



The world through picture books: U. S. librarians' choices

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Session:

99 — *Picture books in libraries now!* — Libraries for Children and Young Adults

Abstract:

Working through the American Library Association (ALA) and the United States national section of the International Board on Books for Young People (USBBY) the Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) representatives to the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) posted an on-line survey to which members of ALSC USBBY or other children's literature list serves could respond. Over the course of approximately two months, 171 individuals participated through the survey. There were 779 individual books named. Of those books 296 were unique titles and 483 were multiple-vote titles. There were comments both informative and insightful about most of the choices.

The United States members of IFLA and IBBY, represented by Barbara Genco (YALSA) and Linda M. Pavonetti (ALSC and IBBY), created a survey for ALSC and USBBY members in conjunction with the IFLA Libraries for Children and Young Adults section. The goal of our survey parallels that which members from other nations have been researching: What books do librarians believe are essential as read aloud offerings?

In order to select the ten books recommended by a sample of American librarians, we posted a series of questions on Survey Monkey, which was administered by ALSC. All members of the ALSC list serve were invited to participate. Additionally, other list serves devoted to literature for children were also provided access, as were members of USBBY. The survey was posted on-line during October and November 2011.

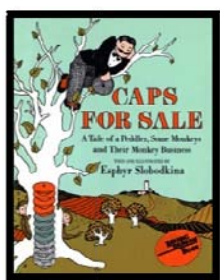
Altogether, there were 171 participants. Only those books submitted through the on-line survey were counted. There were 779 individual books named, including books that were cited multiple times. Of those books, 296 were unique titles and 483 were multiple-vote titles. There were comments—both informative and insightful—about most of the choices.

Table 1

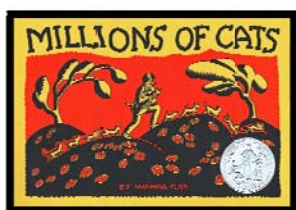
Rank Order of US Librarians' Favorite Read Aloud Books (2011)

	Author	Illus.	Title	Pub.Date	Publisher	Votes
1	Maurice Sendak	the author	<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	1963	Harper & Row	31
2	Eric Carle	the author	<i>Very Hungry Caterpillar The</i>	1969	Philomel Books	28
3	Mo Willems	the author	<i>Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus</i>	2003	Hyperion	24
4	Bill Martin Jr	Eric Carle	<i>Brown Bear Brown Bear What Do You See?</i>	1967	Henry Holt	17
5	Jules Feiffer	the author	<i>Bark George</i>	1999	HarperCollins	15
6	Ezra Jack Keats	the author	<i>Snowy Day The</i>	1962	Viking	15
7	Margaret Wise Brown	Clement Hurd	<i>Goodnight Moon</i>	1947	Harper	13
8	Ed Emberley	the author	<i>Go Away Big Green Monster</i>	1992	Little Brown	11
9	Eric Litwin	James Dean	<i>Pete the Cat</i>	2010	HarperCollins	11
10	Wag Gág	the author	<i>Millions of Cats</i>	1928	Coward-McCann	10
11	Esphyr Slobodkina	the author	<i>Caps for Sale</i>	1940	W. R. Scott/HarperCollins	9

We disqualified one book, *Pete the Cat* by Eric Litwin and James Dean, because it did not meet the endurance criterion—it was published too recently to be considered a persistent favorite. This moved *Caps for Sale* into tenth place.



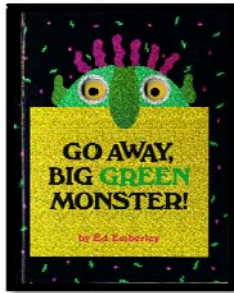
Utilizing a familiar phrase—“monkey see, monkey do”—Esphyr Slobodkina, a fine artist and graphic designer, created this clever read-aloud from an old folk tale and imbued the illustrations with sly humor. It has been an American picture book favorite for over 60 years.



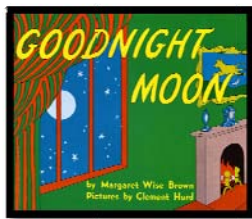
Number 9: Hand-lettered text and strong, curvilinear drawings combine to tell the story of a lonely couple, searching for a cat.

The repetitive, rhythmic phrasing entices children to join in the telling: "...hundreds of cats, thousands of cats, millions and billions and trillions of cats..." *Millions of Cats*, a 1929 Newbery Honor book, is considered to be one of America's first modern picture books.

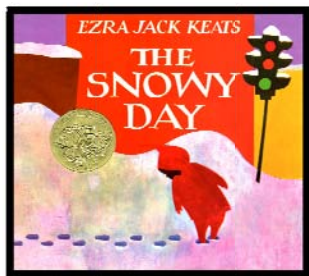
Choice 8 is one of two non-classic read-aloud books on our list.



Nonetheless, the topic—confronting nighttime fears—is as integral to childhood as scraped knees. Caldecott-winning artist Ed Emberley adds and subtracts all of the monster's frighteningly florescent features until the reader finally proclaims, "DON'T COME BACK! Until I say so."



Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown and illustrated by Clement Hurd is ranked number seven in our survey. Although the book was initially rejected by the library world (The New York Public Library declined to purchase it until 1973), *Goodnight Moon* has become one of the best-selling American picture books of all time.

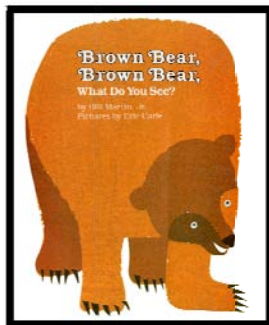


Number 6 on the list is *The Snowy Day*. With this book, Ezra Jack Keats integrated multi-racial characters into the previously all-white world of American picture books. Keats is acclaimed for his bold and brilliant mixed media art (watercolor, gouache, collage) as well as his impassioned humanism. *The Snowy Day*, winner of the 1963 Caldecott Medal, thrills readers as much today as it did when it was first published.



Bark, George, by Jules Feiffer, is fifth on our list. George's mother is exasperated when he refuses to bark like a good little dog. George quacks. He oinks. He moos! Finally, Mama

escorts George to a resourceful vet who reaches deep down inside the errant pup, and pulls out a barnyard of animals. Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist Feiffer's pen and ink line drawings on pastel paper reinforce and expand the humorous text.



Number 4 on our list, *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?*, by Bill Martin, Jr. and Eric Carle, is deceptively simple. The repetitive, clearly patterned, and predictable question-and-answer text encourages children to participate by reading along. Carle's vivid tissue paper collages add to the book's playfulness.

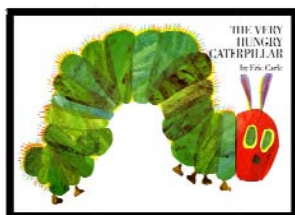
Book 3, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, is an ingeniously simple story that instantly



connects with a child's worldview. Funny and exciting by turns, the child-centric text is perfectly matched to the spare yet expressive line drawings and understated, earth-toned palette.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! was a 2004 Caldecott Honor

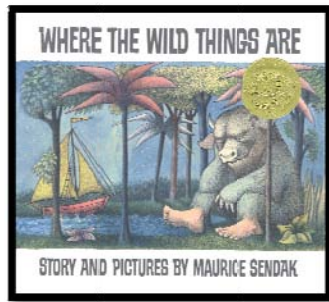
Winner.



The second place book, *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*, follows the progress of a hungry little caterpillar as he eats his way through

an enormous hodgepodge of food until, full at last, he forms a chrysalis and goes to sleep.

This book has been translated into over 50 languages and has become a favorite worldwide.



Published nearly 50 years ago, *Where the Wild Things Are*

remains one of America's most enduring picture books. It is an

irresistible and simple story: after he is sent to bed without

supper for behaving like a wild thing, Max dreams of a voyage

to the island where the wild things are. By journey's end, he

finds himself safe at home with his supper waiting. This book has been honored with some

of the most significant awards in children's publishing, including the 1964 Caldecott Medal.

Author-illustrator Maurice Sendak, who passed away in May, 2012, received the Hans

Christian Andersen and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Awards.

Many of the books on our list are old favorites that are popular around the world.

When we compared this current survey to previous polls of librarians, critics, bloggers, and

children's literature specialists, we found that American read-aloud preferences have

remained relatively consistent. In 2008, *School Library Journal* columnist Elizabeth Bird

published her poll of favorite books. The only book on our list that did not appear in the top

30 percent of hers was Ed Emberley's *Go Away Big Green Monster* (Little Brown, 1992).

Numerous books are temporary favorites but for the most part, librarians prefer fiction to

nonfiction, picture books to longer novels, and classics to newly published books.

Table 2

2008 Ranking Compared to 2011 Ranking

Rank in IFLA Survey	Title	Rank in 2008 Survey
10.	<i>Caps for Sale</i>	(17)
9.	<i>Millions of Cats</i>	(9)
8.	<i>Go Away Big Green Monster</i>	(100)
7.	<i>Goodnight Moon</i>	(2)
6.	<i>The Snowy Day</i>	(4)
5.	<i>Bark George</i>	(21)
4.	<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i>	(30)
3.	<i>Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus</i>	(5)
2.	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	(3)
1.	<i>Where the Wild Things Are</i>	(1)

Appendix A

Additional Books Recommended by U.S. Librarians

Table 3

Rank Order of US Librarians' Favorite Read Aloud Books Receiving Five or More Votes (2011)

Rank	Author	Illustrator	Title	Pub. Date	Publisher	Votes
12	Laura Numeroff	Felicia Bond	<i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i>	1985	Harper Collins/Laura Geringer Books	9
13	Mo Willems	the author	<i>Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale</i>	2004	Hyperion	9
14	Karen Beaumont	David Catrow	<i>I Ain't Gonna Paint No More</i>	2005	Harcourt	8
15	Robert McCloskey	the author	<i>Make Way for Ducklings</i>	1941	Viking/Penguin	8
16	Bill Martin Jr. & John Archambault	Lois Ehler	<i>Chicka Chicka Boom Boom</i>	1989	Simon & Schuster	7
17	Kevin Henkes	the author	<i>Kitten's First Full Moon</i>	2004	Greenwillow Books	7
18	Jan Thomas	the author	<i>Rhyming Dust Bunnies</i>	2009	Simon & Schuster/Atheneum	7
19	Karma Wilson	Jane Chapman	<i>Bear Snores On</i>	2002	Simon & Schuster/Margaret K McElderry Books	6
20	Robert McCloskey	the author	<i>Blueberries for Sal</i>	1949	Viking/Penguin	6
21	Don Freeman	the author	<i>Corduroy</i>	1968	Viking/Penguin	6
22	David Shannon	the author	<i>Duck on a Bike</i>	2002	Scholastic/Blue Sky Press	6
23	Aesop	Jerry Pinkney	<i>The Lion & the Mouse</i>	2009	Little Brown	6
24	David Shannon	the author	<i>No, David!</i>	1998	Scholastic/Blue Sky Press	6
25	William Steig	the author	<i>Sylvester and the Magic Pebble</i>	1969	Simon & Schuster	6
26	Tomie dePaola	the author	<i>Strega Nona</i>	1975	Philomel	5
27	David Wiesner	the author	<i>Tuesday</i>	1991	Clarion Books	5

Appendix B

Letter Introducing the Survey

Dear Colleagues—We invite you to take a few minutes to jot down the top five (5) children's picture book titles, which you enjoy sharing with children, that have been created and published in the United States.

After all titles have been submitted, we will rank order the nominations and submit them as the United States' top ten list to the IFLA Libraries for Children and Young Adults Committee. Act soon! The survey closes in about two weeks.

Aim of the Project: To create a list of picture books from around the world that have been selected and recommended by librarians. These can then be used:

- ✓ As a way of celebrating and promoting the language, culture and quality of children's book publishing from each country
- ✓ By countries wishing to purchase books from other countries and are looking for 'favorite' titles to help build and develop their collections
- ✓ By "Sister Libraries" as a way of exploring the children's literature of their "Sister Library" country <http://www.ifla.org/en/news/videos-by-sister-libraries>
- ✓ As an opportunity to encourage interaction and growth within IFLA
- ✓ To develop the list into an exhibition with supporting catalogue that can be exhibited at the IBBY and IFLA conferences in 2012

CRITERIA: THE BOOKS SHOULD

- ✓ have been **published first in the United States**
- ✓ have been **written originally in English**
- ✓ **be in print (and therefore available for purchase)**
- ✓ be excellent for reading aloud to and with children
- ✓ be suitable for any age between 0 – 11 years
- ✓ have or will last the test of time
- ✓ represent the best in picture books of the United States
- ✓ be of good quality and a high standard of publishing
- ✓ have text and illustrations that work well together
- ✓ reflect a positive message

START THE SURVEY HERE: <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/RRF23LP>

Many thanks!

Linda M. Pavonetti, IBBY Vice President and ALSC Representative to the IFLA Literacy and Reading section

Barbara Genco, ALA Representative to the IFLA Libraries for Children and Young Adults Section

PS: Please feel free to share the link!