

Seaside Wisdom for Life School

Selecting Children's Books With spiritual and uplifting messages

We offer these ideas or suggestions for you to consider when selecting children's books as a gift for a friend, for your home, or for your library at your church or school. My respected friend and mentor, Narani Moorhouse, once shared many of these ideas with me. Narani has been a master teacher for over 20 years and Early Childhood Director at one of our sister *Education For Life* schools, *Living Wisdom School* in Nevada City, California.

Consider that pictures, illustrations and images are equally as important as the content or written message of the book. We have all heard, "A picture says a 100 words," or the idea that 85-95 % of a message is communicated through non-verbal means. Ask yourself if the illustrations are uplifting and inspiring? Do the faces and images of the people feel comfortable or are they distorted and unreal or too surrealistic for a child? What feelings would the illustrations likely evoke in a young child? In our media driven society our children are inundated with negative images that can energetically leave a heavy feeling in children. Why not give them an offering of uplifting pictures? If the illustrations open your heart chakra and/or allow for positive feelings within you it is likely that they may have the same effect on a child.

What is the message, central theme or intention of the book? Be very conscious of the words, and content to determine developmentally if it is appropriate for the age and maturity of your child/children. Often themes and story lines are misinterpreted or not understood by young minds based on words they do not fully comprehend the true meaning of quite yet. What purpose does the book or story serve for the child/children? Is it educational, uplifting, inspiring or merely entertaining? Does it empower children to make wise choices, think creatively and lead an affirmative, spiritually based life? Again, what is the intention of the book and does it appear to successfully align with your intentions? These are all things to be considered when making conscious choices with regard to children's books.

Mainstream movies, stories, and commercialization: Many traditional stories, nursery rhymes and Disney books have long been thought to be appropriate options for children and at times they can be. Other times they are negative, violent and even appalling but often found in our children's libraries! For instance, stop to consider "Rock a Bye Baby"..."when the wind blows the cradle will fall and down will come baby cradle and all" ...yikes! Or...what about Jack and Jill who broke their crowns? Or what about unfortunate Mr. Humpty Dumpty who could never be put back together? These are not exactly in alignment with our philosophies for an affirmative life! Do these old stories (or similar ones) really serve any higher purpose in a child's life? As adults, let's educate ourselves not just our children.

“Education for Life” Book Selection Guidelines

Adapted from *Calm and Compassionate Children*,

By EFL Ex. Director, Susan Dermond

- The most important part of story telling is the book selection. Content and language usage is most important! Books that use negative truths (poor examples) to teach lessons can often leave children uninspired. Avoid books that use poor examples of language such as hate, stupid, lying or cheating.
- Choose a time to read when children will be most receptive and attentive.
- To be engaging, the story must also have at least a certain amount of action, suspense or entertaining dialog that perhaps is fast paced. Long descriptive passages or a slow pace is not suitable to keep children attentive.
- A great read aloud book should first inspire the reader (teacher) or storyteller. Their enthusiasm and their interest will then be conveyed in their tone of voice and attitude as they read. The consciousness and intention of the reader/teacher should be clear.
- Reading aloud to children should provide a shared experience between the children and a heart-to-heart connection produced by the teacher or readers voice sharing the story.
- Carefully selected, age appropriate literature should convey our school values and beliefs and depict ideals we wish our children to adopt or the villainy we wish them to avoid. Like nature, stories are a springboard to compassion because they tend to stimulate feelings and open the heart.
- Appropriate, uplifting stories can inspire feelings of honor or nobility. Select books that consistently portrait noble, loving, brave heroes and heroines worth emulating.
- The wise teacher responds to a child’s natural yearning for entertaining stories that depict love, courage, compassion, and joy. The stirring ideals generated by great stories produce a reservoir of aspiration that your child can draw on throughout their lives.
- Good read alouds should: provide valuable insights, help solve problems, stir to action, change attitudes, present high ideals, develop a positive expectancy of life. Overall they should leave listeners with an uplifting message and affirmative thoughts.
- For more examples check out:
 - Attached appendix 3 from Susan’s book
 - Living Wisdom School websites
 - Chinaberry Book Catalog
 - Jim Treleases-read aloud handbook

Seaside Wisdom for Life School Book List

Recommended Reading- Children's Books with spiritual and uplifting images and messages

"In God's Name", by Sandy Eisenberg Sasso

Provides a wonderful illustration of the many faces and names through which God is known. One of my personal favorites!

"I wanted to Know All about God", by Virginia L. Kroll

Beautiful pictures of children in nature expressing a simple but profound message about where to find God.

"The Lovables in the Kingdom of Self Esteem" by Diane Loomas

Colorfully illustrated with animals in nature teaches an affirmative approach to self-esteem and how each one has a special gift to share.

"Where Does God Live?" by Holly Bea

Young Hope seeks the question of: Where does God Live? And soon learns that God is everywhere and all things.

"Where Does God Live?" by August Gold & Matthew Perlman

Playfully helps children find God by opening our eyes.

"Incredible You" by Dr. Wayne Dyer

10 secrets for success interpreted for children to understand they're unique and powerful beings.

"Saying Goodbye to Lulu" by Corinne Demas

A beautiful book about the loving and letting go of a beloved animal named Lulu.

"Emma & Mommy Talk to God" by Marianne Williamson

A beautifully illustrated book sharing a conversation with Mom about what God is and is not.

"One Grain of Rice", by Demi

A mathematical folktale with an inspiring message on abundance.

"One Gift Deserves Another" – by Joann Oppenheim

Adapted from the Brothers Grimm; lively illustrations capture the broad humor of this lighthearted tale about the pitfalls of greed and power of generosity.

Series: "Dear Children of the Earth", "Children of the Earth Remember", "Dear Children of the Earth: A Letter from Home" by Shim Schimmel

A beautiful series, illustrated by environmental visionary and artist Shim Schimmel, highlights animals and all creatures. The central theme is planetary interdependency and the message is that we must share this planet Mother Earth with all its varied life.

Sister Anne's Hands

Granddad's Prayers for the Earth

Prince Siddhartha -- Landaw/Brooke

All the Places to Love – MacLachlan

A Special kind of Love – Stephen M King

Through Grandpa's Eyes – Patricia

Maclachlan

All God's Creatures Go To Heaven – N. A.

Noel