

**Looking for gift ideas for children? Try some of these suggestions
offered by our Youth Services Librarian, Bernie Alie!**

Bernie has organized them by reading level rather than grade levels, as children learn to read at such varying rates. She's added suggested grade levels only when she felt it necessary to alert you to potential teen items.

Family Books

Moo by David LaRochelle. Read this one aloud with lots of expression for a family giggle fest!

Small Blue and the Deep Dark Night by Jon Davis. A comforting story reframes Small Blue's nighttime fears with the possibilities of a doggie Saturday-night unicycle convention or a retired-pirates' annual sock-knitting jamboree!

Odd One Out: A Spotting Book by Britta Teckentrup. Full page art looks filled with all the same animal, but look closer and find the one that has something different. Give this to fans of seek-and-find titles such as the *I Spy* books and *Where's Waldo*.

E-i-e-i-o: How Old MacDonald Got His Farm by Judy Sierra. What starts as a suburban lawn is transformed into an organic garden with a little help from the usual suspects.

Froodle by Antoinette Portis. What happens when Little Brown Bird begins to sing a different tune? Silly rhyming words provide humor for both reader and listeners.

Mr. Wuffles by David Wiesner. A mostly wordless picture book/graphic novel. Mr Wuffles displays all of the aloofness and craziness that cat owners will recognize, but aliens provide the reason why. Although this has the appearance of a picture book for young children, because of the details in the illustrated story, older readers may get the most from it. I'm hard pressed to choose a favorite between this one and *Binky the Space Cat*!

New Readers

Mo Willems. In my humble opinion, Mo Willems is the new Dr. Seuss. His *Elephant and Piggie* series are hilarious for both adults and beginning readers. He uses simple language and expressive illustrations to help new readers decipher the story. I recommend any of his titles; his most recent is *Waiting Is Not Easy*.

Cats are Cats by Valeri Gorbachev. Miss Bell's new kitten grows to resemble another feline...

Binky the Space Cat by Ashley Spires. Still one of my favorite graphic novels! Binky's determination to protect his humans from aliens leads him to join F.U.R.S.T. (Felines of the Universe Ready for Space Travel). Illustrated panels are filled with visual gags that new readers can easily follow. Anyone who has ever loved a cat will recognize Binky's worldview.

Bathing Costume: or the worst vacation of my life by Charlotte Moundlic. Ronnie writes letters to his mother chronicling his first summer away from home, staying with his grandparents and cousins. It is a hilarious tale of rambunctious boys and the dangers of hand-me-downs.

Boris series by Andrew Joyner. Friendship stories featuring two boys and one smart girl. Large, colorful illustrations, minimal text and speech bubbles will help children new to chapter books be successful with reading. Each title has a simple craft or activity that ties in to the story.

Down Girl and Sit series by Lucy Nolan. This is another series that I frequently recommend to readers new to chapter books. Down Girl and Sit are two dogs living in neighboring houses. They think those are their names because that's what they hear all the time. The stories are told from their point of view as they try to train their masters and encounter squirrels and the dangerous Here Kitty Kitty.

Stronger Readers

Game Over, Pete Watson by Joe Schreiber. This playful romp of a story has Pete trying to rescue his father who has been abducted into a video game, and stretching his gaming skills beyond his wildest imaginings to save the world. Short, funny chapters and illustrations that add to the text will assist struggling readers.

A Hundred Horses by Sarah Lean. Can the love of a horse save a child? Two unhappy loners tentatively reach towards friendship when Nell goes to stay with her aunt and cousins during school vacation.

The Abominables by Eva Ibbotson. A witty farewell from a beloved author has civilized yetis traveling to England to avoid discovery. However, what was thought to be a safe haven has changed drastically. Ibbotson's last book was completed by her son and editor after her death.

Saranormal series by Phoebe Rivers. Sara's ability to see and hear ghosts makes for some troubling interactions, but really this is a series about a new girl making good friends when she moves across the country to New Jersey.

The Ash Mistry series by Sarwat Chadda will appeal to fans of Rick Riordan. Only the first two titles, *Savage Fortress* and *City of Death*, have been released in the U.S. so far. Characters from Hindu mythology play a key role as Ash becomes transformed into the superhero Rama who is an avatar of Vishnu.

Older Readers

Voices from the March on Washington by J. Patrick Lewis and George Ella Lyon. Grades 4-12 Told in multiple voices, Lewis and Lyon present fictionalized characters at the 1963 March on Washington. Going beyond the well-known speech of Martin Luther King Jr., we glimpse the dreams and frustrations that led people from across the nation to gather in the hopes of transforming the country. Black and white, young and old are moved by the voices they hear and their interactions with the crowd.

Girls Like Us by Gail Giles. Grades 8 and up. Quincy and Bidy, recently graduated from high school, find housing together with the help of the school counselor. Although perceiving themselves as worlds apart, the girls discover that leaning on one another helps to make the world tolerable. The story is told in two voices, each with her own unique vernacular dialect. Each is believable, and provides clues into the reality faced by special education students aging out of the education system. This is not your typical unlikely friendship story, as these are voices not often heard in teen literature.

Language Inside by Holly Thompson. Grades 6-12. Emma has been raised in Japan since infancy. The family returns to the US shortly after the 2011 earthquake and tsunami for her mother's cancer treatment. Emma feels disorientated, but no one suspects. The novel in verse format whittles the prose to the bare essence of beauty without skimming on the story.

Gorgeous by Paul Rudnick. Grades 9-12. Just as the Sisterhood of Travelling Pants featured a magical pair of pants that fit four different body types, this humorous romp has a magical dress that transforms Becky into Rebecca, and gets her noticed as the most beautiful woman in the world. However, magic spells come with a curse, and Rebecca has one year to fall in love and get married. References to celebrity culture, British royalty and fashion ring true.

Two Girls Staring at the Ceiling by Lucy Frank. Grades 8 and up. This will appeal to sensitive readers open to seeing another view of life. Two girls hospitalized with Crohn's disease both speak in this unique novel. Shannon rails against the disease and those whose job it is to help her. Chess' meekness belies her denial and her struggle to accept herself while warring with her body. We get an inside look at the horror of treatment as well as the social implications, for how will friends and first loves respond to the diagnosis of this illness? Told in verse.

Non-Fiction

Scientists in the Field (various authors). I have been impressed by each title in the *Scientists in the Field* series that I have read. Each personalizes the work of researchers, bringing their work to life. Included are a wide range of topics to appeal to a variety of readers. Recent titles include:

- * *Beetle Busters: A Rogue Insect and the People Who Track It* by Loree Griffin Burns
- * *The Next Wave: the Quest to Harness the Power of the Oceans* by Elizabeth Rusch
- * *Chasing Cheetahs: the Race to Save Africa's Fastest Cats* by Sy Montgomery
- * *Sea Turtle Scientist* by Stephen Swinburne
- * *The Dolphins of Shark Bay* by Pamela Turner
- * *Eruption! Volcanoes and the Science of Saving Lives* by Elizabeth Rusch
- * *The Mighty Mars Rovers: the Incredible Adventures of Spirit and Opportunity* by Elizabeth Rusch

Electrical Wizard: How Nikola Tesla Lit up the World by Elizabeth Rusch, Although it is Edison & Marconi who got the fame, it was Tesla who gave us the electrical capability for our world as we know it. The size & picture book layout suggest a younger audience, but back matter is geared to older students.

We've seen a lot of interest in learning more about Greek mythology from children first introduced to it via Rick Riordan's *Percy Jackson* series. If your child likes Percy Jackson, suggest Riordan's recently released nonfiction title *Percy Jackson's Greek Gods*. In *Hades Speaks* by Vicky Alvear Shecter, Hades himself offers a tour of the underworld with a humorous introduction to Greek mythology. Or try the *Olympians* graphic novels by George O'Connor. O'Connor's series retells stories from Greek mythology in graphic novel format and each includes a family tree of the Olympian gods and goddesses. Titles include: *Zeus: King of the Gods*, *Athena: Grey-Eyed Goddess*, *Hera: the Goddess and Her Glory*, *Hades: Lord of the Dead*, *Poseidon: Earth Shaker*, and *Aphrodite: Goddess of Love*.