

# How to Find Great Storybooks

by Chazda Albright -

<http://greatstorybook.com/find-great-storybooks/>

This entry is part 21 of 23 in the series [Publishing Biz](#)

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*How to find great storybooks is a bit of know-how every writer needs to acquire. If you don't know where to look, most of what you'll find isn't that good. There's a lot of garbage on the market. So what are we supposed to do? How are we supposed to learn from the best if we don't know who they are? In this article, I'm going to point you in the right direction, so that you know where to find great stories.*

**Part of being a writer and learning how to become a *great* writer is studying great stories. Learn from the best. But how do we track those books down in the first place?**

There are at least 12 major internet-based companies that offer a list of the **100 Best Books for Kids**. Problem is, they're almost always the same list and they're typically the classic titles we all grew up with – these are not the *crème de la crème* of *today*, they're our evergreen titles.

### **Evergreen Titles (a smattering)**

If you don't know these titles, track them down and read them. You do need these. They are on every single Top 100 List. Starting from pre-readers and working up to YA:

- The Giving Tree
- Corduroy
- The Snowy Day
- The Runaway Bunny
- The Complete Tales of Winnie-the-Pooh
- Amelia Bedelia
- Caps for Sale
- Charlie and the Chocolate Factory
- Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing
- Harriet the Spy
- The Hobbit
- Where the Red Fern Grows
- Anne of Green Gables

A Top 100 List isn't really helpful if what you need to do is research the *current book market*. Here are the best ways to find out what's on today's book market.

### **What You'll Get Here:**

- 3 essential ways to find great books (with lots of resources)
- 4 criteria for spotting a good story

**This is how you Get the Buzz on Books.**

### **Book Reviewers**

There are some truly great book reviewers out there who do the hard work of critically reading books and then sharing their insights with us. Here are some solid book reviewers who have blogs worthy of a

subscription.

### [Great Kid Books](#)

by Kirkus Reviewer Mary Ann Sheuer. This school librarian is a powerful and influential book reviewer.

What's great about her blog too is that she provides easy ways for you to search her book reviews based on what you need. You can search by age group or by type of book. It's fantastic.

### [Kids' Book Review](#)

This is an Australian-based website organized and run by a group of women in the publishing industry: everything from writers to publishers and distributors. Very excellent, top resource.

You cannot subscribe to Kids' Book Review, but you can follow them either through [Pinterest](#) or [Facebook](#).

### [The Best Children's Books](#)

This is an American-based website organized and run by three sisters who are all teachers. What I love about this site is that they organize their reviews in a manner that's especially helpful to teachers.

### [The Children's Book Review](#)

This is an American-based website comprised of a group of talented and devoted people: writers, teachers and librarians.

### [Kirkus Reviews](#)

Respected source of book reviews, though some are more thorough than others. To find what you want there, you need to hunt-and-peck around their navigation bar. Once you've found a particular reviewer (or reviewers) you like, follow them (see Mary Ann Sheuer of Great Kid Books, above).

There are other great reviewers out there, I know. I didn't want to make this list too overwhelming. If you know of a really incredible book reviewer, and you feel they should be on this list, please let me know.

## Ask Kids

If you want to know what kids think about a book, you should definitely visit [The Spaghetti Book Club](#). This is a fun website, from kids.

[Scholastic Books](#) has also provided a wonderful resource for writers and teachers. You can find out what kids of different ages are reading, and then read their personal book reviews. It's called [Share What You're Reading](#). I can't help but smile when I read these.

## Go to Book Fairs

The best way to really grab onto the current book market is to attend a book fair. No question. I've so far been able to attend the [Bologna Children's Book Fair](#) (the largest children's book fair worldwide) and the [Frankfurt Book Fair, or Frankfurter Buchmesse](#) (the largest book fair worldwide).

To find out [what these two very different book fairs offer and how they compare, GO HERE](#).

If you can't go, or aren't sure whether you can or not - I've written several articles about these events and what I've learned there. It's a LOT; let me tell you! (To track those down, just use the Search Engine here on GSB. Type Bologna for all the articles about that event, or type Frankfurt for all the articles about that and what I gleaned there.)

## Keep Your Eyes Open: The Criteria

Whenever you can, just pop over to the local library or the local bookshop. Second Hand Bookshops are great, too. You never know when you're going to discover a real gem.

How do you know it's solid? Here's my criteria:

### 1. You genuinely love it.

Not because you can imagine a child enjoying it, but because you as an adult enjoy it. If the language makes you cringe, put it aside.

### 2. It's original, not a book adaptation of a movie.

I've written about this before, but I cannot state this strongly enough. These are perfect examples of terrible writing. They aren't really books most of the time. Just as Infomercials aren't really educational shows.

### 3. The artwork grabs your attention.

I know this isn't typically the sort of thing anyone would ask you to consider - not as writers, at any rate. But I feel strongly that the artwork in an illustrated storybook is as essential to the storytelling process as the actual text.

It gives more depth and it inspires us in a different way than the words do alone. Too, the story's timing relies heavily on images and page turns.

If the artwork makes you cringe, or the page turns have you scratching your head - well, it's a good book for learning what NOT to do. Look for and find the books that really inspire you, [the ones that make you think, "Wow."](#)

### 4. It's really a story.

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Many books aren't stories because they don't have a character and/or they don't have a plot. That doesn't necessarily mean it's a throw-away, just that it isn't a story. ABC books aren't stories. That doesn't mean it's bad stuff, just that - this isn't something to learn from as a writer.

*When you do* unearth a gem of a story, write about it. Tell everyone about it. Help us find it too.

Have you read something great lately? Whether it's an evergreen or a new release, write below, *let everyone know* - or, as ever, send me an email. You know I love getting those.

**Keep creating, no matter what.**

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