

Children's Classics

A Booklist for Parents

COMPILED BY MARY M. BURNS

SINCE IT WAS FOUNDED in 1924, *The Horn Book Magazine* has celebrated notable achievements in the writing and illustrating of books for children. A logical consequence of this emphasis is the periodic compilation of lists of classics, beginning with an article by pioneering librarian Alice M. Jordan in 1947. Jordan was particularly distinguished for the contributions she made as Supervisor of Work with Children at the Boston Public Library. In that position, she had ample opportunity to observe, to reflect, and to comment on the qualities that allow some books to endure for generations, thus becoming classics.

More than fifty years have passed since that first list was prepared. Tastes have changed; so have demographics and publishing. This list, like its predecessors, has been modified to reflect those changes. Yet many of the titles cited earlier have been included. Still read and enjoyed, they are indeed classics.

Preparing a list of classics involves some basic assumptions—not to mention a certain amount of presumption. It is hoped that these selections will provide some guidelines for developing a home library of books that are as accessible to young readers as they are worthy. The final choices are not the only possibilities; many a favorite has been eliminated so that the list would be useful rather than overwhelming.

Classics written before 1920 have been placed into separate categories, calling attention to books that are part of the literary heritage from times past. All other entries are arranged by genre with suggested audience levels. But, in the final analysis, a list is only the beginning. The real test of a classic is the individual child's delight in reading, sharing, and rereading a book again, again, and again.

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ONE OF THE HAPPIEST DEVELOPMENTS in the twentieth century is the increasing focus on books for toddlers, preschoolers, and beginning readers. Sections featuring books for toddlers and preschoolers not only address the growing concern for early literacy but also demonstrate the importance of art and illustration in books for children. Varied art techniques, intriguing stories, memorable characters make these appealing to young children and to the adults who read them.

For the Very Young

The ABC Bunny. Written and illustrated by Wanda Gág. Coward, 1933.

A handsomely illustrated book, which, unlike most alphabetic representations, presents the sequence of letters in the context of a rhymed story about a young rabbit, startled by a falling apple, who embarks on a series of adventures as he seeks safety. Music to accompany the text is included.

The Carrot Seed. Written by Ruth Krauss. Illustrated by Crocket Johnson. Harper, 1945.

Ignoring the well-meaning advice of adults who prophesy that nothing will happen, a small boy plants a carrot seed with satisfying results, documented in simple but effective graphic shapes. A wonderful story of empowerment.

Freight Train. Written and illustrated by Donald Crews. Greenwillow, 1978.

Vibrant illustrations, shaded to suggest accelerating movement, combine with a brief text to introduce a basic color vocabulary while depicting the journey of a freight train across the countryside, through a tunnel, over a bridge—"going, going, gone."

Goodnight Moon. Written by Margaret Wise Brown. Illustrated by Clement Hurd. Harper, 1947.

Just right for the stage when small children enjoy labeling what they see, the description of the young rabbit who postpones sleep by bidding farewell to objects in the room as well as more distant phenomena is a calming bedtime story with reassuring, childlike illustrations.

Max's First Word. Written and illustrated by Rosemary Wells. Dial, 1979.

Bright laminated pages, a minimal text, and expressive but simple illustrations give added appeal to the story of a small rabbit who outwits his bossy older sister as she insists on improving his vocabulary. First of a series that explores various toddler dilemmas.

Mr. Gumpy's Outing. Written and illustrated by John Burningham. Holt, 1971.

Summer-like tones of greens and yellows predominate in illustrations for this account of a boat ride that turns into a comic adventure as Mr. Gumpy's craft is overcrowded with eager passengers. A similar situation develops in *Mr. Gumpy's Motor Car*.

Rosie's Walk. Written and illustrated by Pat Hutchins. Macmillan, 1968.

Brilliantly colored, stylized illustrations accompanied by a matter-of-fact minimal text depict the perils of a farmyard progress for a fox intent on capturing a plump hen unaware of his presence. The suspense is geared to preschoolers; the resolution is satisfying.

The Snowman. Written and illustrated by Raymond Briggs. Random House, 1978.

Pastel illustrations, varying in size from sequences of small vignettes to breathtaking panoramas, make this adventure of a small boy and his snowman, who has come to life, an excursion into fantasy and the imagination.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar. Written and illustrated by Eric Carle. Putnam, 1970.

Eye-catching colors and an interactive format invite children to participate in a counting game as the tiny caterpillar eats its way into becoming a very large caterpillar and then to its metamorphosis into a butterfly. First in a series of concept books that includes *The Very Quiet Cricket* and *The Very Busy Spider*.

Picture Books

Alfie Gets in First. Written and illustrated by Shirley Hughes. Lothrop, 1982.

On returning home from shopping with his mother and small sister, Alfie races ahead, shuts the front door (leaving his mother and baby sister outside)—and discovers that he doesn't know how to open the locked door. The dilemma involves the whole neighborhood until Alfie solves the problem by himself. Realistic illustrations are designed so that the reader can contrast

the action taking place outside the door with Alfie's reactions inside the door—and his final ingenuity. First in a series.

Andy and the Lion. Written and illustrated by James Daugherty. Viking, 1938.

A schoolboy enthralled with stories about lions encounters the real thing—an escapee from a circus—in a lively small-town America variant of an old tale from classical times. Cartoon-style illustrations extend the fun.

Anno's Alphabet: An Adventure in Imagination. Written and illustrated by Mitsumasa Anno. Crowell, 1975.

With unusual perspectives and curiously manipulated shapes, the Japanese educator-turned-author gives imaginative insight into the delineation of letters for more sophisticated young readers. *Anno's Counting Book* is a similarly intriguing look at numerical sequence.

Caps for Sale. Written and illustrated by Esphyr Slobodkina. Harper, 1947.

A text full of delightful repetition and bright uncomplicated illustrations add suspense to the story of a weary peddler whose caps are stolen by a mischievous band of monkeys.

Corduroy. Written and illustrated by Don Freeman. Viking, 1968.

A department-store teddy bear, thinking that the button missing from his overalls may prevent someone from buying him, searches for one in various parts of the store until he is returned to his proper place—and finds an owner. The illustrations give the small hero a real personality and create genuine emotion.

Cricter. Written and illustrated by Tomi Ungerer. Harper, 1958.

A French schoolteacher who receives a boa constrictor for her birthday discovers that her pet has amazing capabilities to aid in instructing her students. Equally absurd, but different in situation, is *The Three Robbers*, which tells how three bandits abandoned their wicked ways after encountering an orphan named Tiffany.

Curious George. Written and illustrated by H. A. Rey. Houghton, 1941.

Transplanted from Africa by the man in the yellow hat, George, a small monkey with unquenchable curiosity, finds himself in one predicament after another until he finds a permanent home in the zoo. Simple, cartoon-style drawings translate the text into action readily appreciated by preschoolers.

Doctor DeSoto. Written and illustrated by William Steig. Farrar, 1982.

A kindly mouse dentist and his capable assistant outwit an ungrateful patient, a fox intent on adding them to his menu. Skillful detailed drawings re-create Doctor DeSoto's ingenuity and document his skill. Additional titles by this master are also recommended.

George and Martha. Written and illustrated by James Marshall. Houghton, 1972.

The contrast between two plump hippos and the delicacy with which they respect each other's feelings offers fresh perspective on the meaning of friendship. Developed in five short vignettes, accompanied by understated line and wash drawings, the humor is subtle and charming. First of a series. Also notable is *Miss Nelson Is Missing*, the story of a schoolteacher who finds an imaginative way to control her unruly class.

Harry, the Dirty Dog. Written by Gene Zion. Illustrated by Margaret B. Graham. Harper, 1956.

Harry, a white dog with black spots, buries the scrubbing brush to avoid his bath and sets forth on a series of adventures on which he gets so dirty that he becomes a black dog with white spots. How he convinces his family that he is still Harry introduces just the right note of tension into an appealing story with lively illustrations.

Horton Hatches the Egg. Written and illustrated by Dr. Seuss. Random House, 1940.

A rhyming text and exaggerated cartoon-style illustrations match the wonderfully absurd story of the elephant who hatches an egg for a flighty bird and is rewarded for being faithful "one hundred percent." *And to Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street*, an earlier book that tells of a young boy's imaginative exaggerations, is another fine choice for reading and sharing.

Ira Sleeps Over. Written and illustrated by Bernard Waber. Houghton, 1975.

The first night away from home can pose problems for someone used to sleeping with a teddy bear and afraid of looking foolish in front of his friend. The issue is resolved with great sensitivity and gentle humor as described in a lively text and strongly outlined, energetic line drawings.

Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book. Written by Muriel Feelings. Illustrated by Tom Feelings. Dial, 1974.

More than just a reiteration of alphabetic sequence, this handsome variation introduces another culture through a basic vocabulary of daily activities and special events.

Sculptured forms in tones of gray convey the spirit of the African people who developed the Swahili language. Equally successful is *Moja Means One*, a counting book.

The Little House. Written and illustrated by Virginia Lee Burton. Houghton, 1943.

What happens when urbanization destroys the countryside is portrayed through the experience of a small house caught in the expansion of the nearby city. Rhythmic illustrations complemented by a descriptive, straightforward text make this an enduring ecological statement. Another Burton tale of survival in the midst of progress is *Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel*.

Madeline. Written and illustrated by Ludwig Bemelmans. Viking, 1939.

A rhymed text describing the adventures of "twelve little girls in two straight lines" is developed in sketch-like drawings supplemented with full color interpretations of Paris landmarks to give the story of an irrepressible small schoolgirl an unmistakably Gallic flair.

Make Way for Ducklings. Written and illustrated by Robert McCloskey. Viking, 1941.

Lively, sepia-toned illustrations plus an unself-conscious humorous text give zest to the story of the Mallard duck family's search for a home in Boston's Public Gardens. Also appealing, but with a different New England setting, this time Maine, is *Blueberries for Sal*.

Millions of Cats. Written and illustrated by Wanda Gág. Coward, 1928.

With its chantably repetitive phrase "millions and billions and trillions of cats," combined with black-and-white illustrations that swirl across the pages, the story of the old man who set forth to find a cat and comes home with a quarrelsome horde (eventually resolved to everyone's satisfaction) is a perennial favorite. Arguably the first modern picture book.

The Polar Express. Written and illustrated by Chris Van Allsburg. Houghton, 1985.

Told as a reminiscence, the story of a young boy's journey to the North Pole aboard a magical train and his choice of the first gift of Christmas is interpreted in an economical text and dazzling full-color illustrations which evoke mystery and wonder. Similarly intriguing is *Jumanji*, the story of an unusual game which precipitates the players into a series of harrowing adventures—until they find the means to stop the magic.

Miss Rumphius. Written and illustrated by Barbara Cooney. Viking, 1982.

Full-color luminous illustrations capture time and place in the story of Alice Rumphius, who achieved her three childhood dreams: to travel, to live in a house by the sea, and to make the world a more beautiful place.

The Snowy Day. Written and illustrated by Ezra Jack Keats. Viking, 1962.

The joys of childhood take on new meaning in this elegantly simple, sensitively illustrated account of a small boy's delight in his encounter with a world transformed by a snowstorm.

The Story of Ferdinand. Written by Munro Leaf. Illustrated by Robert Lawson. Viking, 1936.

A peace-loving bull who prefers smelling flowers to fighting is suddenly thrust into the bull ring with unexpected and hilarious results as depicted in a combination of a tongue-in-cheek text and black-and-white illustrations.

The Tale of Peter Rabbit. Written and illustrated by Beatrix Potter. Warne, 1902.

The classic story of the adventurous rabbit who ignored his mother's warnings to avoid Mr. MacGregor's garden is a unique blend of perfectly scaled watercolors with a precise text never equaled by its many imitators. Other titles by this author in the same understated small format are also recommended.

The True Story of the Three Little Pigs. Written by Jon Scieszka. Illustrated by Lane Smith. Viking, 1989.

An iconoclastic picture book for virtually all ages, this version of the familiar tale as told from the wolf's point of view explores new possibilities in the picture story format as it entertains contemporary readers. Equally daring, for more sophisticated readers, is *The Stinky Cheese Man: And Other Fairly Stupid Tales*, which experiments with the conventions of book design.

Where the Wild Things Are. Written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak. Harper, 1963.

Mischievous Max is sent to bed without supper. His anger takes him to a land where he is hailed as King of the Wild Things in an eye-catching panorama of a wild rumpus. He stays for a long time, but finally finds himself ready to come home—and his supper is “still hot.” A landmark title in exploring children's emotions through fantasy.

For Beginning Readers

The Cat in the Hat. Written and illustrated by Dr. Seuss. Random, 1957.

A simple vocabulary used with great effect in a rhythmic text tells of the problems that occur when an artful cat visits a household while mother is away. The resulting chaos rouses two children from boredom as they observe the frolicsome feline and his cohorts—Thing One and Thing Two—in action. Also recommended: *The Cat in the Hat Comes Back*; *Green Eggs and Ham*.

Frog and Toad Are Friends. Written and illustrated by Arnold Lobel. Harper, 1970.

The possibilities of a minimal vocabulary have never been more fully realized than in this engaging set of stories about two best friends who complement each other's idiosyncrasies with problems such as finding a lost button or providing comfort when one is ill. Illustrations in tones of brown and green capture the personalities of the characters. Other titles in the series are also recommended.

Little Bear. Written by Else Holmelund Minarik. Illustrated by Maurice Sendak. Harper, 1957.

Softly textured illustrations add a note of reassurance to four stories about a small bear and his mother and skillfully crafted to match the interests as well as the abilities of beginning readers. Other titles in the series are also recommended.



WHETHER IT IS FUNNY OR FANTASTIC, about people who could live next door or those who lived in days gone by, there is a book to suit just about every taste or situation.

Stories

Babe: The Gallant Pig. By Dick King-Smith. Illustrated by Mary Rayner. Crown, 1985. Intermediate.

How an engaging pig with impeccable manners avoids the fate of most porkers by becoming a champion sheep-herder is the remarkably believable premise of an outstanding animal fantasy. Written with a genuine feeling for English farm life, the book creates a cast of memorable characters captured as well in Mary Rayner's black-and-white drawings.

The Best Christmas Pageant Ever. By Barbara Robinson. Illustrated by Judith G. Brown. Harper, 1972. Intermediate.

When the Herdmans—"the worst kids in the world"—decide that they want to be part of the traditional Christmas pageant, the townsfolk anticipate a disaster. Surprisingly, they discover that this unusual interpretation adds new meaning to the Christmas story in the conclusion of a wildly funny, fast-moving book.

The Book of Three. By Lloyd Alexander. Holt, 1964. Intermediate.

The first of five books in *The Prydain Chronicles* introduces the principal characters who appear in the series including Assistant Pig Keeper Taran, the Princess Ellowny, Prince Gwydion, the faithful complaining Gurgi, and the vainglorious harpist Fflewddur Fflam. Indirectly inspired by Welsh mythology, flavored with humor, the tales depict the development of Taran into a heroic figure as he and his companions battle the forces of evil in a series of impelling adventures.

The Borrowers. By Mary Norton. Illustrated by Beth and Joe Krush. Harcourt, 1953. Intermediate.

A fully realized miniature world is the setting for an unusual fantasy based on the premise that a diminutive race of people lives by "borrowing" the necessities of life from human beings. Their ingenuity in adapting items like postage stamps or pins for their purposes is as intriguing as it is inventive. First in a series.

Bridge to Terabithia. By Katherine Paterson. Illustrated by Donna Diamond. Crowell, 1977. Intermediate.

Ten-year-old Jess Arons never envisioned the possibilities which the world might hold for him until Leslie Burke moved to his rural community in Virginia. First, she proved superior as a runner; then she introduced him to the joys of literature and the imagination as they worked together to create their own special kingdom—Terabithia. Although a tragic accident ends their idyll, Leslie's legacy endures in the hopeful ending of a beautifully crafted book.

Charlotte's Web. By E. B. White. Illustrated by Garth Williams. Harper, 1952. Intermediate.

The nature of friendship, the power of advertising, and the foibles of society are deftly explored in an unforgettable story featuring a runt pig who is saved from becoming pork chops by the intervention of a remarkable spider. Expressive black-and-white illustrations, executed in harmony with the text, add further distinction.

Harriet the Spy. By Louise Fitzhugh. Harper, 1964. Intermediate.

Determined to be a writer, Manhattan-raised sixth-grader Harriet M. Welsch records her gimlet-eyed observations of her world in a notebook which when discovered leads her into an unusual dilemma. With the help of Ole Golly, her eccentric but perceptive ex-nanny, she is able to resolve the situation to her advantage. A milestone in contemporary realism for children.

The Hobbit; or, There and Back Again. By J. R. R. Tolkien. With illustrations by the author. Houghton, 1938. Intermediate.

Bilbo Baggins, a home-loving mild little creature, finds himself enticed by the wizard Gandalf into a series of hazardous adventures involving goblins, Wargs, trolls, and a dragon named Smaug. A hero in spite of himself, Bilbo shows that ordinary individuals are sometimes capable of extraordinary feats. The blending of humor and suspense with a cast of distinctive characters make this unforgettable.

Humbug Mountain. By Sid Fleischman. Illustrated by Eric von Schmidt. Little, Brown, 1978. Intermediate.

A humorous frontier story written in an engaging tall-tale style chronicles the adventures of an itinerant newspaperman and his family as they journey westward in search of a missing relative. Dastardly villains, the unpredictable Missouri River, and an unexpected gold rush guarantee suspense as incidents follow one another at a frenzied pace.

The Hundred Dresses. By Eleanor Estes. Illustrated by Louis Slobodkin. Harcourt, 1944. Primary, Intermediate.

When shabby Wanda Petronski claims that she has one hundred dresses at home, she becomes a target for teasing by classmates who scorn her because she is different. Despite their cruelty, it is Wanda who triumphs and is remembered for her sterling character.

The Incredible Journey. By Sheila Burnford. Illustrated by Carl Burger. Little, Brown, 1961. Reissued Bantam/Skylark, 1990. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Seeking their family, two dogs and a cat traverse over two hundred miles of Canadian wilderness in a breathtaking saga of endurance that creates suspense without sentimentality.

Island of the Blue Dolphins. By Scott O'Dell. Houghton, 1960. Young Adult.

When her tribe leaves their island home, a young Indian girl remains behind with her brother. After his death, she struggles alone to stay alive until rescuers arrive eighteen years later. Based on a true story, this unforgettable first person narrative is one of the great survival stories of the twentieth century.

Johnny Tremain. By Esther Forbes. Illustrated by Lynd Ward. Houghton, 1943. Young Adult.

When a jealous fellow apprentice precipitates the accident which maims his hand, a bright, observant teenager, unable to continue his training as a silversmith, becomes embroiled in events leading to the opening battle of the American Revolution.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe. By C. S. Lewis. Illustrated by Pauline Baynes. Macmillan, 1950. Intermediate.

Four siblings, evacuees from London during World War II, discover the magic land of Narnia behind a wardrobe in the country home where they are staying with an elderly professor. Drawn into the story of a kingdom under the spell of a white witch, they join forces with the lion Aslan to defeat her in a classic confrontation between good and evil. Perhaps the most familiar of a series which concludes with *The Last Battle*, 1956.

Little House in the Big Woods. By Laura Ingalls Wilder. Illustrated by Garth Williams. Harper, 1953. Intermediate.

Family solidarity is the memorable element in a story of pioneer life based on the author's recollections of her own childhood. Details of daily living, the conquest of hardships through faith and determination, and above all the sense of security created by loving parents have endeared the Ingalls family to countless readers. First in a series.

Many Moons. By James Thurber. Illustrated by Louis Slobodkin. First published 1943. New edition illustrated by Marc Simont. Harcourt, 1990. Primary.

When cosseted Princess Leonore insists that she must have the moon in order to recover from the illness that has incapacitated her, she plunges the court into a frenetic search for a solution. After all the great minds have failed, the court jester triumphs in a logical conclusion to a sparkling spoof of the conventional fairy tale by one of America's foremost humorists.

Mary Poppins. By P. L. Travers. Illustrated by Mary Shepard. First published, 1934. Revised edition, Harcourt, 1981. Primary, Intermediate.

The storytelling tone immediately draws readers into events at Number Seventeen Cherry Tree Lane when that impeccable nursemaid Mary Poppins arrives on the East Wind and transforms the lives of her young charges. The episodic structure makes the book suited for reading aloud; the combination of Mary Poppins's acerbic personality and her magical powers guarantees adventures whether on a trip to the zoo or having afternoon tea. First of a series.

Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIMH. By Robert C. O'Brien. Illustrated by Zena Bernstein. Atheneum/Macmillan, 1971. Intermediate.

Threatened with the loss of home and family, Mrs. Frisby, a widowed field mouse, finds help from a colony of super-intelligent rat escapees from the NIMH laboratories, who have formed a unique rat society. The account of their metamorphosis, intertwined with Mrs. Frisby's problems, blends suspense with science and speculation.

The Perilous Gard. By Elizabeth Marie Pope. Illustrated by Richard Cuffari. Houghton, 1974. Young Adult.

At a time when beauty rather than brains assured success at the court of Mary Tudor, Kate Sutton was clever rather than comely. When she is unjustly exiled to a remote part of England, she inadvertently finds herself the captive of an otherworldly underground cult from which she not only must escape but must also prevent their sacrificing young Christopher Heron. A page-turning reworking of the "Tam Lin" story.

Pippi Longstocking. By Astrid Lindgren. Translated from the Swedish by Florence Lamborn. Illustrated by Louis S. Glanzman. Viking, 1950. Primary, Intermediate.

Resourceful superchild Pippi Longstocking lives alone with her monkey and horse. Unencumbered by parents, hers is an idyllic existence as she neatly outwits the efforts of adults to transform her actions into socially acceptable behavior. Wildly imaginative, thoroughly recalcitrant, she fascinates readers as readily as she fascinates the children next door. First in a series.

Ramona the Pest. By Beverly Cleary. Illustrated by Louis Darling. Morrow, 1968. Primary.

Perhaps the most memorable of Beverly Cleary's characters, the inventive Ramona has to cope with the realities of first days at school as a number of misunderstandings cause her to become a kindergarten dropout.

Funny yet touching, this is a wonderful introduction to a superb series that explores the tribulations and joys of everyday life.

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry. By Mildred D. Taylor. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Dial, 1976. Young Adult.

The effects of racism and segregation in Depression-era Mississippi are vividly evoked in a powerful novel which describes the almost daily humiliations placed on the Black community as well as the overt violence employed to terrorize its members. Under these circumstances, the unquenchable spirit and family solidarity of the Logans, the central characters, take on heroic dimensions. One of a series based on experiences of the author's family.

Sarah, Plain and Tall. By Patricia MacLachan. Harper, 1985. Intermediate.

Concerned that their father's mail-order bride may leave their prairie home to return to her native Maine, two motherless children have their fears allayed. An unsentimental but tender conclusion to a spare, thoughtful, and moving book.

The Shrinking of Treehorn. By Florence P. Heide. Illustrated by Edward Gorey. Holiday House, 1971. Primary, Intermediate.

Although this looks like a picture book, it is really an illustrated story that slyly pokes fun at the establishment in describing the tribulations of an ordinary boy who, for no apparent reason, starts to shrink. Narrated in a deadpan style with illustrations to match, this is a tale for those who enjoy off-beat humor.

The Sword in the Stone. By T. H. White. With decorations by the author and endpapers by Robert Lawson. Putnam, 1939. Intermediate, Young Adult.

The first book of *The Once and Future King* describes the development of young Wart into the future king Arthur, culminating in his retrieving the great sword imprisoned in an anvil. Narrated with humor and insight, this translates legend into human terms with overtones of fantasy and adventure.

Tuck Everlasting. By Natalie Babbitt. Farrar, 1975. Intermediate.

When ten-year-old Winnie Foster learns from the eternally young Jesse Tuck that a magic spring on her family's land is a fountain of youth, she is faced with a number of dilemmas, not the least of which is the temptation to become immortal. A compelling but unassuming story, this is an unforgettable book which blends suspense with a profound theme.

Winnie-the-Pooh. By A. A. Milne. Illustrated by Ernest Shepard. Dutton, 1926. Primary.

Stuffed animals come alive for Christopher Robin in a series of adventures featuring that endearing bear of little brain, Winnie-the-Pooh, whose capacity for trouble seems limitless. The situations are just right for younger readers who, like Christopher Robin, can rejoice in their own capabilities as they observe Pooh's entanglements. Ernest Shepard's illustrations blend fantasy and reality, adding engaging details to enhance the stories. First in a series.

The Witch of Blackbird Pond. By Elizabeth G. Speare. Houghton, 1958. Young Adult.

Transplanted from the warmth and color of Barbados to the chill environment of Puritan New England in 1687, sixteen-year-old Kit Tyler finds herself on trial as a witch for her nonconformist activities. A well-researched historical novel with memorable characters and a compelling plot.

A Wizard of Earthsea. By Ursula LeGuin. Illustrated by Ruth Robbins. Parnassus, 1968. Atheneum/Simon, 1991. Young Adult.

When young Ged violates the precepts of his training at the school for mages, he unleashes an evil force in the Archipelago of Earthsea. Because it is nameless, he must first learn its true nature so that by calling it, he can control it. The final confrontation takes place on a darkling plain where the revelation serves as a dramatic resolution to an absorbing fantasy. First of a series. Also recommended: *The Giver* by Lois Lowry. Houghton, 1993.



CONTEMPORARY RETELLINGS of classics originally written for adults offer today's children an introduction to their literary heritage through the artistry of authors and illustrators. Note: folklore has been included in a separate section.

Echoes of Times Past: Part One

A selection of retellings for children based on works from Ancient Days through the Eighteenth Century.

Black Ships before Troy: The Story of the Iliad. Retold by Rosemary Sutcliff. Illustrated by Alan Lee. Delacorte, 1993. Young Adult.

Homer's epic poem about the Trojan War becomes accessible to today's readers in a masterful and captivating prose retelling that clarifies the relationships among

the combatants and expands understanding of its causes and effects. Handsome watercolor illustrations highlight the drama. Also recommended: *The Children's Homer: The Adventures of Odysseus and the Tale of Troy*, retold by Padraic Colum and illustrated by Willy Pogany (Macmillan, 1982).

The Canterbury Tales. Written by Geoffrey Chaucer. Adapted by Barbara Cohen. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Introduction by Christopher Baswell. Lothrop, 1988. Young Adult.

Written with understanding of the source, this version of Chaucer's great work speaks to contemporary audiences through a fluid adaptation of stories told by four of the original participants in the famous pilgrimage to Canterbury: the Nun's Priest, the Pardoner, the Wife of Bath, and the Franklin. Full-color illustrations capture the personalities as well as the era. A picture-book version of "The Nun's Priest's Tale," *Chanticleer and the Fox*, adapted and illustrated by Barbara Cooney for younger readers (HarperCollins), is also recommended for its elegant interpretation of the dangers inherent in listening to flattery when a hapless rooster finds himself captured by a wily fox.

David's Songs: His Psalms and Their Story.

Selected and edited with an introduction by Colin Eisler. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Dial, 1992. All ages.

Set in the context of David's life and times, this retelling of the Psalms for a contemporary audience is accompanied by handsome full-color watercolor paintings that give vigorous impressions of the country and its people.

Gulliver in Lilliput. Retold by Margaret Hodges from *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift, illustrated by Kimberly Bulcken Root. Holiday House, 1995. Primary, Intermediate.

Although not written for children, *Gulliver's Travels*—particularly the section set in Lilliput where the narrator, an English doctor, encounters a kingdom of people not quite six inches high—has always intrigued young readers. In this retelling, the flavor of the original has been preserved in a fluent storytelling style complemented by detailed illustrations.

Robinson Crusoe. Written by Daniel Defoe. Illustrated by N. C. Wyeth. Repr. of 1990 edition, Running Press. Young Adult.

With ingenuity and patience, the lone survivor of a shipwreck succeeds in creating a personal kingdom on a deserted island with help, eventually, from the owner of a mysterious footprint. The full-color illustrations by N. C. Wyeth add luster to a book adopted by young readers rather than written for them.

St. George and the Dragon. Adapted by Margaret Hodges from *The Faerie Queen* by Edmund Spenser. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Little, 1984. Primary, Intermediate.

A prose retelling of the enduring legend in which England's patron saint overcomes a fearsome dragon and then marries the Lady Una is extended in full-color illustrations that match its dramatic appeal.

Stories from Shakespeare. Retold by Geraldine McCaughrean. Illustrated by Anthony Maitland. McElderry, 1995. Intermediate, Young Adult.

A brief but satisfying introduction sets the stage for fluid prose retellings of ten Shakespearean dramas familiar to most audiences including "Romeo and Juliet," "A Midsummer Night's Dream," "King Lear," "Macbeth," and "The Tempest." A list of characters precedes each story; pertinent quotations that give the flavor of the original are presented as sidebars. Also recommended is the classic retelling *Tales from Shakespeare* by Charles and Mary Lamb, first published in 1807. Puffin, 1988.



A SELECTION OF ENDURING STORIES from the great nineteenth and early twentieth-century writers for children reflects the qualities that make a book timeless — and a classic.

Echoes of Times Past: Part Two

Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries
through 1920

The Adventures of Pinocchio. (1883, 1891—first English translation) By Carlo Collodi. Illustrated by Roberto Innocenti. Translated by E. Harden. Creative Education, 1988. Intermediate.

For those used to the Disney version of the classic Italian story of the mischievous puppet who must earn the right to become a real boy, this oversized volume with magnificent, painterly illustrations blending character studies with evocative views of the Tuscan landscape offers new insights into a tale whose episodic structure makes it well suited for reading aloud. Another faithful translation is that by Carol D. Chiesa with the famous illustrations by Attilio Mussino and an introduction by M. Cimino. Reissued by Macmillan in 1969.

The Adventures of Tom Sawyer. (1876) Written by Mark Twain. Illustrated by Barry Moser. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1989. (Books of Wonder) Intermediate.

Whether it's conning his friends into whitewashing a fence, attending his own funeral, or trying to impress Becky Thatcher, Tom Sawyer immediately conjures up an image of small-town America in a story which combines down-to-earth humor with suspense. Full-color illustrations by Barry Moser capture setting and characters. Also recommended: *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn.* Illustrated by Steven Kellogg. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1993. (Books of Wonder) Young Adult. The redoubtable Huck, who plays a minor role in Tom's story, is the central character in a journey down the Mississippi on a raft that becomes his transition to adulthood.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland. (1865) By Lewis Carroll. Illustrated by John Tenniel. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1992. (Books of Wonder) Intermediate, Young Adult.

After failing down a rabbit hole one warm summer day, Alice is transported into a marvelously topsy-turvy world where she encounters a number of unusual characters, including the White Rabbit and the Cheshire Cat, as she copes with a dizzying array of strange events. Also recommended: *Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There*, the companion volume in the same series.

Anne of Green Gables. (1908) By Lucy Maud Montgomery. Illustrated by Inga Moore. With an introduction by Naomi Lewis. Holt, 1994. (Little Classics Edition) Intermediate.

When a middle-aged brother and sister are mistakenly given a girl rather than a boy to adopt, their lives are changed for the better in this chronicle of an imaginative, captivating orphan's growth from childhood to young womanhood. Set on Prince Edward Island, Canada, the story blends humor and humanity in an ageless portrait of a memorable character. (Intermediate, Young Adult)

Around the World in Eighty Days. (1873) By Jules Verne. Illustrated by Barry Moser. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1988. Intermediate.

Illustrations by Barry Moser highlight pivotal scenes in Phileas Fogg's adventures as he attempts to circumnavigate the globe in eighty days if he is to win a bet. Without benefit of modern transportation, his ingenuity in surmounting impossible odds is truly remarkable. Also recommended: *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea.* Scholastic, 1992. Perhaps the masterpiece by the "Father of Science Fiction," this description of the

underwater world dominated by the brilliant anarchist Captain Nemo blends adventure and scientific theories into the account of three captives who must somehow escape from the submarine Nautilus which is his headquarters and fortress.

Black Beauty: The Autobiography of a Horse. (1877) By Anna Sewell. Illustrated by Charles Keeping. Farrar, 1990. Also Holt, 1993 [Little Classics Edition]. Illustrated by Victor Ambrus. Introduction by Naomi Lewis. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Written in the first person from the horse's perspective, the story of Black Beauty's triumphs and tribulations, coupled with his observations on the appalling conditions under which horses labored in nineteenth-century society, became an important force for change. It is also so technically correct that it has enthralled generations of readers with its realism.

A Christmas Carol. (1843) By Charles Dickens. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Holiday House, 1983. Intermediate, Young Adult.

The reformation of money-grubbing Scrooge through the intervention of three spirits—and the influence of Tiny Tim—is an enduring tribute to the joys of the Christmas season—if properly observed. A 1995 edition illustrated with great verve by Quentin Blake, Margaret K. McElderry Books, is also recommended.

The Enchanted Castle. (1907) By E. Nesbit. Illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1992. (Books of Wonder) Intermediate.

Three children, looking for adventure in the woods adjacent to the school where they are spending their holidays, find a magic ring which leads them into a series of bizarre mishaps as they try to control its powers and solve the mystery of the Enchanted Castle. Full-color illustrations capture the fantasy as well as the atmosphere of Edwardian England. Also recommended: *Five Children and It*, in which five ordinary children are plunged into extraordinary adventures as the Psammead, a diminutive, furry sand fairy, grants them a wish a day.

Heidi. (1884—first English translation) By Joanna Spyri. Illustrated by Ted Rand. Holt, 1994. (Little Classics Edition) Intermediate.

A compact format, illustrated with color plates and black-and-white drawings, offers an appealing introduction to the story of the little orphan girl who transforms a bitter old man into a kindly guardian and an invalid adolescent into a healthy young woman. The magnificence of the Swiss landscape creates an unforgettable setting.

The Jungle Book: The Mowgli Stories. (1894, 1895) By Rudyard Kipling. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1995. (Books of Wonder) Intermediate.

A celebration of freedom from the restraints of everyday life in an exotic setting, the story of a boy raised by wolves in India's jungle is marked by Kipling's flair for description and sense of pacing. This centenary edition, which combines all the Mowgli stories into a single volume, features eighteen handsome watercolor illustrations. Also recommended: *The Just So Stories*, illustrated by Michael Foreman, Viking, 1987, which includes "The Elephant's Child," the tale of the small elephant whose "satiating curiosity" led to the development of that most useful appendage—a flexible trunk.

Little Women. (1868) Louisa May Alcott. Centennial Edition. Little Brown, 1968. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Because "it makes you feel like one of the family," generations of readers have returned again and again to the story of four sisters growing to maturity in the 1860s. Triumph and tragedy, romance and comedy—all part of the human condition—are artfully blended in an enduring "domestic drama."

Peter Pan. (1904) By James M. Barrie. Illustrated by Trina Schart Hyman. Scribner's/Macmillan, 1980. Intermediate.

Escape from the familiar sights and sounds of daily routines are offered to the three Darling children through the intervention of Peter Pan, an elfin, boyish figure who remains eternally young in a Neverland filled with adventures and peopled with unusual characters, among them the villainous Captain Hook. Trina Schart Hyman's illustrations add dimension to the fantasy.

The Secret Garden. (1911) By Frances Hodgson Burnett. Illustrated by Tasha Tudor. Harper, 1987. Intermediate.

The allure of a hidden garden and the discovery of a secret hidden in the rooms of Misselthwaite Manor, transform orphaned Mary Lennox from a disagreeable young girl into a feisty character with commonsense and genuine charm. Also recommended is *A Little Princess*, another variant on the perennially popular orphan theme, which celebrates Sara Crewes's indomitable spirit as she triumphs over the loss of her father, poverty, and ill-treatment in Miss Minchin's boarding school. Illustrated by Tasha Tudor. HarperCollins, 1963.

Treasure Island. (1883) By Robert Louis Stevenson. Illustrated by N. C. Wyeth. Scribner's/Macmillan, 1981. Intermediate, Young Adult.

When Jim Hawkins boards the Hispaniola as a member of an expedition searching for buried treasure, he soon discovers that most of the crew are pirates intent on securing a fortune for themselves under the leadership of Long John Silver. Full-color paintings illustrate pivotal incidents with dramatic effect.

Twelve Tales: Hans Christian Andersen. (1835–1871) Selected, translated, and illustrated by Erik Blegvad. McElderry, 1994. Primary, Intermediate.

Watercolors, skillfully cross-hatched, add warmth and charm to stories translated by the Danish-born illustrator in a format which will appeal to younger audiences. Among stories included are "The Steadfast Tin Soldier," "The Princess and the Pea," "The Swineherd," and "The Emperor's New Clothes." Recommended for intermediate readers, *Fairy Tales of Hans Christian Andersen*, collected and translated by Nell Philip with elegant, jewel-like illustrations by Isabelle Brent, features a dozen tales among which are "The Snow Queen" and "The Nightingale." Viking, 1995. For a complete collection, the definitive edition is *Hans Andersen: His Classic Fairy Tales*, translated by novelist Erik Haugaard, born and raised in Denmark, and illustrated by Michael Foreman. Doubleday, 1978. (Intermediate, Young Adult)

The Wind in the Willows. (1908) By Kenneth Grahame. Illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard. Scribner's/Macmillan, 1991. Intermediate.

Whether exploring the river in boats or adventuring in threatening woods, three animal friends—Mole, Ratty, and Toad—and their protector Badger are enduring, and endearing, representatives of human foibles. The plot is episodic, deriving most of its impetus from Toad's impulsive, frequently disastrous escapades, lending itself to reading aloud. Ernest Shepard's cross-hatched, detailed illustrations are a loving evocation of the English countryside as well as the characters.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz. (1900) By L. Frank Baum. Illustrated by W.W. Denslow. Afterword by Peter Glassman. Morrow, 1987. (Books of Wonder) Primary, Intermediate.

Originally titled simply *The Wizard of Oz*, the story of Dorothy's journey to the fabled Emerald City, accompanied by the Scarecrow, the Tin Woodman, and the Cowardly Lion has become, as its author hoped, "a modernized fairy tale, in which the wonderment and joy are retained and the heart-aches and nightmares are left out." The original illustrations, some in color, add a distinctive touch.

BECAUSE TRADITIONAL LITERATURE is by its very nature "classic," many of the following titles, published in the last few years, were selected as representing cultures sometimes overlooked in earlier compilations or as reflecting more contemporary styles of writing. The books may be new; the stories are timeless.

Myths, Legends, and Folklore

About Wise Men and Simpletons: Twelve Tales from Grimm. Written by Jakob and Wilhelm Grimm. Translated by Elizabeth Shub. Illustrated by Nonny Hogrogian. Macmillan, 1971. Primary, Intermediate.

The selection of tales from the first edition of the famous collection by the two German brothers includes such favorites as "Briar Rose" (a variant of "The Sleeping Beauty"), "Rapunzel," "Rumpelstiltskin," and "King Thrushbeard." Well-suited for reading aloud, the stories are enhanced by Nonny Hogrogian's interpretive etchings. With a foreword and a brief biography of the Brothers Grimm.

Aesop's Fables. Illustrated by Fritz Kredel. Grosset, 1963. (Deluxe edition.) Primary, Intermediate.

Although there are many fine versions of these stories, this substantial collection of more than ninety tales, illustrated with line drawings, offers a chance to sample some of the less familiar observations on nature and behavior. The traditional maxims serve as the conclusions to pithy retellings. An introduction describing Aesop's life, the origins of the fables, and the various ways in which they have been used adds still another dimension. Also recommended: *Aesop & Company*, prepared by Barbara Bader. Illustrated by Arthur Geisert. Houghton, 1991. Twenty of the more familiar tales are given a handsome setting in a thoughtfully designed edition with an informative foreword and stunning illustrations by a master etcher.

The Arabian Nights: Their Best Known Tales. Edited by Kate D. Wiggin and Nora A. Smith. Illustrated by Maxfield Parrish. Scribners/Macmillan, 1993. Intermediate.

A favorite collection for reading aloud, this handsomely produced volume with magical full-color illustrations, suggesting the opulence of turn-of-the-century book-making, features retellings of twelve tales from the vast repository of stories known collectively as "Tales of a Thousand and One Nights." Aladdin, Ali Baba, and Sinbad are among the featured personalities.

D'Aulaire's Book of Greek Myths. Retold and illustrated by Ingri and Edgar P. D'Aulaire. Doubleday, 1962, 1980. Primary, Intermediate.

A comprehensible narrative and large, interpretive illustrations adapted from the lithographic process, not only offer a lucid overview of the cosmic origins of Greek mythology but also clarify the relationships among the members of the pantheon including the squabbles between Jove and Juno. A map showing significant locations such as the birthplace of Heracles or the site of Hephestus's forge adds interest and dimension.

D'Aulaire's Norse Gods and Giants. Retold and illustrated by Ingri and Edgar P. D'Aulaire. Doubleday, 1967, 1986. Primary, Intermediate.

Accessible retellings of Norse myths feature, among others, the stories of Odin, Thor, and Loki. One important feature is an appended "Reader's Companion," a glossary that provides a phonetic transcription as well as the literal meaning of each term included. Vigorous, oversized, textured illustrations, like those for the Greek myths described above, are an adaptation of the lithographic process. Also recommended: *The Children of Odin: The Book of Northern Myths.* By Padric Colum. Illustrated by Willy Pogany. Macmillan, 1920, 1984. Young Adult. The stories of the Norse gods and heroes are integrated into a flowing narrative considered by many one of the finest retellings of this material.

Favorite Fairy Tales Told around the World. Selected and retold by Virginia Haviland. Illustrated by S. D. Schindler. Little, Brown, 1985. Primary.

Selections from a sixteen-volume collection of classic tales simply but not simplistically retold, this handsomely produced book offers an excellent introduction to the folklore of more than a dozen countries including Greece, India, Japan, and Russia as well as familiar tales such as "Jack and the Beanstalk" from England and "Puss and Boots" from France. Black-and-white finely detailed illustrations add substance and emotion to the text.

The Merry Adventures of Robin Hood. Written and illustrated by Howard Pyle. Dover, 1968. Intermediate.

First published in 1883, this version of the traditional English ballad established Pyle as an important figure in American children's literature. The illustrations, like the stories of Robin's many encounters with dastardly villains, are vigorous and filled with action. Romanticized descriptions of life in the green wood are particularly appealing to armchair adventurers.

Nursery Tales around the World. Selected and retold by Judy Sierra. Illustrated by Stefano Vitale. Clarion, 1996. Primary.

Eighteen stories from a variety of cultures, including African and Native American, add dimension to a handsomely designed, profusely illustrated book with helpful notes on reading aloud. Some of the stories, such as "The Gingerbread Boy," are familiar; others, such as "The Coyote and the Rabbit," will be new to many listeners. All are appealing. Motifs from the traditions of the countries represented are cleverly woven into the interpretive artwork.

The People Could Fly: American Black Folktales. By Virginia Hamilton. Illustrated by Leo and Diane Dillon. Knopf, 1985. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Written in a flowing narrative style, twenty-four stories from the African-American tradition are enhanced by forty dramatic illustrations executed in tones of gray. A variety of motifs are included from talking beasts to riddles. Many of the tales, such as "A Wolf and Little Daughter," are variants of familiar plots, but all reflect the oral tradition of the Black experience. Using "a reasonably colloquial language or dialect, depending on the folktale," the author gives the flavor of the sources without erecting barriers for her audience, as many would be fine choices for reading aloud.

The Rainbow People. Retold by Laurence Yep. Illustrated by David Wiesner. Harper & Row, 1989. Young Adult.

Based on stories collected in the Chinatown of Oakland, California, in 1930, these retellings offer new insight into the Chinese-American culture through a variety of tale types featuring such unusual characters as a Professor of Smells, a girl who weds a ghost, and a nose-y woodcutter who, like Rip Van Winkle, finds that he has returned to a different time after an enchanted encounter. With decorative illustrations in black and white.

Uncle Remus: The Complete Tales. Retold by Julius Lester. Illustrated by Jerry Pinkney. Dial, 1999. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Recast for contemporary audiences without the stereotypical narrator, Uncle Remus, this omnibus edition of Lester's retellings of the tales collected by Joel Chandler Harris is notable for its imagery and imaginative phrasing. Written in "a modified contemporary southern black English," the style reflects the origin of the tales but avoids the virtually incomprehensible phonetic transcription of the dialect used in the originals. Many old favorites are included—the story of Brer Rabbit's encounter with the Tar Baby, for example—as well as other exploits which may be less familiar. Jerry Pinkney's illustrations, many in full color, capture the

flavor of the retellings. Also recommended: *The Three Bears and 15 Other Stories.* Retold by Anne Rockwell. Crowell, 1975. Preschool, Primary.

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BECAUSE OF DATED INFORMATION or an essentially utilitarian approach, there are few nonfiction classics from the early years of publishing for children. Fortunately, in recent years, substantial advances have been made in developing a literary approach to factual material. Here are some representative selections with appeal for varied audiences.

Nonfiction

And Then What Happened, Paul Revere? Written by Jean Fritz. Illustrated by Margot Tomes. Coward-McCann, 1973. Primary, Intermediate.

Written with energy and exuberance, this is one of a series that revolutionized the writing of biography for younger readers. Paul Revere comes to life as a remarkably versatile patriot—not just the horseman remembered for alarming the Minutemen on April 19, 1775.

Anne Frank: The Diary of a Young Girl. Written by Anne Frank. Rev. ed. Translated by B. M. Mooyart. Introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt. Doubleday, 1967. Young Adult.

Written by a young Jewish girl forced into hiding after the Nazi invasion of Holland during World War II, this account of life under difficult circumstances has become one of the most poignant memoirs of that era.

Anne Frank. Beyond the Diary: A Photographic Remembrance. By Ruud and Rian Verhoeven. Viking, 1993. Young Adult.

Compiled from family albums by the Associates of the Anne Frank House in Amsterdam, this absorbing photobiography, expands the impact of the diary by placing it in historical perspective including an overview of Hitler's rise to power as well as commentary on the prewar life of the Franks, the years of concealment, and the aftermath of discovery by the Nazis.

Cathedral: The Story of Its Construction. Written and illustrated by David Macaulay. Houghton, 1973. Intermediate.

Detailed black-and-white drawings and a precise text blend the art of history and the art of architecture in a fascinating description of the building of a medieval cathedral. First in an outstanding series that includes *Castle, City, and Pyramid*.

"Charlie Needs A Cloak." Written and illustrated by Tomie dePaola. Prentice Hall, 1973. Primary.

How fleece becomes cloth is the theme of a comfortably sized, easy to read picture-information story with a witty text and equally inviting illustrations.

The Endless Steppe: Growing Up in Siberia. By Esther Hautzig. Crowell, 1968. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Considered "Capitalists and therefore enemies of the people," a ten-year-old Jewish girl and her family are transported from Poland to Siberia in the early days of World War II. Like latter-day Crusoes, their ability to survive in a hostile environment is directly related to their ingenuity and fortitude as described in an engrossing first-person narrative.

Harriet and the Promised Land. Written and illustrated by Jacob Lawrence. Simon, 1993. First published in 1962. Primary, Younger.

A biography in verse accompanies bold, expressionistic paintings by one of the twentieth century's greatest artists in celebrating the life of Harriet Tubman, born a slave, who led numbers of her people to freedom.

Lincoln: A Photobiography. Written by Russell Freedman. Clarion, 1987. Intermediate, Young Adult.

Written with the style and immediacy of a contemporary news story, this interpretation of historical events, illustrated with carefully selected photographs, offers fresh insight into Lincoln's life in an appealing format. *Indian Chiefs*, a collection of short, incisive biographies of Native Americans leaders, published by Holiday House, 1987, is also recommended.

Mary M. Burns, former Coordinator of the Curriculum Library at Framingham (MA) State College, is currently a children's literature consultant and lecturer. A long-time reviewer for *The Horn Book Magazine*, she has worked as a children's librarian in the Boston Public Library and as a secondary-school teacher. She has served on numerous award juries and chaired the 1988 Newbery Award committee. In 1999, she was the co-recipient, with Ann Flowers, of the Hope S. Dean Memorial Award, for promoting the appreciation and knowledge of children's literature.

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