

## **Rachel Winchester:**

Raising a child who loves to read is the secret sauce of homeschooling. One way we cultivate a love of reading is by giving our children the very best books. In this episode from the archive, Carole shares her list of the top books every child should read. And don't worry, we've got the whole list written down for you, so you can sit back and relax. You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Carole has helped thousands of families build their home libraries over the years. She knows the very best books. As one homeschooling mom recently told us, there's never a dud on Carole's list. If you're ready to discover a treasure trove of great authors and the stories they tell, listen in.

## **Carole Joy Seid:**

Well, today, I'm gonna talk about my favorite subject in the whole world, and that is children's books. Many families have asked me to help them find out how to build a library systematically, so they're not just buying a bunch of books that they regret or wind up selling in garage sales, but they really have a plan. So I thought I would just go through my bookshelves briefly today with you and just hit on some key children's books that every child should grow up having. Otherwise, they're living in a kind of a deprived world.

## **Four Pillars of British Literature**

So I'd start with my very, very young ones, and I'd probably begin with *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and I'd make sure it was illustrated by Jesse Wilcox Smith. *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson. And then I would buy the 4 Winnie the Pooh books in hardcover in a box if I could afford it. And these are great things to ask for from the grandparents.

And make sure that they write in the books and date them, and maybe write a little note to the children. I read this book to your mama when she was little, or congratulations on sleeping through the night without a diaper or getting your driver's license or whatever, you know, milestone that you can celebrate, of course, Christmas, holidays. So the 4 Winnie the Pooh books, unabridged, of course, we wanna actually start with the poetry. So when we were very young, and now we are 6. Two books of delightful poetry that every little nursing baby would just love to be read to as they're just in infancy being nursed or being thrown around on daddy's knee, such great poems that kids just can't resist. And then the 2 books of prose, *Winnie the Pooh* and *The House at Pooh Corner*. So those are a must. Every child needs to grow up with those lovely books in their lives.

And then *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Graham. Kenneth Graham was head of the Bank of England, and he wrote these stories for his little boy when he went away to the seashore, and he sent him a story every day. And his nurse kept the stories, and that's *Wind in the Willows*. And make sure that you get the edition illustrated by Ernest Shepherd, who also illustrated Winnie the Pooh, and make sure that it's unabridged.

We don't do abridgments if we can help it. And then as your children get a little bit older, then you move into really the children's classics. So things like *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson, illustrated by Wyatt, and *Little Women* by Louise May Alcott, illustrated by Jessie Wilcox Smith, *A Little Princess* by Frances Hodgson Burnett, *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery, *Little Men*, also by Louisa May Alcott.

## Shakespeare

And then a book on Shakespeare's plays for children called *Tales from Shakespeare*, which contain the retelling of the Shakespeare plays in prose form, so the comedies and the tragedies.

They're written by, as I said, Charles and Mary Lamb, and they were brother and sister team. They were concerned that children in Britain were just not loving Shakespeare the way they should. So one of them took the comedies, one of them took the tragedies, and it's kind of like your grandmother telling you a story on Sunday afternoon after lunch, and it's Shakespeare. Your kids grow up knowing the characters, the story lines. So then, eventually, when they're exposed to the the play itself, it's like an old friend. It's not a foreign concept.

## Beginning Chapter Books

Then Mark Twain, I think one of his very best books, *The Prince and the Pauper*, by Twain, and then a book that will change your family's lives as you write read it out loud is a book that was written by a lady named Johanna Spirie, and it's *Heidi*. And you'd be sure that it's unabridged, and I love to get the addition illustrated by Jessie Wilcox Smith.

There are many beautiful editions of Heidi. An unabridged *Peter Pan* by James Berry. And my favorite part of *Peter Pan* is when they're still in England, and the Darling's kind of family life and dealing with mister Darling and the dog who's their nanny. And I love the writing and the humor. There's just nothing quite like it. Two of Kipling's books that every child needs to grow up with would be *Just So Stories* (How the Camel Got His Hump, How the Leopard Got His Spots, that type of thing) and then *The Jungle Book*, also by Kipling. Keep in mind that just so stories were written by Kipling and illustrated by him for his daughter, who he calls his best beloved. And, they're a little politically incorrect.

I just have to warn you, very different age and era in British history, but there's no one like Kipling. He's just he's very talented, fun guy. And then I talked a little bit earlier about some of the boys' classics, and so King Arthur and His Knights, and those that series of books, *Treasure Island*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Robin Hood*, those illustrated classics that were done by Wyeth and many other people, but just be sure that you're exposing your children to unabridged books. And if they're too young for the unabridged book, there's so many wonderful books in every age. Why force them into book they're not ready for? It will come around in the right time for them.

## Fairy Tales

And then every child should be raised with Anderson's fairy tales, Grimm's fairy tales, a little bit grim at times, but there is an there is a book called *A Child's Book of Stories* that was illustrated by Jesse Wilcox Smith, and it has some of the best known and best loved tales from around the world, *A Child's Book of Stories*.

## Attend Our Upcoming Webinar

### Rachel Winchester:

The promise of this podcast is that you can homeschool simply. Doctor Raymond Moore said you can homeschool with a bible, a library card, and a math curriculum. He was a radical guy. You might be asking yourself, is there any evidence it can really be that simple? Can books be the basis of a good enough education? And how do you find the very best books and not waste time on duds? For 35 years, Carole Joy Seid has been helping families use great books as the basis of their education. And now we are seeing kids homeschooled with this method grow up to use it with their own children. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. In our upcoming webinar on June 1st, Carole and her son, J.J. Seid will teach you our literature based approach to education. You'll learn how to make your child a lover of books, how to create unit studies around books, and much, much more.

If you want to build a simple yet comprehensive education on a love of books, then join us for a literature based approach to education on June 1st. You can learn more about the webinar at [homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars](http://homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars). And even if you can't make it to the live event, registrants have access to the replay for 2 weeks afterwards. Plus, you get book lists that are yours to keep indefinitely. Visit our website, [homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars](http://homeschoolmadesimple.net/seminars) to register today. Now back to the show.

## Little House Books

Of course, as you start reading out loud some of these chapter books with your kids, a good place to start when you're reading chapter books would be the Little House books. If you can begin to collect them in hardback, I would very much recommend that you do so, maybe one for each holiday because they're not inexpensive. Of course, they start with *Little House in the Big Woods*. But if you have a predominantly male population, I recommend that you read *Farmer Boy* first, and get the boys on board with reading the books. Otherwise, the books might seem a little too girlish for them, and you might lose them.

## British Literature

*Lassie Come Home*, which was written by Eric Knight, is a beautifully written book taking place in Scotland. Eric Knight was a pilot in the RAF in Britain during World War 2, and then he went to America and signed up, to fly for the American Air Force and was killed in action as a bomber pilot in World War 2. But I wish he'd lived longer and written more books for children.

*Tom's Midnight Garden* is considered one of the great classics of British literature by, Philippa Pearce, kind of a mysterious, fascinating fantasy book for all for your older children.

## Understood Betsy

And then a book that every family should grow up reading is *Understood Betsy*. *Understood Betsy*, the story of a kind of pampered, overprotected little girl by Dorothy Canfield Fisher, and the story of how she goes and lives with her Putney cousins in Vermont and is exposed to normal life, and work, and service, and animals, and minor dangers, and how it just shapes her and changes her.

## Edith Nesbitt

An author that our family really has enjoyed, She's definitely not a Christian author. I just wanna give a little bit of a warning on that. Her name is Edith Nesbitt, and sometimes you'll see her books, E. Nesbitt, because at the time that she was writing, it wasn't acceptable for women to write books. She was very, she was kind of in the Bloomsbury group, if if you're familiar with that crowd.

So not a Christian woman, but she wrote some very imaginative, delightful books for your older kids, not for your little bitties. Delightful books for your older kids, not for your little bitties. And I'd say about 9 and up, so she is maybe best known for *The Railway Children*, which is a lovely book, but she also wrote *5 Children and It*, *The Phoenix and the Carpet*, the story of the amulet, which are a trilogy, and lots of other books for kids that were kind of influential in CS Lewis' life, actually. And he read those books, and then they influenced how he created the Narnia books and the family dynamics of the Pevensie children and the Narnia books.

## Beatrix Potter

Another author that I forgot to mention for your very littles would, of course, be Beatrix Potter. Beatrix Potter is considered the greatest illustrator of children's books of all time, and she wrote 18 little books for children. She insisted that they be kept in the right size so that children's hands were comfortable holding them and touching them, and she used real, live animals as her models. She was very into nature and understood a great deal about animals.

And her books are basically people in fur, so there's nothing supernatural in any way about her books. They're very realistic to the British Victorian era. But she, like Aesop, just took the liberty of turning people into animals so that she could tell her stories in in a more imaginative way. Excuse me. One of my favorite books of hers would be *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*. I also love *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*, *Roly Poly Pudding*. She was a genius. Her humor, her understanding of of human nature and and relationships, and her drawings, all taking place there where she lived in England, at a farm that she eventually bought as she got older.

And she and her brother collected a whole menagerie of live and dead animals and drove their parents crazy. They're very proper, kinda social climbing British people, and she did not fit in

with them at all. But she was a delightful woman and gave all of her vast property to the National Trust in England to be kept in perpetuity as undeveloped land, as after she after her death.

## **Nursery Rhymes**

Now let's talk about some picture books for your littles. Marguerite de Angeli probably did the very best, I think, book of nursery and mother goose rhymes.

## **Ingrid and Edgar Parin D'Aulaire**

The D'Aulaires, Ingrid and Edgar Parin D'Aulaires. My two favorite books of theirs would be *Abraham Lincoln* and *George Washington*. They're beautiful, illustrated picture books.

They were done on stone. It's a very complicated printing process, which is no longer used today, but they were artists as well as authors, and I think their books are matchless in character development, in beauty of illustration, in just being fascinating for children.

## **Taro Yashima**

A book that I learned about when I was in graduate school taking a kiddie lit class, which I never tire of reading to children, is a book called *Crow Boy* by Taro Yashima. Yashima also wrote a little book called *Umbrella* about a little Japanese girl who gets an umbrella and a pair of red rubber boots, and then it never rains in Japan. Every day, she's trying to figure out a way to get to use her umbrella and her boots. Then one day, she gets up, and it's raining, and she gets to wear them. And how she grew up that day in a very beautiful way. The illustrations are magnificent, and the Japanese understanding of simplicity and beauty that comes forth in in both of his books.

## **Mythology**

The D'Aulaires also did a book on Greek myths that I recommend for every family, but, again, for your much older children, at least 4th grade and up. Don't confuse your littles with Greek gods prematurely.

## **Patricia Polacco**

An author that I really enjoy is Patricia Polacco, and so many of her books are well done. But one of my favorites is *Just Plain Fancy*, about an Amish family that accidentally raises a peacock, and they're just horrified with all the beauty and the color, but they figure out later that, actually, it's God's creation, and it's okay.

## **Pilgrim's Progress**

Dangerous Journey was probably my son's favorite book, and it's now his twin son's favorite book. It is a boy's dream come true because the illustrations are very kind of graphic and a little scary, and little boys just love it.

But it's the retelling of Pilgrim's Progress by John Bunyan, and it's using the actual words of Bunyan, but it's just been simplified. And the illustrations are by Alan Perry, who's a British illustrator, and they actually even made a book using his illustrations.

## **Tales of the Kingdom**

Tales of the Kingdom and Tales of the Resistance, I consider to be one of the greatest book series created for children. They were done by Karen and David Mains from Chapel of the Air, and I just can't recommend these books highly enough. And you will never tire of reading them at any age, so you can give them to adults as presents. You can read them to your children. Wait till your children are a bit older because they can be scary, but they're really Christian fantasy, but they just embody the gospel in so many helpful ways. They really flesh out what it is to follow the king in his kingdom.

## **Ibi Lepsky**

And then a little book from Italy that was part of a series of books called children of genius. It's by Ibi Lepsky, l e p s k y. And the one I like best in the series is the one on Albert Einstein and how much of a miss fit he was, and how he didn't fit in, and he wasn't normal. And so often when I work with families and they start telling me about a child that's just kind of marching to their own drama. I just giggle, and I recommend that book to them because there's nothing wrong with their child. It's it's just that he's probably very gifted and very bright and very creative.

## **Marjorie Flack**

One of the great children's classics of all time is the story of Ping, and Every Child Needs to be Raised With It by Marjorie Flack, illustrated by Kurt Weisz, the story of a little duck in China who didn't wanna get spanked. And it's just an adorable book, and children always cringe when ping gets spanked.

## **Tomie DePaola**

And an author that I'm very fond of is a gentleman named Tomie DePaola. Tomie DePaola, he wrote many, many, many books, but my one of my favorites of all time is *Now One Foot, Now the Other*, about a little boy and his grandpa. He's named after his grandpa, and they're best friends. And his grandpa teaches him how to walk, now one foot, now the other, and then years later, his grandpa has a stroke, and he can't walk, And then the little boy teaches his grandpa, and he brings him back from the stroke. And it if you can read that book without crying, I don't know too many people who can.

## **Ezra Jack Keats**

Another author that I love is Ezra Jack Keats. Ezra Jack Keats So Jewish author from New York City, and he wrote about inner city children. And one little boy in particular named Peter, and he wrote a book called *The Snowy Day*, which won the Caldecott Award.

But the one I like best is, *A Whistle for Willie*. *A Whistle for Willie*, and it's a story of Peter, little African American inner city child trying to learn to whistle. And he comes from this lovely family, very loving, very stable home. It's a beautiful book, and all of, the books about Peter, *Peter's Chair*, etc.

## **Bible Story Book**

And then, when it comes to Bible storybooks, when you have very small children, the one I recommend would be *Read Aloud Bible Stories Volume 1* by Ella Lindval. It is irresistible as you read the story of Jesus blessing the children and Jesus calming the sea, and the one I like best is Bartimaeus, blind Bartimaeus. That is a book. No matter how wiggly a child is, I have never seen them not sit still for that book.

## **Riki Levinson**

Then Watch the Stars Come Out by Levinson, illustrated by Good, story of a Jewish refugee family. And another Jewish author that I enjoy so much, I can't even talk.

## **Uri Shulevitz**

Uri Shulevitz and his book, *The Treasure*. *The Treasure* is the story of a Russian peasant and a dream that he has and how he goes on to build a prayer chapel after the Lord sends him a treasure.

## **Rachel Field**

*Prayer for a Child* by Rachel Field is beautiful, beautiful poem that any child can memorize, and I hope your children will memorize. Such a sweet book, and the illustrations, oh my goodness. They're just precious. I think I'm going to read you this poem very quickly here because I love to hear children recite it, and I bet your children will memorize it.

The illustrations are by Elizabeth Orton Jones, and it makes the most beautiful baby present if you're going to a baby shower.

## **Marguerite De Angeli**

An author that I'm extremely in love with is a lady named [Marguerite De Angeli](#).

And if you listen to my kiddie lit seminar called Reading Under the Covers with a Flashlight, I tell you a lot about her, life, but she was from Lapeer, Michigan, and she started actually as an illustrator of other people's books and then eventually began to write her own. She would spend a year doing research, going and living in the place where the book was set. *Thee Hannah* is her retelling of a little family, a Quaker family, during the time of the Underground Railroad. And this is a little girl that gets into trouble all the time for, as her grandmother says, listening to old Spotty. And it is just a delightful book, and all of Marguerite De Angelis' books are worth collecting and owning.

## **Lois Lenski**

Another author that all young children need to grow up with is [Lois Lenski](#). And she wrote many books, but I'm particularly fond of her Mr. Small books, and my favorite of all is *Papa Small*, the story of a family of smalls.

Papa, mama, baby small, and the children, and how they help their mommy, and how they go to church, and the baby has to get carried out, and just so politically incorrect and so lovely, and how, papa makes lunch on Sundays, and mom arrests, and, oh, it's just the sweetest little book. But there's *The Little Auto*, *The Little Farm*, *The Little Sailboat*, *The Little Fire Engine*, *The Little Train*, *The Little Airplane*, *Cowboy Small*. You will love her books.

## **Arthur Ransome**

And then another, author that I think you will really enjoy for your children would be Arthur Ransome, and he did a series of 9 books starting with the first being *Swallows and Amazons*.

## **Favorite Chapter Books**

Then Patricia McLaughlin, I'm particularly fond of her book *Skylark*, but she's best known for *Sarah, Plain and Tall*. Carol Ryrie Brink's, *Caddie Woodlawn*. Noel Strutfield's books, *Theater Shoes*, *Dancing Shoes*, *Ballet Shoes*, *Circus Shoes*. Meindert De Jong. I love *Far Out the Long Canal* about a little boy in Holland who doesn't know how to ice skate and has to teach himself quickly because he'd been sick, the other times that they had a freeze on the canals, and *Dirk's Dog*, *Bellow*, but he also wrote *Shadrach* and *Wheel on the School* and so many other books, most of which are set in Holland.

## **Genevieve Foster**

And then Genevieve Foster's books, *George Washington's World*, *Abraham Lincoln's World*, *The World of Columbus and Sons*, *Augustus Caesar's World*. She wrote books for her 2 children. She had a little boy and a little girl. They lived in Evanston, Illinois, and the world is so much richer for her books.



## Rosemary Sutcliffe

A British author that you don't wanna miss is Rosemary Sutcliffe, and I believe her very best books are *The Wanderings of Odysseus* and *Black Ships Before Troy*. *Black Ships Before Troy* is the Iliad, and the wanderings of Odysseus is the retelling of *The Odyssey*.

## Significant Illustrators

A very significant author and illustrator in America was a gentleman named Howard Pyle. He had a school of illustration called the Brandywine School in Pennsylvania, and he taught Jesse Wilcox Smith and Maxfield Parrish.

Many of the great illustrators came out of N.C. Wyeth's school, and he himself was an amazing illustrator. So he wrote *Otto of the Silver Hand*, *The Wonder Clock*, *Salt and Pepper*, *The Story of the Champions of the Round Table*, and don't miss his illustrations as well as as the reading of his books.

## More Chapter Books

I I love Mildred Taylor's books, *Roll of Thunder*, *Hear My Cry*, *May the Circle Be Unbroken*.

Then a British author who is actually a missionary in Northern Africa, Patricia Saint John. There is no one equal to her in quality of writing and in deep Christian spirituality and depth. Children love her books. She never talks down to children. She treats them with respect, as Charlotte Mason said to do. Of all of her books, she's best known for wait, let me think.

I think her very best book is *Star of Light*. *Star of Light*, set in Morocco, where Patricia St. John and her sister were nurses, and her and her brother was a surgeon. She's also very gifted at writing biblical fiction, you know, based on biblical themes. One would be *The Runaway*, and another is *Twice Freed*, the story of, Onesimus the slave.

If you would enjoy some kind of Jewish understanding of the Jewish festivals and the Jewish culture, I don't think there's anything better than the *All of a Kind Family* books by Taylor, Sidney Taylor. And they're set in the turn of the century New York City with the most loving, sweet family. Each book, they're celebrating a different Jewish festival, and it just comes to life how their family just does life together. They're a family of all girls, so that's why they're called all of a kind family until they finally get a baby brother.

Kate Seredy is one of the finest authors, I think, in children's literature, and her book, *The Good Master* and *The Singing Tree*, are not to be missed.

Then I'm gonna close with James Daugherty of *Courage Undaunted*. He wrote many, many books. Poor Richard, he wrote books that boys just love, and his illustrations look like they're just gonna jump right off the page at you. They're so full of dynamic energy, and every little boy really loves the books of James Daugherty.

## Where to Get More Book Lists

So that's just kind of a quick drive by of some top books you're gonna want to begin to collect and look for. If you've been to my seminars, you know that I give you a much longer book list in the seminars, but this will get you started.

You can go to my website, [www.homeschoolmadesimple.net](http://www.homeschoolmadesimple.net), and see what upcoming seminars are available. Admission to the seminar includes all my book lists, which are only given to families who are part of a seminar. So that will also expand your boundaries, but this, I hope, will give you a good head start on systematically building a library. Share this episode with grandparents to give them some ideas of what you're looking for as, you know, holidays are coming and gifts are being purchased. Say, you know, we don't need clothes. We don't need toys. Please just buy us books and buy us wonderful books, not books that are gonna be discarded, but books that our grandchildren will benefit from as well, books that will stand the test of time. That's how we build a library systematically that our kids will love reading, and it will last for generations.

### **Rachel Winchester:**

Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. I'm Rachel Winchester. Don't forget to download our free book list that includes all of the books mentioned in this episode, as well as many more to help you fill your family's library with the very best children's literature. You can get it at [homeschoolmadesimple.net/booklist](http://homeschoolmadesimple.net/booklist). Be sure to join us next time as we help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Blessings.