

The
**CLASSICAL
READER**



A Comprehensive Reading Guide for
K–12 Students

Leslie Rayner and Dr. Christopher Perrin



Leslie Rayner and Dr. Christopher Perrin would like to acknowledge the many contributions to this list, which originated from the work of the Curriculum Committee of Covenant Christian Academy in Harrisburg, PA, during the ten years from 1997 to 2007.



*The Classical Reader: A Comprehensive
Reading Guide for K–12 Students*
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Preface

The Classical Reader has been designed to provide guidance and direction for the choosing, reading, and ultimately loving of worthy books, including those that have been deemed classics. In order to encourage a lifelong love of reading, we aim to develop in students, incrementally according to general age-appropriateness and personal reading levels, a taste for the best literature while exposing them to a variety of genres. *The Classical Reader* will also provide a handbook reference for tracking books read and adding newer recommendations, and will aid parents in choosing books to read aloud to their children.

At Classical Academic Press, our desire is not only for students to learn how to read well, but also to acquire a passion for reading. We aim to cultivate a lifelong love of reading excellent books that span generations and are worth reading over again. As C.S. Lewis said, “No book is really worth reading at the age of ten which is not equally and often far more worth reading at the age of fifty and beyond.” If we are going to read literature to our children, or pass along books to them, why not give them the best we have found? We hope that students and parents come to know and love some of the best authors and literature that exist and are then motivated to read more and build new areas of interest.

God is a Being who speaks and who has fashioned creatures who speak. Christ himself is called the “Word.” The Bible is filled with many kinds of literature—history, narrative, poetry, philosophy, parables, and letters. As speaking beings and as Christians, we wish to pass on this love of the Word (Scripture written to record His saving acts for our salvation, edification, and instruction) and choice literature to our children. As parents and teachers, we imagine and pray for many wonderful hours in which our children and students are transported by great worlds from great minds, so well chosen that they “awaken sensibility, great emotions, and understanding of truth.”¹

1. Gladys Hunt, *Honey for a Child's Heart*, Grand Rapids, MI, Zondervan, 1989, p. 14.

Ensnconced with great books, our children will travel to places that we cannot take them and to times we cannot go. Lives will be lived, loves lost and gained, battles fought and won. Truth, beauty, and goodness can be seen, held, and understood. Virtue can be taught and stoked. Empathy, understanding, conviction, courage, and compassion can all find strength and depth. As our children travel the world among the pages, we will find them not just entertained but one day made wise. The right book at the right time can change the course of a child's life. The right story, the right biography, can awaken an interest or calling that may serve the Church and culture, all through a well-chosen book.

Because a child's understanding and character can be shaped and influenced by what he reads, the books listed in this guide have been examined to ensure they are excellent examples of writing containing proper grammar and syntax, skillful language of various styles, vivid descriptions, and gripping narration and dialogue. Books that have been awarded the Newbery Medal (Honors for the runners-up) for the year's "most distinguished contribution to American Literature for Children" are noted on the lists. Many of the books contain appealing illustrations—an exposure to the world of fabulous art and a visual enhancement to the story. Caldecott Medals and Honors awarded to the artists/illustrators with the "most distinguished American picture book" are also noted on the lists.

We have searched for books that are generally wholesome and affirming to a Christian worldview, even when they may portray the realities of this world's brokenness and sin. Books with little or no redemptive value and books that contain patently offensive or sacrilegious language have been avoided. We have used these criteria for the selection of both classics and more recent publications. Some of the books selected for rhetoric students will require critical, Christian analysis as the themes will be more complex and mature.

Literary Objectives

The following information gleaned from *The Book Tree* is an overview of our literary objectives for each stage of grammar, dialectic, and rhetoric students:

Grammar Students (Grades K–6)

Beginning readers should be given character-building stories along with those that celebrate the joys of childhood. The plots should reward the good and punish the wicked and never condone or gloss over sinful behaviors. Authoritative figures (parents, teachers, pastors, etc.) may have flaws, but should be generally virtuous and depicted in a positive light. Children in this stage love animal adventure stories, mythology, Arthurian legends, fables, and tales of heroes (including those of our faith and American heritage).

Dialectic Students (Grades 7–9)

Students at this stage need to read books for reports and research as well as for pleasure. It is imperative to introduce them to a variety of excellent books that ensure the development of good literary taste. Their creative imaginations should be cultivated with well-written fantasies, thrillers, mysteries, science fiction, and narratives about growing up and coming of age. They should also be regularly reading biographies and historical fiction.

Rhetoric Students (Grades 10–12)

Tastes in this stage become more precise and refined. Once students find their reading niche, they should be directed to more excellent books within that niche, though not exclusively. Rhetoric students should be encouraged to read the best classic novels, plays, and poems. Students tend to relish these works earlier than we think. Reading these books will aid them in developing a “sharp intellect, an analytical mind, and a well-tuned sense of humor”² as well as provide them with vocabulary, figures of speech, quotes, and writing styles that they can emulate in their own writing and speaking.

The Classical Reader also exists as an online resource at ClassicalReader.com. There you will find the same list of books (regularly updated) that can also be sorted by author, genre, and reading level. There will also be an opportunity to engage in conversation with other readers of the great books on our list.

2. Ibid., p. 14.

We hope you will enjoy a lifelong odyssey exploring many of the best books ever written and engaging in the Great Conversation. We hope as well that this little publication will facilitate that journey.

Other Resources and Book Lists

Bloom, Jan. *Who Should We Then Read? Authors of Good Books for Children and Young Adults*. Cokato, MN: BooksBloom, 2001.

McCallum, Elizabeth, and Jane Scott. *The Book Tree: A Christian Reference for Children's Literature*, 2nd ed. Moscow, ID: Canon Press, 2008.

Hatcher, Carolyn. *Let the Authors Speak: A Guide to Worthy Books Based on Historical Setting*. Joelton, TN: Old Pinnacle Publishing, 1995.

Hunt, Gladys. *Honey for a Child's Heart*, rev. ed. Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2002.

Wilson, Elizabeth. *Books Children Love: A Guide to the Best Children's Literature*, rev. ed. Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books, 2002.

A Note on Poetry

Christine Perrin, MFA

Poetry has been described as “the best words in the best order” and as speech that is closest to song. We are all conscious of the fact that many resources of language are being used at once in poems, which is why they are like unto speech as espresso is to coffee. Similar to this densely concentrated form of coffee, poems are dense, rich, and full of exponential power. Hence, it is challenging to classify their level of difficulty, and learning to read them is a process that is enriched with every ounce of attention the reader pays to the poem in front of her as well as the attention that accumulates over years. Traditionally, the finest writers were called poets, and at one time there was no distinction between poetry and prose, narrative and song—they were wedded. This abundance is the reason we start students in kindergarten reading poems with bright, engaging illustrations, and why we make grade-level recommendations throughout their K–12 education.

We have used the Poetry for Young People Series for our K–6 recommendations. These include several anthologies but also entire picture books of individual poets who are essential to the inheritance of English-language speakers. Most of these poets read each other and wrote their poems on the backs of the poems they were reading. For students in seventh grade, we introduce a variety of anthologies of various sorts—the standard Norton Anthology (of several varieties) but also international anthologies, anthologies by topic, and other classifications. We introduce a single non-anthology—the works of contemporary poet Billy Collins—because he is universally accessible and we are hoping your students will have a wonderful encounter that sets them searching for more. Please note that you should use discretion when consulting these anthologies as they are broad and some will contain elements better suited to a particular age or stage of development. Like all wide collections, they vary in their propriety for your students. We think the exposure is well worth the return. While our

culture is inundated with cheap imagery and noise, here are carefully wrought images, silence, music, and argument. Do not be afraid of having students reread poems and go back to poets they have already encountered—poetry is well suited to repeated contact.

In the rhetoric stage we introduce a few more single-book poets who are classics in the English-language tradition and in the American tradition in particular. There is a particular pleasure and instruction that comes through the slim volume of poems written in a single voice which weaves a narrative over sixty or so pages. In addition, we have included a separate list of modern and contemporary recommendations (both UK and American) as its own section. Some of these voices students will have encountered in the anthologies and perhaps their appetites will have been whetted for more from this source. The anthologies are an excellent way for students to read broadly and to discover whose poems they would like to go in search of.

The poets included in this list were selected out of thousands that might have been chosen. We have tried to represent numerous schools, or styles, of poetry as well as other forms of variety. For students and teachers who would like to be instructed in the art of reading poetry carefully, well, and with pleasure, we recommend *The Art of Poetry* (available at ClassicalAcademicPress.com), which leads the reader through poetry's constituent elements and a history of its forms as well as the practices of a reader, or taster, of this honey. Another excellent resource is the superb website PoetryFoundation.org.

An embarrassment of riches awaits!

Key

Most classical schools divide grades into lower grammar (grades K–3), upper grammar (grades 4–6), dialectic (grades 7–9), and rhetoric (grades 10–12). Our reading list features recommended titles for students within each of these four groupings. The key below provides abbreviations for the level of difficulty within each grouping, the way the title can be used or read within each grouping, and the type of literature (genre) for each title listed.

Level (Lvl.)

The level section describes the approximate level of difficulty for each title within each grade grouping.

Level 1: easy

Level 2: average

Level 3: challenging

Notations (Not.)

The notations section describes the recommended ways in which the title can be used or read within a grade grouping.

TRA: Teacher reads aloud to student(s)

PaH: Pennsylvania history referenced¹

NM: Newbery Medalist

NH: Newbery Honor

CM: Caldecott Medalist

CH: Caldecott Honor

Genre (Gn.)

The genre section describes the kind, or genre, of literature for each title listed.

AB: Autobiography

Ad: Adventure (unlikely, exciting, and/or surprising stories)

1. In the lower grammar section, we have included some sample books for Pennsylvania (the authors' home state) history as examples for state history selections. Schools and families from other states will want to select literature appropriate to their own state.

B: Biography

D: Drama

F: Fiction

Fa: Fantasy/fables/fairy tales/myths/legends/allegory
(characters enter other worlds or are not human)

H: Historical (historical accounts)

HF: Historical fiction (realistic fiction set in a particular time
period)

M: Mystery

NF: Non-fiction

P: Poetry

Ph: Philosophy

RF: Realistic fiction (contains characters and situations
that could happen)

SF: Science fiction (contains gadgets, inventions, or imaginary
worlds)

Poetry

UKCP: United Kingdom classic poetry

UKMP: United Kingdom modern poetry
(modern = 1900–1950)

UKconP: United Kingdom contemporary poetry
(contemporary = 1950–present)

USCP: U.S. classic poetry

USMP: U.S. modern poetry

USconP: U.S. contemporary poetry

Kindergarten

Title	Author
Children's Book of Virtues, The (selections)	Bennett
Little Fur Family	Brown
Big Al	Clements
Freight Train	Crews
Ten Black Dots	Crews
Are You My Mother?	Eastman
Best Nest, The	Eastman
Go, Dog. Go!	Eastman
Gingerbread Boy, The	Galdone
Little Red Hen, The	Galdone
Three Bears, The	Galdone
Three Billy Goats Gruff, The	Galdone
Three Little Kittens	Galdone
Three Little Pigs, The	Galdone
Inside Mouse, Outside Mouse	George
Chickens Aren't the Only Ones	Heller
Bread and Jam for Francis	Hoban
Danny and the Dinosaur	Hoff
American Poetry (Poetry for Young People Series)	Hollander
Animal Poems (Poetry for Young People Series)	Hollander
Big Alfie and Annie Rose Storybook, The	Hughes
Dogger	Hughes
There Once was a Puffin	Jaques
Round Trip	Jonas
Biggest House in the World, The (and others by author)	Lionni
Inch by Inch	Lionni
Chicka Chicka Boom Boom	Martin
Wait and See	Munsch
Little Engine That Could, The	Piper
Tale of Peter Rabbit, The (and others by author)	Potter

Lower Grammar

Title	Author/ Ed./Illus.	Gn.	Not.	Lvl.	✓
Aesop for Children, The (selections)	Aesop	Fa	TRA	3	
Corn Is Maize	Aliki	F		2	
Story of William Penn, The	Aliki	B/H	TRA, PaH	1	
Miss Nelson Is Missing! (+ sequels)	Allard	F		2	
An Amish Year	Ammon	HF	TRA, PaH	2	
Amish Horses	Ammon	HF	TRA, PaH	2	
Emperor's New Clothes, The	Andersen	Fa		2	
Andersen's Fairy Tales (selections)	Andersen	Fa	TRA	3	
Ugly Duckling, The	Andersen	Fa		3	
Steadfast Tin Soldier, The	Andersen/ Brown	Fa	CH	2	
Billy and Blaze (+ Blaze sequels)	Anderson	Ad		2	
Ancient Egypt (History Detectives)	Ardagh	HF		2	
Mr. Popper's Penguins	Atwater	F	NH	2	
Edgar Allan Poe (Poetry for Young People Series)	Bagert	P		3	
Adventures in Ancient Egypt	Bailey	HF		2	
Big Book of Brambly Hedge, The	Barklem	F		2	
Little Rabbit's Loose Tooth (+ any in series)	Bate	F		1	
Big Snow	Bean	F		1	
Building our House	Bean	RF/B		1	
Madeline (+ any in series)	Bemelmans	RF	CH	1	
Madeline's Rescue	Bemelmans	F	CM	1	
George: The Drummer Boy	Benchley	HF		1	
Sam: The Minute Man	Benchley	HF		1	
Emily Dickinson (Poetry for Young People Series)	Bolin	P		2	

Upper Grammar

Title	Author/ Ed./Illus.	Gn.	Not.	Lvl.	✓
Watership Down	Adams	F		3	
Old-Fashioned Girl, An	Alcott	RF		3	
Eight Cousins	Alcott	RF		3	
Little Men	Alcott	RF		3	
Little Women	Alcott	HF/RF		3	
Black Cauldron, The (The Chronicles of Prydain, Book 2)	Alexander	Fa	NH	2	
Book of Three, The (The Chronicles of Prydain, Book 1)	Alexander	Fa		2	
Castle of Llyr, The (The Chronicles of Prydain, Book 3)	Alexander	Fa		2	
High King, The (The Chronicles of Prydain, Book 5)	Alexander	Fa	NM	2	
Taran Wanderer (The Chronicles of Prydain, Book 4)	Alexander	Fa		2	
William Shakespeare & the Globe	Aliki	H/B		1	
William Butler Yeats (Poetry for Young Readers)	Allison	P		2	
Three Visitors to Early Plymouth	Altham/ Pory/de Rasieres	H/NF		3	
Night Gardener, The	Auxier	Fa		3	
Crispin: The Cross of Lead (medieval England)	Avi	HF	NM	3	
Iron Thunder (Civil War)	Avi	HF		3	
Parallel Journeys	Ayer	H/B		3	
Coral Island, The	Ballantyne	Ad		2	
Meet Thomas Jefferson (Landmark Books)	Barrett	B/H		2	
Twenty and Ten (WW II)	Bishop	H		1	
Shakespeare Stealer, The (Book 1)	Blackwood	HF		3	
Shakespeare's Scribe (Book 2)	Blackwood	HF		3	

Dialectic

Title	Author/Ed.	Gn.	Not.	Lvl.	✓
Eight Cousins	Alcott	RF		1	
Jo's Boys	Alcott	RF		1	
Little Men	Alcott	RF		1	
Little Women	Alcott	RF		1	
King's Shadow, The (11th century Britain)	Alder	HF		1	
Story of a Bad Boy, The	Aldrich	AB/Ad		1	
Iron Ring, The (ancient India)	Alexander	HF		1	
Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther	Bainton	B		3	
Life of John Calvin, The	Beza	B		3	
Making of a Poem: A Norton Anthology of Poetic Forms, The	Boland/ Strand	P		2	
Good Earth, The (1920s, China)	Buck	HF		2	
Last Days of Pompeii, The	Bulwer- Lytton	HF		3	
Summer of the Swans, The	Byars	F	NM	1	
O Pioneers! (American frontier)	Cather	HF		1	
Canterbury Tales, The (selections) (Norton)	Chaucer	Fa		3	
Complete Father Brown Stories, The	Chesterton	M		2	
Sailing Alone Around the Room	Collins	P		2	
Six American Poets	Conarroe	P/B		2	
Little Prince, The	de Saint- Exupery	SF		1	
Robinson Crusoe	Defoe	F/Ad		2	
David Copperfield	Dickens	RF		3	
Oliver Twist	Dickens	RF		3	
Looking for the King: An Inkleling's Novel	Downing	HF/M/ Ad		3	
Adventures of Sherlock Holmes, The	Doyle	M		1	
Hound of the Baskervilles, The	Doyle	M/Ad		1	
Three Musketeers, The	Dumas	RF/Ad		2	
Murder in the Cathedral	Eliot	P/B		3	

Rhetoric

Title	Author/Ed.	Gn.	Not.	Lvl.	✓
Confessions	Augustine	AB		2	
Emma	Austen	RF		1	
Persuasion	Austen	RF		1	
Pride and Prejudice	Austen	RF		1	
Sense and Sensibility	Austen	RF		1	
Here I Stand: A Life of Martin Luther	Bainton	B		2	
Journals of Lewis and Clark, The	Bakeless	H/B		2	
Waiting for Godot	Beckett	D		3	
Lorna Doone	Blackmore	F		3	
Rag and Bone Shop of the Heart: A Poetry Anthology, The	Bly/Hillman/ Meade	P		2	
Fahrenheit 451	Bradbury	SF		2	
Martian Chronicles, The	Bradbury	SF		2	
Of Plymouth Plantation	Bradford	H/AB		3	
Jane Eyre	Bronte	RF		1	
Villette	Bronte	RF		3	
Wuthering Heights	Bronte	RF		2	
God's Smuggler	Brother Andrew	AB		2	
Greenmantle	Buchan	F/Ad		1	
Thirty-Nine Steps, The	Buchan	F/Ad		1	
Pilgrim's Progress	Bunyan	Fa		1	
Alice in Wonderland	Carroll	Fa		1	
Death Comes for the Archbishop	Cather	RF/HF		3	
My Antonia	Cather	RF/HF		2	
Don Quixote de la Mancha (abridged)	Cervantes	F		2	
Witness	Chambers	NF/AB		3	
Canterbury Tales, The (selections)	Chaucer	P		3	
Everlasting Man, The	Chesterton	NF		3	
Man Who Was Thursday, The	Chesterton	F/Ad		3	
Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The	Coleridge	P		1	

Poetry

Title	Author/Ed.	Gn.	✓
Complete Works of W.H. Auden, The	Auden	USCP	
Selected Poems of Wendell Berry, The	Berry	USconP	
Elizabeth Bishop: The Complete Poems 1927–1979	Bishop	USMP	
William Blake: The Complete Poems	Blake	UKCP	
Outside History: Selected Poems 1980–1990	Boland	USconP	
Selected Poems (Gwendolyn Brooks)	Brooks	USCP	
Gift Songs	Burnside	USconP	
Philokalia: New and Selected Poems	Cairns	USconP	
Ledge, The	Collier	USconP	
Tunnel: Selected Poems, The	Edson	USconP	
T.S. Eliot: Collected Poems 1909–1962	Eliot	USCP	
Art of the Lathe, The	Fairchild	USconP	
Gods of Winter, The	Gioia	USconP	
Wild Iris, The	Gluck	USconP	
Thomas Hardy: The Complete Poems	Hardy	UKCP	
Dear John, Dear Coltrane	Harper	USconP	
Praise	Hass	USconP	
Opened Ground: Selected Poems 1966–1996	Heaney	UKconP	
Complete Poems of John Keats, The	Keats	UKCP	
Book of Nightmares, The	Kinnell	USconP	
Life in the forest	Levertov	USMP	
City in Which I Love You, The	Li	USconP	
New and Collected Poems: 1931–2001	Milosz	USconP	
American Primitive	Oliver	USconP	
Poems of Wilfred Owen, The	Owen	UKCP	
Summer Celestial: Poems	Plumly	USconP	
Collected Poems of Theodore Roethke, The	Roethke	USMP	
Complete Works of Alfred Lord Tennyson, The	Tennyson	UKCP	

Learning More about Classical Education

Key for This Section:

Hi: History

Int: Introduction

Ph: Philosophy

Pr: Practice

Title	Author/Ed.	Gn.	Lvl.	✓
Norms & Nobility: A Treatise on Education	Hicks	Ph	3	
Beauty for Truth's Sake: On the Re-enchantment of Education	Caldecott	Ph	2	
Desiring the Kingdom: Worship, Worldview, and Cultural Formation	Smith	Ph	2	
The Intellectual Life: Its Spirit, Conditions, Methods	Sertillanges	Ph	2	
The Great Tradition: Classic Readings on What It Means to Be an Educated Human Being	Gamble	Hi	2	
Leisure: The Basis of Culture	Pieper	Ph	2	
The Abolition of Man	Lewis	Ph	3	
The Republic	Plato	Ph	2	
Rediscovering the Lost Tools of Learning	Wilson	Ph	1	
The Liberal Arts Tradition: A Philosophy of Christian Classical Education	Clark/Jain	Ph	2	
Wisdom and Eloquence: A Christian Paradigm for Classical Learning	Evans/Littlejohn	In, Pr	2	
An Introduction to Classical Education: A Guide for Parents	Perrin	In	1	
Awakening Wonder: A Classical Guide to Truth, Goodness & Beauty	Turley	Ph	3	
Plato: The Great Philosopher-Educator	Diener	Ph	2	
C. S. Lewis: An Apologist for Education	Markos	Ph	2	