



Choosing books for children

There are so many wonderful books out there these days in the world of children's literature, where does one begin when choosing the perfect book for those young readers in your life? Here are some tips that I use as a reading teacher:

RL: when you buy a book, look on the back of the book and many times in the lower left hand corner you will see RL1, RL2, RL3, etc. RL stands for reading level. This means that if the child reads at the 3rd grade level, he/she is capable of reading books that are RL3 and below.

Reading level means that the words in the book are appropriate for a reader at that level, it doesn't mean that the content of the book is appropriate.

Ages: many times when you look at the back of a book, you'll see that the book says Ages 8-12 or Ages 3+. This means that the content of the book is appropriate for this age range. It doesn't mean that the children will be able to read the words in the book independently.

So how do I know what reading level my reader is at? Most children (or their parents) will be able to tell you what level their child is reading at. In most schools, children's reading progress is communicated to children/parents either by Reading Level or Lexile. If you know the child's reading level and some of the things they're interested in, you're all set. If you know the lexile...let me explain.

Lexile: the lexile is the range of reading difficulty that the child is able to read. A lexile range correlates with a grade level (see table below). If you want to know if a book the correct difficulty for the child you can go to one of my favorite websites: <http://lexile.com>

Once here, you just type in the title of the book and 99% of the time, the book will come up with a lexile number. If that number is within the lexile range of your reader, the child should be able to read the words in the book.

Preschool-kindergarten: Lexile range = BR-200

1st grade: Lexile range = 200-370

6th grade: Lexile range = 880-1000

2nd grade: Lexile range = 360-490

7th grade : Lexile range = 950-1030

3rd grade: Lexile range = 450-670

8th grade : Lexile range = 1020-1100

4th grade : Lexile range = 630-800

9th grade: Lexile range = 1030-1120

5th grade : Lexile range = 790-930

10th grade: Lexile range = 1100-1200

Here are some of my favorite series for new readers. These books are written at the 2nd-4th grade reading levels:

Mysteries:

A to Z Mysteries by Ron Roy (lexile 350-610).

Calendar Mysteries by Ron Roy

Capital Mysteries by Ron Roy (lexile 540-630). RL3

Jack Stalwart Mysteries by Elizabeth Singer Hunt (these need to be ordered from Barnes and Noble or online. They can also be found in small bookstores)

Jigsaw Jones Mysteries by James Preller (lexile 280-450)

Magic Treehouse by Mary Pope Osborne (lexile 280-550)

Adventure:

Beast Quest by Adam Blade (lexile 620-730)

Flat Stanley by Jeff Brown (lexile 480-640)

This Side of Magic (for all the young Harry Potter fans): by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones

Percy Jackson series by Rick Riordan (lexile 590-740)

Humor:

Diary of a Wimpy Kid by Jeff Kinney (lexile 950-970)

Franny K. Stein by Jim Benton (lexile 610-750)

Horrible Harry by Suzy Klein (lexile 440-510)

Judy Moody by Megan McDonald (lexile 390-600)

Stink series (this is Judy Moody's little brother): by Megan McDonald and Peter H. Reynolds (lexile 610-740)

Favorite authors for this age group (I've included links to their websites and books):

Beverly Cleary <http://www.beverlycleary.com/books.aspx>

Andrew Clements <http://www.andrewclements.com/books.html>

Debbie Dadey <http://www.debbiedadey.com/Books/index.php>

Kate DiCamillo <http://www.katedicamillo.com/> (click on books at the bottom of the page to see her books)

Marcia Thornton Jones <http://www.marciatjones.com>

The Maud Hart Lovelace Award booklists (I've never read a book off of this list that I didn't truly enjoy : The Maud Hart Lovelace Book Award is a children's choice book award. Its purpose is to encourage recreational reading among school age children. <http://www.maudhartlovelace.org/pages/nominees.html>

Another great website to find books (I'm new to this website, but books are broken down into categories and have a picture of the cover and a short description. Looking for a book for your favorite preschooler? Click on Preschool read alouds. Trying to find something for a junior high boy? Click on Boys in Junior High)

<http://www.childrensliteraturenetwork.org/resource/readlist/readlist.php>

My all-time favorite website with everything you ever needed to know about reading:

<http://www.readingrockets.org/> I could spend days at this site getting titles of books, learning about new reading strategies, finding resources for reading and writing with children of all ages. It's a true gem!



I hope these resources are helpful to you!

Sincerely,

Laura Hanson

