

Choosing Books for First Day School: Guidelines for Selecting Books

Begin here:

1. Read Gail Thomas's article for selection criteria:

<http://www.fgcquaker.org/resources/considerations-when-choosing-and-using-books-first-day-school>

Another useful check for anti-bias criteria is at Teach for Change Books:

<http://www.tfcbooks.org/guide-anti-bias-childrens-books>

2. In your internet browser, type in: *children's books* and a (theme, issue, question, eg. *immigration, environment, peace*). Depending on your search engine you will get various results. Using Google search, the results display images of about 6 books in a row. Choose one that appeals to you and navigate the websites as described below.

3. Navigating useful websites:

Having selected the book you want to preview, link to the page that talks about a specific book (not the ad, but the book itself). Often Amazon is the first one after the ad. This book page will have a list of sites where you can read about the book.

4. It is helpful to start with Amazon to check the available formats – hardback, paper, Kindle or 3rd party sellers. Also, look to see if the book has received any awards. Amazon wants to sell books so they give you lots of information, including other book titles on the same topic. Below the publisher's book write-up you may find reviews by School Library Journal and Booklist, followed by product information that includes suitable ages for the book, and information about the author, and finally reviews from people who purchased the book. The bar graph makes it easy to see how the book is viewed. If it is not highly rated, you will likely want to keep looking.

5. Another good review source is **Good Reads**. [<https://www.goodreads.com/>] Check their reviews of the book. Their rating is based on 5 points so the closer to 5 the better they like the book. Usually both sites have similar opinions about a book, but not always.

6. Another step is to scan the search results page to see if there is a **You Tube** [<https://www.youtube.com/>] video. This will often allow you to see the contents of the book. Be aware that not all YouTube videos are done well, so look beyond the presentation.

7. Finally, look to see if there are professional organizations [see the list of awards in the CCBC webpage listed below] that endorse the book. The more positive statements about a book, the better.

Helpful Websites for Issues:

The **Cooperative Children's Book Center** (CCBC), at the library school of education at UW-Madison, lists many of the major awards related to children's literature with links to the originating web pages. Find the list here: <https://ccbc.education.wisc.edu/links/links.asp?idLinksCategory=2>

Colours of Us is a blog by a woman living in South Africa who has lived in a number of different countries. She continues to watch for multicultural books for children here:

<http://coloursofus.com/multicultural-childrens-books-lists/>

TeachingBooks.net is an easy-to-use website that adds a multimedia dimension to the reading experiences of children's and young adult books. The database includes thousands of resources about fiction and nonfiction books used in the K–12 environment, with every resource selected to encourage the integration of multimedia author and book materials into reading and library activities. This is a paid subscription resource, however, searching is free and can help identify useful titles.

<https://www.teachingbooks.net/tb.cgi>

Example Entry:

[#BlackLivesMatter Reads for Kids](#)

Sponsored by:

Hennepin County Library

Grade Level:

PK-8

Curricular Areas:

English Language Arts, Social Studies

Cultural Areas:

African American

Resources for this booklist include:

21 Videos

12 Book Readings

56 Lesson Plans

Total of 200 resources

We Need Diverse Books[™] [<http://weneeddiveersebooks.org/>] is a grassroots organization of children's book lovers that advocates essential changes in the publishing industry to produce and promote literature that reflects and honors the lives of all young people. Awards the Walter Dean Myers Award, also known as "The Walter," which is given to a diverse author whose work features a diverse main character or addresses diversity in a meaningful way. They also have a list of links on **Where to Find Diverse Books** which includes, for example, Coretta Scott King, Jane Addams, ALA Rainbow list, etc.:

<http://weneeddiveersebooks.org/where-to-find-diverse-books/>

ReadBrightly [<http://www.readbrightly.com/>] is a resource to help moms and dads raise lifelong readers. Launched in partnership with Penguin Random House, Brightly features book recommendations from all publishers for every age and stage, reading tips and insights, etc.

For example:

<http://www.readbrightly.com/topics/picture-books/> [selected entries listed below]

[Books That Help Kids Know and Love Themselves](#)

[10 Picture Books that Make Kids Feel Warm and Cozy](#)

[Books to Help Kids Understand What It's Like to Be a Refugee](#)

[Books that Carry On the Legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.](#)
[We Belong Together: 4 Wonderful Picture Books That Feature Adoptive Families](#)
[An Attitude of Gratitude: 11 Books That Show Kids What it Means to Be Thankful](#)
[8 Books about Real-Life Kids Who Changed the World](#)

Examples of **blog postings** that may turn up in search results on specific topics:

<https://www.romper.com/p/10-childrens-books-that-help-white-kids-understand-what-children-of-color-are-up-against-15238>

<https://blog.literatibooks.com/2017/01/31/10-childrens-books-that-celebrate-immigration/>

<http://bookriot.com/2016/11/18/25-picture-books-that-promote-empathy-and-respect/>

<https://mommymystic.wordpress.com/2008/12/04/book-list-spirituality-books-for-young-children/>