

FAMILY READING LIST 2015

1. The Hundred Dresses by Eleanor Estes (Newberry Honor book 1944). She also wrote *The Moffats* and *Ginger Pye* (which won a Newberry medal). Wanda wears the same faded blue dress to school every day, yet says she has one hundred beautiful dresses at home "all lined up." Wanda is teased every day by a group of girls - who don't believe her. One girl, Maggie, wonders if she can ever summon the courage to stand up for Wanda. When Wanda doesn't come to school one day, they learn the truth about the hundred dresses. And about kindness and the golden rule. This might seem like a book for girls but its lesson of compassion and non-judgement is incredibly touching. A universal message that should be read by every school-age child.

2. The Family Under the Bridge by Natalie Savage Carlson (Newberry Honor book 1958). Armand is an old homeless man who lives under a bridge in Paris. He begs and does odd jobs to stay warm and fed, but likes his carefree life. Then a mother with her three children find themselves homeless and invade his territory under the bridge. He tries not to let them into his heart and life, but when the mother leaves the children to find food and work during the day, he can't help but care for them. Eventually he wants to make their wish for a real home come true. "It isn't walls and furniture that make a home, it's the family."

3. The BFG by Roald Dahl (1982). Roald Dahl is a master storyteller. Other books by him: *Matilda*, *James and the Giant Peach*, *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory*. But the "Big Friendly Giant" is our favorite. The BFG is no ordinary bone-crunching giant. He doesn't eat children like the other giants do. Which is lucky for Sophie, who spies him lumbering through her town one night. He takes Sophie home with her. When she realizes the other giants are "flush-bunking" off to England to "swollomp" a few little "chiddlers" she decides she has to stop them. And the BFG decides he'll help her. It's the play on language and words, like "froboscottle, whizpoppers, and redunculous," that make this book so hilariously funny. Totally delightful to read out loud.

4. The Tale of Despereaux by Kate DiCamillo (Newberry Medal 2003). This is the story of Despereaux Tilling, a runt of a mouse who is in love with words, stories, music, and a princess. It is also the story of a rat named Roscuro who lives in the darkness but actually loves the light. And it is the story of Miggery Sow, a slow-witted servant girl with a simple but impossible wish. This adventurous journey is a page-turner, extremely well-written, and shines with an incredible message about forgiveness. I love Kate DiCamillo because she often breaks story to address the reader, "Now Reader, you must know that an interesting fate always awaits one who does not conform..."

Also excellent and by Kate DiCamillo is **The Miraculous Journey of Edward Tulane (2006)** about a china rabbit who belongs to and is adored by a girl named Abilene, but one day he is lost.

5. The Penderwicks by Jeanne Birdsall (National book award 2005). A summer tale of four sisters, two rabbits and a very interesting boy. The four Penderwick sisters spend summer in Maine on a beautiful estate known as Arundel. Their adventures, strong personalities, and family dynamics make all the Penderwick books absolutely charming. Birdsall's books have an old-fashioned feel, affectionate humor, and we both adore and admire the sibling relationships. The Penderwicks is a series with the fifth and final book coming out this year.

6. A Wrinkle in Time by Madeleine L'Engle (Newberry Medal 1962). I love Madeleine L'Engle. She said, "If a book will be too difficult for grown-ups, you write it for the children." And that is what she did with her series, *A Wrinkle in Time*, *Wind at the Door*, and *Swiftly Tilting Planet...* (*Time Quintet*: Five books in all). Meg Murry and her brother Charles Wallace are met at night by a disturbing visitor who knows about "the tesseract" or time travel, something their father was working on for the government when he disappeared. Meg and Charles Wallace travel through a wrinkle in time to try to save their father. This book, while disconcerting and scary at times, offers readers such a powerful message about love and truth.

7. Where the Mountain Meets the Moon by Grace Lin (Newberry Honor book 2009). This book is both written and illustrated by Grace Lin. My girls have loved it for its exposure to chinese story-telling and real chinese myths/folklore. Minli lives in the Valley of the Fruitless Mountain where she and her parents work hard in the fields for money and food. Her father tells her stories at night about the Old Man

of the Moon, who knows the answers to everything. Minli sets out on a quest to find the Old Man of the moon because he will know how to bring good fortune to her family. Minli meets some magical friends along the way, including a dragon who cannot fly!

8. Escape from Mr. Lemoncello's Library by Chris Grabenstein (2014). This book has been explained as a cross between Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and Night at the Museum. Kyle Keeley who loves all kinds of games is kind of the class clown. But when his hero, game maker Luigi Lemoncello, helps construct the town's new library and has selected twelve kids (including Kyle) to play his first library game, Kyle gets serious. The game is a game of riddles, book, and clues. A game they have to win if they are going to get out of the library. Readers play along, deciphering puzzles and clues as they go. My kids loved this book. Grabenstein's next book, *The Island of Dr. Libris*, was released in March 2015.

9. The War that Saved my Life by Kimberly Brubaker Bradley (2015). New this year. Historical fiction about a brother and sister who are London evacuees during World War II. Ada (10 yrs old) has never left her one-room apartment. Her mother is too humiliated by Ada's clubfoot to let her outside. She keeps her locked up in side. But when Jamie (Ada's younger brother) is shipped out of London to the countryside, Ada sneaks out to join him. Thus begins a new adventure for Ada and Jamie. And for Susan Smith, the woman forced to take the two kids in. This book has concepts appropriate for older children, I would say age 8 and older, including war, death, abandonment, and physical abuse. But I think it's good for children to understand what life is like for many children in the world who struggle with these issues. The history is fascinating. And so is the story-line, about a girl at war inside herself for identity, self-worth, and family love. Inspiring on so many levels.

10. Fish in a Tree by Lynda Mullaly Hunt (2015). Also new this year. This exceptional book is about a girl named Ally who is very bright, a whiz at math in her head, but has dyslexia. Ally has cleverly slid through school pretending that she knows how to read and write when really, she has never been able to learn. In sixth grade, things change. Her teacher, Mr. Daniels, catches on and offers to help Ally. This book should be read by every child who has ever worried about school. And by children *without* learning differences, so they can better understand that all children learn differently. Main take-away: "Not all great minds, think alike." This book will tug at your heart. Similar to *Wonder* by RJ Palacio, in setting and context, but different in that Ally looks just like everyone else on the outside, while inside, her brain and mind see things very differently. *Fish in a Tree* will teach you about dyslexia, and how many smart kids are misunderstood; they simply learn differently.

"Everybody is smart in different ways. But if you judge a fish by its ability to climb a tree, it will live its life believing it is stupid."

Some of these books we've already read, so here are a few others we're hoping to get to this summer:

The Chronicles of Narnia by CS Lewis. Most people think the books begin with *The Lion, Witch and the Wardrobe*. But they actually begin with Lewis' book, *The Magician's Nephew*, We thought it would be fun to try and get through all seven books.

Sarah, Plain and Tall By Patricia MacLachlan. And everything else by MacLachlan. Gifted writer who has crafted some very tender stories.

Miracles on Maple Hill by Virginia Sorensen. Also historical fiction, set in post WWII.

And we LOVE this book of original poetry by **Jack Prelutsky: The New Kid on the Block.** So funny!