Paul Goble, Storyteller*.



James S. Jacobs began his teaching career as an instructor of English in grades 7 through 12. He next taught English at a junior college where, to his disappointment, he was assigned a children's literature course. Expecting flat content and simplified writing, he was surprised to discover literature that could hold its own against any literary standards. Following this new love and life path, he returned to graduate school for a degree in children's literature. He taught at Brigham Young University and is now a professor emeritus. He has written about Lloyd Alexander, authored a picture book, and served on the Caldecott Committee. While teaching at Brigham Young, he earned a teaching credential in elementary education and then gained classroom experience as a fourth-grade teacher for two years at a U.S. Army school in Germany.



Michael O. Tunnell is retired from Brigham Young University (Provo, Utah), where he taught children's literature and served as chair of the Department of Teacher Education. He has also served twice on the Newbery Award Committee, as well as on the selection committee for the NCTE Award for Excellence in Poetry for Children. Besides this text, Mike has published other professional books, including *The Story of Ourselves: Teaching History Through Children's Literature* (Heinemann) and *Lloyd Alexander: A Bio-bibliography* (Greenwood), and has written articles for a variety of educational journals. His children's book titles include *Mailing May* (Greenwillow), *Halloween Pie* (Lothrop), *The Children of Topaz* (Holiday House), *Wishing Moon* (Dutton), and *Candy Bomber* (Charlesbridge).



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# Preface

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In 2018 the National Council of Teachers of English published a position statement titled “Preparing Teachers with Knowledge of Children’s and Young Adult Literature.” The statement specified knowledge and skills that teachers must develop to effectively share literature with children and young adults.

1. Teachers must know the literature with a “broad and sustained knowledge of quality books” across genres and be aware of resources such as review journals, websites, and blogs that can “provide them with knowledge of new books and their potential for classroom use.”
2. They should be readers themselves, as “teachers who are engaged readers do a better job of engaging students as readers.”
3. They must be prepared to affirm diversity and exercise critical literacy by “engaging all students with diverse books.”
4. They should understand and use appropriate pedagogy, which includes both learning “appropriate and effective strategies for helping students find books that will engage them as readers and as participants in critical, significant conversations about their lives” and developing “strategies for supporting student knowledge of literary crafting—that is, how authors develop characters, construct plots, and employ other literary elements to create an exemplary work.”

We believe that *Children’s Literature, Briefly* is a resource that embraces and expands on these qualifications. It offers prospective teachers and librarians the tools necessary to be well acquainted with the literature, including resources for learning about new books as well as those that have been available over time. One of the two major sections focuses on content in books of various genres, approaches, and styles. A chapter on multicultural and international books is also available. Chapters in this section provide a wide range of information and guidance helpful for exploring critical issues and affirming diversity. Appropriate pedagogy is interwoven in the major section treating characteristics and crafting, as well as in the content treatments. Future teachers and librarians increase their love for reading as they explore the richness of children’s and young adult literature and recognize how many of these benefits extend to adult literature as well.

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## About *Children’s Literature, Briefly*

When the first edition of this book was published in 1996, Mike and Jim stated in the preface that they felt the subtitle should be “A children’s literature textbook for people who don’t like children’s literature textbooks.” Until that time, they had taught children’s literature at the university without using a textbook because virtually all the ones available were too expensive and too extensive for an introductory course. They owned and regularly consulted the available texts, but they seemed more like reference books. The biggest concern, though, was neither the cost nor the length but the hours stolen from students when they could be reading actual children’s books. The focus of a children’s literature course should be on those marvelous children’s titles. They

are more important than any textbook, including this one, and Mike and Jim originally wrote this book on that assumption.

Since that time, two additional authors have been added to this textbook, bringing fresh and additional perspectives to the field of children’s literature and to the pages of this book. Though the massive children’s literature tomes are still around today, a variety of shorter texts are now also available. As with the authors of competing textbooks, we have written our book as an overview to shed light on children’s literature and its use with young readers. However, one way in which ours may differ is in its conversational rather than academic voice. We have made an effort to make the reading as enjoyable as possible, while still providing all the pertinent information and ideas relating to the topic.

Our job as teachers, whether university or elementary, is to introduce children’s books and illuminate them for our students. These books can offer insight and pleasure without having to be explained, analyzed, or used as objects of study. Yet appropriate commentary, if it is secondary to the books and doesn’t become too self-important, can help both teachers and children find their own ways to the rewards of reading.

The goal of this text, then, is to provide a practical overview of children’s books, offering a framework and background information while keeping the spotlight on the books themselves. That’s why we kept the textbook itself and each chapter short.

And that’s why we limited the book lists. The world of children’s literature offers only one completely dependable book list—your own. Throughout the following chapters, we present ours, absolutely trustworthy in every way—to us. You are allowed to harbor serious doubts about our choices, but the value of the lists is that they may save you time wandering up and down library aisles.

## New to This Edition

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In revising the previous edition of *Children’s Literature, Briefly*, we continued to concentrate on trying to achieve greater clarity—making the book as user friendly and understandable as possible. This required us to constantly reflect on literature, literacy education, and education in general. Though our philosophies have remained mostly unchanged, we believe that we understand them better than before and have been able to communicate them more clearly and effectively.

Besides the changes mentioned already, we have made a number of other alternations, including the following:

- Updated book examples and included new research findings to keep the book as relevant and up to date as possible.
- Reorganization of the text to bring multicultural and international books to greater prominence.
- Substantially increased focus on diversity in its various forms throughout the textbook. This includes an especial focus on Indigenous children’s literature, and a section on LGBTQ+ literature.
- Conscious inclusion of books and creators reflective of North America’s diversity within the recommended book lists.
- Increased recognition of the prevalence and popularity of graphic novels and verse novels.

- Conscious inclusion of graphic novels and verse novels in the lists of recommended books.
- Added a section on expository informational books.
- Increased visual appeal of the textbook. Throughout the book, color illustrations and book covers have been added to enhance the discussion and facilitate greater reader understanding. Similarly, the addition of color in the typesetting and design is intended to help make the book even more engaging and easy to read.

## Acknowledgments

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We would like to thank the reviewers of this edition of our text for their valuable insights and comments: Melanie Koss, Northern Illinois University and Nicholas Husbye, University of Missouri, St. Louis.



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# Read, Read, Read

## Learning Objectives

After reading this chapter, the student will be able to:

- Summarize the immediate and long-term benefits of engaged reading.
- Identify differences between text books, reference books, and trade books.
- List strengths of trade books that make them an invaluable tool for teaching and learning.
- Describe the role of the teacher in engaging students in reading.
- Differentiate between extrinsic and intrinsic incentives for students to read.
- Describe how each suggestion for organizing the classroom would contribute to a student's motivation to read.

Entertaining and informative stories never go out of fashion. For as long as humans have walked on Earth, we have been telling stories to amuse and educate one another. In a modern world where oral storytelling occurs relatively less frequently than in the distant past, stories today are often conveyed through books. As such, reading is indisputably important. Even in a 21st-century climate of constant controversy and limitless lawsuits, where almost no one appears to agree on anything, reading receives unanimous and unqualified support. An anti-reading position gets no one elected to office and makes no one a hero to the people for telling things the way they see them. No magazine or newspaper prints an article about the evils of reading or how time spent with print is wasted. No film star increases in popularity by begging people not to read. The push is always toward more reading. After all, as Tim O'Brien, the author of the multi-award-winning Vietnam War book *The Things they Carried* (1990), says, "Books and writers have power in our lives (2017)." Prolific Abenaki children's author Joseph Bruchac (2017b), agrees, saying, "A story is a powerful thing. It reminds us of our humanity but also of the necessity of remembering our place on Earth." So why is reading universally acclaimed and, given the power that books and stories can have in our lives, how can we motivate children to read?

## Benefits of Engaged Reading

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### Engaged Reading—Immediate Benefits

Like eating healthy food, engaged reading simultaneously yields both pleasure and benefit. When we chomp down on a juicy red apple, nibble on fresh green salads, or dine on delicious pink salmon, the delightful taste rewards us right then. No one needs to confirm the results; from our own personal taste buds, we know immediately that the bite is satisfying. In addition, our digestive

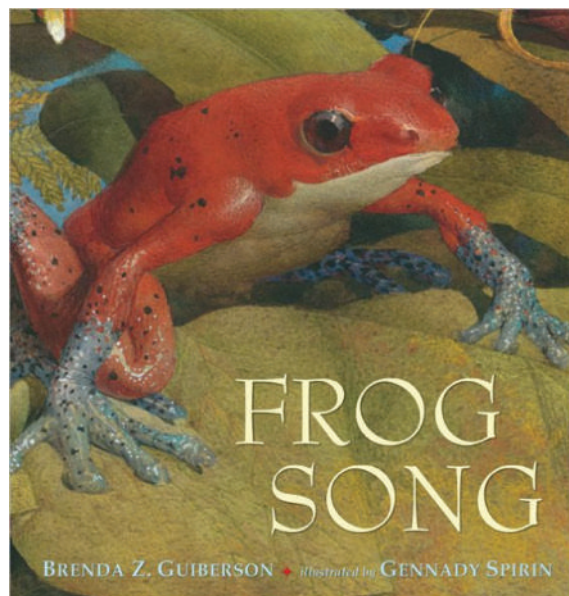
system then turns the food into nutrients that keep us going. Benefits—energy and robust health—automatically follow the pleasing food, but the primary reason for eating is the immediate reward of tasting good and satisfying our hunger.

*Immediate* is the operative word. At the very moment their eyes pass over the words, engaged readers are personally motivated, focused, and involved. They have their reward as soon as they are drawn into the subject, thinking of nothing beyond those sentences, paragraphs, and pages, even the reading process itself. Engaged readers often don't even see words after the first line or two. In a story, they see scenes, people, and action. In nonfiction, they test theories, think of applications, or chew on the facts.

When we already have an interest in what we read, engaged reading comes naturally. No one wonders if the instructions to assemble a swing set for a much-loved but impatient 3-year-old will make good reading. The purpose is determined, and the reading engages immediately. Before the first word is read, we know the instructions are worth it. At a library, a child with an interest in dinosaurs is drawn to a book on the subject. At a bookstore, a birder is drawn to the field guide and nature sections. Even when a book is not particularly well-written, the person who is interested in the topic becomes an engaged reader without persuasion or effort.

If a reader does not display a specific interest, some books create that interest. The manner in which *The Graveyard Book* (Gaiman, 2008) begins often entices readers to turn to the next page, and the next, and the next. Readers are left breathless at the conclusion of the opening scene, in which a family is slaughtered in their own home, a toddler somehow flees the house and escapes the murderer (if only temporarily), and the knife-wielding assailant sets out in hot pursuit of one more victim. That potential victim, however, has made it to the local graveyard, where it will be raised and protected by the cemetery ghosts!

Nonfiction can have the same immediate attraction. Brenda Guiberson and Gennady Spirin's (2013) collaboration, *Frog Song*, is magnetically attractive, stunningly beautiful, and wonderfully informative. First of all, who doesn't love frogs? Even those who *do not* are likely to have their minds changed by *Frog Song*. Spirin's illustrations are as beautiful as any found in picture books.



The detailed, colorful, bold artwork is breathtaking. It perfectly complements Guiberson's fascinating text about the remarkable adaptability and, frankly, almost unbelievable lives of different frogs from across the globe.

These are amazing creatures: the water-holding frog of desert Australia loads up on water before burrowing into the ground to withstand what might potentially be years of arid heat before it reemerges at the next rainfall; Chile's Darwin frog keeps its tadpole offspring safe inside its vocal sacs for almost two months before "burping" them out of its mouth as froglets. What of Ecuador's Surinam toad, which carries as many as 100 eggs in the skin of its back until, after a period of four months, the froglets burst from that skin to begin their life of independence? Or Oklahoma's Great Plains narrow-mouthed toad, which makes a home of an occupied tarantula burrow? Or Canada's wood frog, somehow surviving north of the Arctic Circle, frozen all winter? No one is likely to read *Frog Song* and walk away without an awakened, renewed, or magnified appreciation of frogs. If that is not enough, readers who enjoy the combined talents of Guiberson and Spirin in *Frog Song* will also enjoy the opportunity to learn about dinosaurs through the Guiberson-Spirin collaboration for *The Greatest Dinosaur Ever* (2013).

Immediate reward, a dependable criterion for determining why people choose to read, is difficult for others to predict. Yes, we can choose books that reflect the interests of a reader, and yes, we can recommend books that are pleasing to us. But only the individual reader knows what is personally attractive and satisfying, and to what degree.

When we look only for specific information—the sodium content in a frozen lasagna, the definition of *arcadian*, or what a teacher said in the note a student brought home—it is essential that we get the facts but not essential that we read them ourselves. Seeking information from print indeed can be engaging, but if someone else reads and tells us what we want to know, we generally can be satisfied. In her transactional theory of literature and reading, Louise Rosenblatt (1978) calls this reading for facts *efferent* reading. We are engaged and motivated to acquire that knowledge, but it is not imperative that we discover it with our own eyes.

*Aesthetic* reading is different from *efferent* reading, because the goal is not to acquire facts but to participate in an experience. In *aesthetic* reading, readers focus on what they are experiencing as their eyes pass over the words. This kind of reading cannot be summarized by another but must be done personally because it is not centered on data. The facts are not the most important part, engagement with the experience is. Knowing the plot of *The Winter Pony* (Lawrence, 2011) and the eventual outcome of the ill-fated Terra Nova Expedition is not the same as experiencing with Scott of the Antarctic the difficulties and depravations of the race to the South Pole in 1911–1912. Being told that their teacher is going to die comes nowhere near joining the student protagonists in *Ms. Bixby's Last Day* (Anderson, 2016) as they bumble their way through skipping school to visit her in the hospital to help her experience one last perfect day.

Reading for experience—*aesthetic* reading—can no more be done by someone else and then reported to us than can another do our eating to save us the trouble and yet still give us the benefits. We don't want information on food flavors; we want those flavors to flow over our own taste buds. When we read for experience, simply knowing how the book ends doesn't satisfy us. We want to make that journey to the final page ourselves because when we have lived in a wonderful book, we are never quite the same again.

In short, engaged readers—those who read for personal reasons—know the satisfying feeling of finding pleasure in print and being rewarded in two areas: locating information and gaining experience.

## Engaged Reading—Long-Term Benefits

In addition to the immediate rewards offered by engaged reading, a stunning number of benefits accumulate over time as by-products of reading extensively, including simply choosing to read for personal pleasure. Research from across the world has demonstrated that, among other benefits, those who read extensively can expect the following:

- Increased automaticity and speed. We learn to read faster and can therefore read more (Boakye, 2017; Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).
- Increased motivation to read even more (Arnold, 2009; Powell, 2005).
- Gains in reading achievement (Mol & Bus, 2011).
- Increased confidence and self-esteem as readers (Arnold, 2009; Powell, 2005).
- A sense of achievement and increased confidence overall (Scholastic.ca, 2017).
- Expanded vocabulary (Cain & Oakhill, 2011; Huang & Liou, 2007).
- Improved reading comprehension abilities (Diego-Medrano, 2013).
- Increased verbal fluency (Cullinan, 2000) and reading fluency (Wilfong, 2008).
- Increased knowledge of various topics (Neuman & Roskos, 2012) and higher scores on achievement tests in all subject areas (Krashen, 2004).
- Greater insights into human nature and decision-making (Bruner, 1996).
- Better understanding of other cultures (Short, 2009) and world issues (Howard, 2011).
- Increased empathy and concern for other people (Guarisco, Brooks, & Freeman, 2017).
- Higher scores on general knowledge exams (Cunningham & Stanovich, 1998).
- Pleasure derived from learning and seeking to learn (Wilhelm, 2016; Wilhelm & Smith, 2016).

Remember that all these benefits arrive naturally as we continue to read personally pleasing materials. The focus of that reading is still on the immediate rewards—we pick up books because they are interesting and satisfying—but unmistakable growth and development comes as we spend time with books we like.

## Three Different Categories of School Books

Schools use books as tools of education, and those books fall into three distinct categories: reference, text, and trade. Each type of book is philosophically different and serves a different purpose.

Reference books are those volumes a person consults for an immediate answer to a specific question, such as a dictionary, encyclopedia, atlas, or thesaurus. Textbooks are designed for use in formal instruction, presenting a dispassionate view of a subject in an organized, methodical manner. These two varieties—especially textbooks—are the books most often associated with classroom instruction, yet students seldom choose them for personal reading. Textbooks and reference books are not authentic literacy materials. Authentic literacy materials are the types of materials that are read not just within the walls of a schoolroom but are also read for real-life purposes and pleasure outside school (Duke, Purcell-Gates, Hall, & Tower, 2006).

Trade books are published for the retail market and typically are available in bookstores and libraries. They are written by authors who want to express themselves in a way they hope will appeal to readers who seek pleasure, insight, and knowledge. However, with the exception of English Language Arts teachers, educators historically have not considered trade books of much use in the classroom. Textbooks and reference books both have an important role in education, but trade books should not be dismissed.





## Some Strengths of Children's Literature Trade Books

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People can and do acquire substantial knowledge beyond the walls of formal education when they read often and broadly. We need to recognize that books can create interest for readers, that people learn better when they are interested, and that many of us can learn a great deal by reading widely on our own. The purpose of both fiction and nonfiction children's literature trade books is not so much to inform (which they do very well) as it is to excite, to introduce, to let the reader in on the irresistible secrets of life on Earth.

The following points identify some of the many strengths of trade books:

### Engaging Writing and Illustrations

Trade books are written in interesting and engaging language. They are deliberately written to both entertain and inform. The language creates images by using precise, colorful vocabulary. The sentences are varied and read interestingly. Trade books have the freedom and space to make meaningful comparisons, and use detail to enlarge understanding. Trade books also allow a personal viewpoint to emerge in the writing. Information has more power to inform and entertain when it is presented through a strong, individual voice. Trade book authors shape and develop their views in individualized language, allowing for a personalized explanation that often results in more meaning and perspective. The style is generally not detached and objective. The authors often deliberately infuse their opinion and interests. Almost without exception, trade book authors are writing content about topics in which they are passionately interested. That passion comes through.

Where illustrated, the artwork in children's literature trade books is generally of a superior quality. Picture books often contain stunning illustrations—in many cases, the best art in the world can be found reproduced within the covers of a picture book. Trade books are designed to be appealing and enticing to engage young readers.

### Reflections of Individual Reading Abilities and Interests

For a variety of reasons, children's literature trade books come in all sizes, formats, lengths, levels of difficulty, and levels of detail. Different books suit different levels of reading ability and interests. In a typical classroom, the reading abilities of students vary widely; so do their interests. Because of the number and variety of trade books, students at many levels—even those with reading difficulties—can locate titles on any subject. They can find books they can read, learn from, and enjoy.

Trade books can provide simple, brief introductions to any topic. Alternatively, trade books can otherwise provide the space to bring a subject to life with interesting observations and deep details, presenting the reader with a richer understanding of a topic. Today, books of 300, 400, or 500 pages on a topic are not uncommon for children. They can satisfy their thirst for knowledge on a topic and then move on to another subject they are interested in learning about.

### Many Perspectives

Books are available on any subject, providing overviews as well as exhaustive treatments from a variety of viewpoints. For example, dozens of trade books about dinosaurs are available, rounding out reader knowledge as much as one chooses. There are dozens of books about dancers, dogs, or

disasters. One can take his or her pick. Because trade books are typically shorter and more quickly read, one can read many trade books and get many perspectives.

## Currency

Trade books are written and published frequently, and often present the latest findings, opinions, ideas, and information. What's more, they do it on current topics of interest, reporting and reflecting what is in the news and on people's minds right now. As an example, every four years when new candidates run for election as president of the United States, children's biographies of the leading candidates appear on bookstore shelves. These books appear well before the election, providing even young readers with an opportunity to get to know about the man or woman who might become president.

## Tools of Lifelong Learning

Trade books are available in all libraries and bookstores. They are the books people use most often to learn about the world after they have graduated from school. Trade books are the stuff of real-life reading. Trade books are food that feeds the minds of toddlers at their parent's lap, children developing reading abilities, youths exploring boundaries, adults establishing themselves, and the elderly passionately pursuing new topics for learning.

# The Teacher's Role in Developing Engaged Readers

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## Reading Role Models

One concern is that teachers are not sufficiently strong reading role models. Recognizing the importance of teachers as role models for their students, Applegate and Applegate (2004) coined the term *Peter effect*. In the Christian bible, when a beggar asked Peter for money, he replied that he could not give the beggar what he did not have. Applegate and Applegate contend that a teacher who is not an enthusiastic, engaged, motivated reader cannot model for children reading enthusiasm, engagement, and motivation. In one study, Applegate and Applegate classified more than half of 195 preservice teacher study participants as “unenthusiastic” about reading.

Teachers can help create the desire to read when they introduce and read from a variety of children's books they personally like. Although no method is foolproof, choosing personal favorites to recommend to children seems likely to be at least as successful as any other way of selecting titles. When teachers introduce and read from books they genuinely like, students are more likely to be motivated, for two reasons:

1. Those books generally are good books. There is a reason the teacher likes them. They usually are more solidly crafted and contain more levels on which children can make connections.
2. When teachers recommend books that are personally meaningful, a genuine and irresistible enthusiasm accompanies their words. When people read books they like and then talk about them, those who listen are often influenced by their excitement and conviction.

Insofar as reading is concerned, nothing we offer children is more important than an adult who reads. Children end up doing what we do, not what we say, and all the admonitions about the