

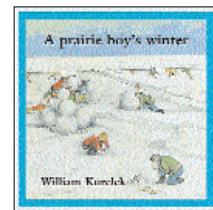
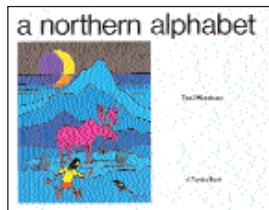
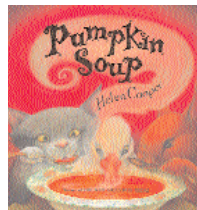
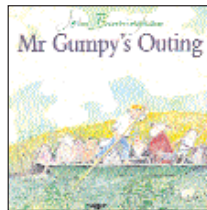


Vancouver Kidsbooks, winner of the 2003 Libris Award for Specialty Bookseller of the Year

PHOTO: TANIA COLINA

TOP TEN kids' books

from toddlers to teens by Phyllis Simon, Vancouver Kidsbooks



It is not uncommon to find both publishers and booksellers fixated on the new releases. This is understandable, since we all get very excited about reading and discussing the hot new books each season. But this concentration on new titles can translate into forgetting the gems of previous seasons, even years. This will not do! What follows is a trip down memory lane as we revisit some wonderful children's books of the past.

STARTING WITH PICTURE BOOKS, the pinnacle of a child's listening and looking pleasure, we must pay homage to one of the best-ever stories in the entire canon: *Mr. Gumpy's Outing* (1970). This simple story serves as an introduction to humour, to language brimming with vitality and to a satisfying story of a pleasant outing down the river that goes slightly astray. *Pumpkin Soup* (1998) is aimed at a slightly older preschooler who can follow the intricacies of a sophisticated story, revel in the beautifully rich tones of the autumn palette of colours used in the illustrations, and learn a few valuable (though not heavy-handed) lessons about sharing and co-operation.

Taken as a group, the next three titles from Tundra Books demonstrate the brilliance of May Cutler's remarkable achievement as founding publisher of one of Canada's most prestigious houses. Her mission, to publish outstanding children's books that could also be seen as works of art, is exemplified in *A Northern Alphabet* (1982), *I Want a Dog* (1987) and *A Prairie Boy's Winter* (1973). *A Northern Alphabet* combines brilliant artwork with a concept that Tundra Books went on to use in a series of alphabet books set in different regions of Canada. *I Want a Dog* cheerfully follows the exploits of a young girl who finds a creative way to convince her parents that she is responsible enough to

TOP TEN KIDS' BOOKS

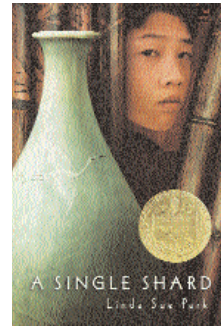
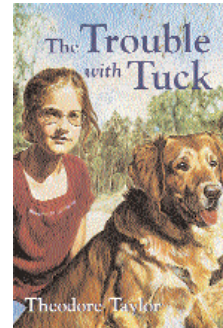
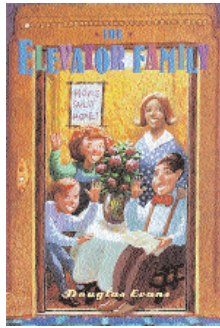
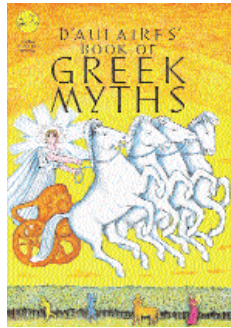
take care of a pet. *A Prairie Boy's Winter* and its companion *A Prairie Boy's Summer* are glimpses into the joys of childhood adventure on the prairies with paintings by one of Canada's greatest artists. What a grand opportunity for children to learn about our past!

D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths (1962) is a classic. It manages to tell the stories of the Greek myths in language that is both sophisticated and clear while staying true to the passion and drama of these ancient stories.

The books in the next group, the novels—or as kids like to call them, chapter books—are vital to children's development as lifelong readers. Here's where the love of reading really gets a kickstart, provided children can find enough to read that is both interesting to them and of an appropriate reading level. *The Elevator Family* (2000) is an early chapter book that is full of humour and plot nuance. What child can resist a story about a family who install

themselves in the only available room at the hotel: the elevator, or as they call it, the Otis Room! *Three Tales of My Father's Dragon* (1998) is a handsome anthology comprising three delightful stories originally published in 1948. The satisfying adventure of Elmer the boy and Boris the dragon is an exciting story that works either as a read-aloud or as a first reading experience. *The Trouble with Tuck* (1981) is a must-read for any dog-lover. This true story of a girl's ingenious solution that enables her blind dog to "see" is inspirational. *A Single Shard* (2001), winner of the 2002 Newbery medal, gives readers an opportunity to learn about twelfth-century Korea and the exquisite celadon pottery of that era, through the story of a young lad's journey to maturity and wisdom.

And here comes the real secret about these great books: they are not just for children. Adults can enjoy reading them with or without a child at their side! ■



A CLASSIC IN THE MAKING by Lahring Tribe

Finding a dragon egg can change your whole life! Eragon, a poor farm boy, hoped he could trade the jewel-like stone for enough meat to feed his family for the winter. But when the brilliant blue Saphira emerges, Eragon is thrust into a new world of destiny, magic and power. Accompanied on his quest by Brom the Storyteller, Eragon learns what it means to be a Dragon Rider as he duels the evil King Galbatorix and his minions.

Christopher Paolini wrote and successfully self-published this classical fantasy with the help of his family after he graduated from high school at fifteen. Carl Hiaasen's stepson acquired a copy while on vacation and was so enthusiastic that Hiaasen told his editor about the book. Now nineteen, Christopher is currently at work on the second volume in the Inheritance trilogy, *Eldest*.