

Good Books for Catholics to Read

Some of the children's books that we will recommend below are unfortunately hard to find, because they are out of print. We have found them by searching on Ebay, Abebooks, Thriftbooks, and other websites that sell old books. The age groups are simply approximations and can be intermixed. We hope to continue looking for and analyzing good (or bad) books so that we can expand this list. The books listed are those we are confident about recommending.

For Ages 1-5:

This category contains picture books and board books that include simple words or nursery rhymes to introduce the child to word meaning.

- *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*
 - *The Real Mother Goose* by Blanche Fisher Wright
 - [*Our Old Nursery Rhymes*](#) by Alfred Moffatt (This is a book of nursery rhymes made into songs that are very nice to sing with your children. You may listen to a recording of the songs in the book [here](#))
 - *Mother Goose* by Tasha Tudor
 - *The Jessie Wilcox Smith Mother Goose* by Jessie Wilcox Smith
 - *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes* by Marguerite de Angeli
- Other Nursery Rhyme Books
 - *Nursery Friends From France* by Olive Beaupre Miller (My Travelship series published by The Book House for Children)
 - *When We Were Very Young* by A. A. Milne
 - *My Very First Winnie-the-Pooh* [*Padded Board Book*](#) by A.A. Milne
 - *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson, Classic Illustrated Edition Board Book, compiled by Cooper Edens
 - *Little Book of Old Rhymes* by Cicely Mary Barker
 - Books illustrated by Randolph Caldecott
 - *The House that Jack Built*
 - *Ride A-Cock Horse to Branbury Cross & A Farmer went Trotting Upon his Grey Mare*
 - *The Farmer's Boy*
 - *Babes in the Woods*
 - *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*
 - *John Gilpin*
 - *Elegy on a Mad Dog*
 - *Sing a Song for Sixpence*
 - *The Queen of Hearts*

- *The Milk Maid*
 - *Hey-Diddle-Diddle and Baby Bunting*
 - *The Fox Jumps Over the Parson's Gate*
 - *A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go*
 - *Come, Lasses, and Lads*
 - *Mrs. Mary Blaze*
- Beatrix Potter
 - *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
 - *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*
 - *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*
 - *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*
 - *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse*
 - *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*
 - *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher*
 - *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*
- Alphabet Books
 - *I is One* by Tasha Tudor (available as a board book)
 - *A Apple Pie* by Gennady Spirin
- Days of the Year
 - *Around the Year* by Elsa Beskow (with a word of caution that the month of June has a picture of a family swimming; the other pictures are just fine)
 - *Pelle's New Suit* by Elsa Beskow
 - *Around the Year* by Tasha Tudor
- Short Stories
 - [*The Little Red Hen*](#) illustrated by Paul Galdone, an American fable

For Ages 5-8:

This category contains picture books with more words and longer stories to further the child's comprehension of literature.

- *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson
 - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations
 - Tasha Tudor's illustrations
- *Now We Are Six* by A.A. Milne
- Picture Books by Jan Brett
 - The books below that we recommend are all charming picture books with talking animals dressed in beautiful folk costumes. The same principles in [Dr. Marian Horvat's article](#) apply here: they are a good type of anthropomorphism. Although the prose in these children's books is not the most eloquent, the illustrations alone

make them worth the read. Most of them can be purchased in paperback, hardback, or Board Book form.

- *Berlioz the Bear*
- *The Easter Egg*
- *Town Mouse, Country Mouse*
- *The Mitten*
- *The Owl and the Pussycat*
- *Gingerbread Baby*
- *The Twelve Days of Christmas*
- Aesop's Fables
 - *The Aesop for Children* by Milo Winter
- Fairy Tales
 - *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
 - *King Midas and the Golden Touch* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
 - *The Adventures of Tom Thumb* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
 - *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
 - *The Frog Princess* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
 - *The Crane Wife* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
 - *The White Cat* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
 - [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#) (Germany - Below we list some of our favorites.)
 - Hansel and Gretel
 - Cinderella
 - Rumpelstiltskin
 - The Goose Girl
 - Snow White and Rose Red
 - Our Lady's Child
 - Hans Christian Andersen's Fairy Tales (Denmark)
 - Thumbelina
 - The Ugly Duckling
 - The Snow Queen
 - The Little Mermaid
 - The Nightingale
 - *The Blue Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang
 - *One Thousand and One Nights* – Arab folk tales
- *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams
- Saint's Stories
 - *Little Nellie of Holy God* by Sister John Vianney
 - *In God's Garden: Stories of the Saints for Little Children* by Amy Steedman
 - *The Child To Whom Nobody Was Kind* by Father Faber

For Ages 8-12:

- *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
 - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations are particularly charming
- *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
 - E. H. Shepard - the original illustrator
- *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi
 - Roberto Innocenti's illustrations
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge
- *The Art-Literature Readers* by Eulalie Osgood Grover (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
- Saint's Stories:
 - *The Life of Dominic Savio* by John Bosco
 - *A Flower of Fatima* by Reverend Galamba De Oliveira
 - *Little Therese* by Pere Carbonel, S.J. (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
 - *King of the Golden City* by Mother Mary Loyola

For Ages 13-15:

- *The Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- *The Nutcracker* by Alexandre Dumas
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Beowulf* - an Anglo-Saxon epic poem
- *The Song of Roland*
- *The White Stag* by Kate Seredy
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving
- Religious Books:
 - *The Catholic Girl's Guide* by Father Lasance
 - *The Young Man's Guide* by Father Lasance
 - *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine

For Ages 15- up: The Good “Great Books”

- *Ethics* by Aristotle
- *Republic* by Plato
- *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad* by Homer
 - However, these should be read carefully as some scenes are indecent and/or excessively violent. It would be good to go through the books and either cover the pages that include indecent scenes or tell the child not to read those sections.
- *The Aeneid* by Virgil
- *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
 - As with Homer’s works, a young adult should not read this alone. With a guided reading, it is a good example of a Greek tragedy that formed the mindset of the Greeks.
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri
- *Confessions* by St. Augustine
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
 - Some of these tales present indecent or immoral scenarios, so a careful perusal of the stories is necessary to discern which stories are acceptable to read. The impure tales such as “The Miller’s Tale” and “The Shipman’s Tale”, as well as the vulgar tales such as “The Summoner’s Tale” should be avoided.
 - Tales that we can recommend are “The Pardoner’s Tale”, “The Clerk’s Tale”, “The Prioress’ Tale”, “The Second Nun’s Tale”, “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”, “The Parson’s Tale”.
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
 - For all of the Shakespeare plays, we recommend not watching live performances of them, because the actors almost always overemphasize the raunchy jokes and insinuos. When reading the play, you can often overpass the vulgar parts without realizing what was said. The plays we recommend are the least vulgar of them all.
- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare
- *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare
- *Everyman* – 15th Century morality play
- *Lord of the World* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hemon

“Great Books” to Avoid

- *Gulliver’s Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells
- *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh
- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
 - Although this book - and others of Jane Austen’s - can be read to better understand and critically analyze her times, it is very romantic and also slightly feminist. Young ladies should especially be cautious if they read this book, because they can easily fall into the trap of sentimentalism.
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
 - This book can be read to analyze the Northern soldiers of the Civil War; however, it is very dark, vulgar, and depressing. It does not present the noble ideal of a soldier that should be instilled in young men, even if it is a realistic portrayal of many of the Civil War soldier’s attitudes towards the war.
- *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
 - This book has many impure scenes in it; therefore, women especially should not read it. However, if a man is analyzing it to better understand modern society, it is very thought-provoking, though this should still be done under strict guidance because the impurity in the story constitutes an occasion of sin. We do not recommend high school age boys to read it.
- *1984* by George Orwell
 - The same criteria for the above book applies here.

The following were on the Index of Forbidden Books:

- *Les Miserable* and *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo
 - These books were on the Index until 1959, when they were removed most likely due to Modernist reasons.
- *Candide* by Voltaire
- *Paradise Lost* by John Milton
- All of Thomas Hobbes’ works
- All of David Hume’s works
- *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke
- *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant
- *Meditations* by René Descartes
- *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus

- *The Prince* by Machiavelli

Songbooks:

Traditional catholic hymns can be found online at hymnary.org, where the following recommended old hymnals are available. By searching the internet for these hymnals, it is also easy to find full PDF copies of them.

- *The St. Gregory Hymnal*
- *The Pius X Hymnal* (1953)
- *Laudate Hymnal* (1942)
- *St. Basil's Hymnal* (1953)

Many folk songs from around the world are innocent and melodious, though they should be sung with discretion, for some are over-romantic and/or sensual. There are many folk song books available for purchase online. Below we list a few we recommend (all in English):

- *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs* by the Hall & McCreary Company
- *American Folk Songs for Children* by Ruth Crawford Singer
- *The Follett Book of Cradle Songs: Lullabies from around the world* by Lynne Knudsen
- *The Oxford Book of Carols*

There are also a few websites where sheet music for folk songs is available for free:

[Mama Lisa's World](#) and [Beth's Notes](#)