



TWENTY-FIVE WONDERFUL BOOKS FOR OLDER READERS

List compiled by Read Me a Story, Ink.

Since abilities vary so widely, I have listed the books only as “younger” or “older”. This is a starting point and many of the books labeled “younger” could easily be enjoyed by anyone. (After all, I’m 60 and I like them). Books with no designation are appropriate for anyone in grades six through twelve.

Anderson, M.T. **Jasper Dash and the Flame Pits of Delaware.** 9–14 yrs. Written for lovers of fantasy, mystery, action, and... Delaware, **Jasper Dash** is reminiscent of old Hardy Boy’s mysteries and other kid’s crime series. M.T. Anderson tells the story of Jasper, Lillie, and Katie as they are drawn into the fantastical land of Delaware to help save the monks of a threatened monastery. But to do it they must elude gangsters, tyrannical government, and mountain squids. M.T. Anderson writes with genius humor, paralleled by extreme beauty and thoughtfulness. *A must read* for all humans aged nine to infinity.

Bauer, Joan. **Rules of the Road.** *Younger.* A gritty 16 year-old girl drives her boss to Texas trying to save her chain of shoe stores from takeover. A book about honor written with humor and a big heart.

Beagle, Peter S. **The Last Unicorn.** Traditional unicorn lore at its very best and the book that made Peter S. Beagle a benchmark in the world of fantasy.

Brooks, Terry. **Magic Kingdom for Sale/Sold.** *Younger.* Pure fun! A big shot lawyer, saddened by the death of his wife and disgusted with the practice of law, inquires after an ad in a Neiman-Marcus-style Christmas catalogue. To his surprise, there is a kingdom for sale complete with a hapless wizard, knights, fair maidens and the rest. Unfortunately this kingdom is just a bit run down and badly in need of a new king.

Card, Orson Scott. **The Seventh Son.** *Younger.* Based on the folklore of the unusual powers possessed by a seventh son, this is the story of the seventh son of a seventh son with very unique abilities. Set in the 19th century Ohio Valley.

De Lint, Charles. **Someplace to be Flying.** *Older.* An urban fantasy about the coming war of the “animal people” that live among us (and there are more than you think).

Edmonds, Walter D. **Bert Breen’s Barn.** *Younger.* Set in 19th century Pennsylvania, a young boy decides the best way to a better life for his mother and two sisters is to buy Old Bert Breen’s barn and move it onto their land. Rumors of treasure hidden in the barn leads to some unwanted competition for young Tom. A nice work of historical fiction and a good mystery to boot. This is on my personal list of top ten favorite books to read aloud.

Finney, Jack. **Time and Again.** *Older.* An ingenious time travel novel with descriptions of 19th century New York City that are so good I found myself reading this more as a memoir, forgetting that it was a novel.

Gaines, Ernest J. **A Lesson Before Dying.** *Older.* When a young black man is convicted of a murder he didn’t commit, a black teacher begins his education in how to die with dignity.

Hardinge, Frances. **The Lie Tree.** *Older.* Faith's addiction is a need to know, even if it requires a little eavesdropping — not something expected of a prim young Victorian lady. She wants to know why her father, a world renowned naturalist, has been declared a fraud and a cheat. And she especially wants to know why he has suddenly uprooted their family from the comfortable home in Kent and moved them to desolate Vane Island, all the while hording a mysterious box that everyone is forbidden to touch. In this spectacular novel for young adults, no relation is what it seems, each page begs for resolve but offers none and only those that finish will finally be able to breathe a sigh of relief for a wonderfully satisfying conclusion.

Hughart, Barry. **Bridge of Birds.** *Older.* The highly fantastic adventures of 16 year-old "Number Ten Ox" and the very ancient "Master Lee". "A novel of an Ancient China That Never Was". This was followed by two sequels which are equally good.

Kidd, Sue Monk. **The Secret Life of Bees.** *Older.* This is one of the more remarkable books that I have read recently. A young white girl in South Carolina leaves her abusive father with her black nanny and follows an elusive trail left by her dead mother. The trail leads to the home of three black beekeeping sisters. With the help of the sisters she unravels her past and finds that family is defined more by love than blood.

King, Laurie. **The Beekeeper's Apprentice.** *Older.* Sherlock Holmes meets his match in a 15 year-old girl who is every bit the sleuth he is. Holmes takes her on as an apprentice and ultimately they match wits with one of Holmes' darkest adversaries. Worthy in its own right and not just as imitation.

Magorian, Michelle. **Goodnight Mr. Tom.** This was originally recommended to me by a fifth grade teacher as a read-aloud. It immediately became an all-family favorite. In World War II England, during the Battle of Britain, young Willie Beech is evacuated to the countryside during the Nazi bombardments. Assigned to the home of the reclusive and ill-tempered, Old Tom Oakley, neither Willie nor Tom like their new circumstance. But as Mr. Tom realizes that Willie has been horribly abused, his attitude softens opening the door to a bond of love badly needed by both of them. When Willie is returned to his abusive mother, the action comes to a head when Mr. Tom heads to London to reclaim his "son." Books just don't get better than this.

McKinley, Robin. **Beauty.** A wonderful and unusual retelling of Beauty and the Beast. This one is also on my personal list of top ten favorite books to read aloud. Okay, it may be a "chick book" but my boys loved it and it was one of the few books that my wife wouldn't let us read unless she was home.

Napoli, Donna Jo. **Stones in Water.** *Younger.* Two young Italian friends, one gentile and one Jewish, are kidnaped by the Germans to be used as forced labor. Throughout their travel to Siberia, they must keep the young Jewish boy's identity a secret lest he be killed by the Germans. This is a powerful book about a little known aspect of the holocaust.

Ness, Patrick. **A Monster Calls.** *Older.* A thirteen year old boy, a reoccurring nightmare, a mother giving way to cancer, a yew tree that transforms into a storytelling monster are themes woven together so deftly by Patrick Ness and married so impeccably with Jim Kay's haunting illustrations, that this is a go to the top of the list, must read!

Potok, Chaim. **The Chosen.** *Older.* This is one of the best books in Jewish literature. This is the story of Reuven Malter, the son of a gentle orthodox scholar, and Danny Saunders, the son of a Hasidic rabbi. Despite living only two blocks apart, their lives are worlds apart. Through a growing friendship they learn to understand each other's lives and help each other with difficult decisions about their futures.

Priest, Christopher. **The Prestige.** *Older.* Dueling magicians in the 19th century, each trying to best the other. A surprise and fantastic ending brings the book to a wonderful conclusion.

Pullman, Philip. **The Golden Compass**. This is one of the richest and most complex fantasies written for young adults in recent years and has garnered quite a following among adult readers. Two young heroes travel through alternate universes in a race against time and growing forces of evil. Followed by two amazing sequels, the trilogy is known as HIS DARK MATERIALS.

Salisbury, Graham. **Under the Blood Red Sun**. *Younger*. A young Japanese boy and his family living in Hawaii at the time of Pearl Harbor struggle to understand the hatred directed at them. Historical fiction at its best.

Snyder, Midori. **The Flight of Michael McBride**. *Older*. "A Fantasy of the American West"

Vanderpool, Clare. **Moon Over Manifest**. 10–14 yrs. Set in depression America, 12 year-old Abilene can't understand why her drifter daddy has sent her to his boyhood home of Manifest, Kansas for the summer. Determined to unravel the mystery of her daddy's past, Abilene tries to piece together life in Manifest in 1917 via stories by the local fortune teller, a series of letters she discovers and articles from the local paper. What she discovers are stories within stories, a family and a home for her and her dad. The author's debut novel and winner of the Newbery Medal for 2011, this is historical fiction at its very best.

Van der Post, Laurens. **A Story Like the Wind**. *Older*. This is one of the best "coming of age" books that I have read. Written for adults, it is loosely based on the author's own experiences growing up in South Africa. A young British boy lives on a remote farm with his parents in South Africa surrounded by the native tribes who help run the farm. Living in two cultures the boy grows to love Africa and its native peoples. A tragic ending is the segue for the equally good sequel **A Far-Off Place**.

Yolen, Jane. **Briar Rose**. A young woman looks into the origins of a story told to her and her sisters by her Grandmother when they were young. The trail ultimately leads to Hungary during the Holocaust and the near fatal experience of her Grandmother in the death camps. Books don't get much better than this.