Definitions:

- **Children’s literature**— both fiction and non-fiction books, written especially for children 0-12 years old.
- **Young adult literature**— both fiction and non-fiction books, written for people 13-18 years old.
- **Genre**— a category of literature defined by their shared characteristics. Within each genre, there are many sub-genres.
- **Chapter book**— stories generally longer than 48 pages, and written in a chapter format.
- **Trade books**— all books published for children and young adults that are not primarily published as part of a basal reading series, or to be used as a textbook in schools; "real" books, not textbooks.
- **Basal reading series**— Reading or Language Arts textbooks which are arranged in a series, containing anthologies and/or actual literature.
- **Our Children’s and Young Adult Literature section** contains links to many useful web sites, including information on authors, and other recommended reading lists.
- **Our Digital Resource Subscriptions** web page contain a number of literature databases. The Edmonton Public School’s "Literature Arrangements," can be viewed by genre. Another example is **Novelist Plus**, which reviews books by genre.

What makes a good book? While there are some specific questions to ask for each genre below, these general questions are useful in evaluating many genres of books:

- Does the book tell an interesting story?
- Is the story appropriate for the intended age range and does it appeal to them?
- Is the book well-written?
- What does the reader anticipate from the title and format of the book?
- Does the story have a theme?
- Is the theme worth conveying to children?
- Is the theme overtly moralistic?
- Is the plot well-constructed?
- Is the plot original, fresh and believable?
- Are the characters convincing and credible, and do they grow and change from their experiences?
- Is the dialogue natural and suited to the characters in the story?
- If there are illustrations in the book, do they add significantly to the the text, and visa versa?
- Does the story avoid sex, race, or other stereotypes?
- Did the book provide for a pleasurable reading experience?
- What have reviewers said about this title?
• Does the author know much about the location/time period/people/subject he/she is writing about?
• If applicable, are all the significant facts included and is the coverage of the subject well balanced?
• Is the style of writing appropriate to the subject of the book?
• For informational books, how accurate are the facts presented in the book?
• For informational books, is the book well organized? Is there a table of contents, index, or bibliography?

**Our Favourite Authors by Genre**
(Many authors write in more than one genre.)

**Picture Books (Format)**

**Definition:** A book in which the picture is as important as the text. This is a genre based on a physical format, so it can contain titles from many of the other genres. It includes picture books, illustrated storybooks, wordless storybooks, concept books, and informational books. In picture books, both text and illustration are fused together, to provide more than either can do alone (the whole is greater than the sum of the parts). Illustrated story books are different from picture books in that the text can stand alone and the illustrations are secondary to the text, yet complements the text. These books are generally up to 48 pages in length.

**Authors/Illustrators to explore:** Paulette Bourgeois, Eric Carle, Babette Cole, Donald Crews, Sarah Ellis, Marie-Louise Gay, Phoebe Gilman, Georgia Graham, Lois Ehlert, Kevin Henkes, Tomson Highway, Hazel Hutchins, Teddy Jam, Ann Jonas, Ezra Jack Keats, Steven Kellogg, Michael Kusugak, Julie Lawson, Janet Lunn, David Pelham, Brian Pinkey, Barbara Reid, Marilynn Reynolds, Maurice Sendak, Chris van Allsburg, Ian Wallace, Melanie Watt, David Wiesner, Tim Wynne-Jones

**Titles to explore:** "Graphic Alphabet" by David Pelletier, "If" by Sarah Perry, The Wall: Growing up behind the iron curtain by Peter Sis, The Rabbits by John Marsden, Crazy hair by Neal Gaiman, Sector 7 by David Weisner, Zathura by Chris Van Allsburg, Shin-chi’s canoe by Nicola Campbell, Miss Nelson has a field day by Harry Allard, Northern lights: The soccer trails by Michael Kusugak, Here is the Arctic winter by Madeleine Dunphy, Chester by Melanie Watt, David gets into trouble by David Shannon, Flip, flop, fly: Seeds on the move by JoAnn Macken, Click, clack, moo: Cows that type by Doreen Cronin.

**Library Catalogue subject headings:** picture books, stories without words, nursery rhymes, stories in rhyme, alphabet, counting

**Recommended reading list:** Bill Glaister’s Bucket List of Best Picture Books For Educators, Marilyn Baillie Picture Book Award, Picture Books for Older Readers

**Poetry Books**

**Definition:** Poetry books can range from poetry that rhymes to free verse and concrete verse. It takes the sound of language and arranges it in beautiful forms. Each word is chosen carefully for its sound and its meaning. It appeals to both the thoughts and feelings of the reader.

**Authors to explore:** Maya Angelou, David Booth, David Bouchard, Kalli Dakos, Sheree Fitch, Paul Fleischman, Robert Frost, Mel Glenn, Mary Ann Holeman, Lee Bennett Hopkins, Paul B. Janeczko, Dennis Lee, Lois Lesynski, A.A. Milne, Naomi Shihab Nye, Jack Prelutsky, Shel Silverstein, Jane Yolen

**Titles to explore:** "In Flanders Fields" by Linda Granfield, "Joyful Noise : Poems for Two Voices" by Paul Fleischman, "Nothing Beats a Pizza" by Lois Lesynski, How do dinosaurs say good night? by Jane Yolen, Sam’s sandwich by David Pelham, Science Contributors: Margaret Rodermond, Bill Glaister, Barbara Huston. August 2003. Updated by Bill Glaister and Beth Cormier September 2013.
verse by Jon Scieszka, I am phoenix: Poems for two voices by Paul Fleischman, The secret of your name by David Bouchard, Flicker flash by Joan Graham, Insectlopedia by Douglas Florian, Pass the poetry by Lee Bennett Hopkins, A maze me by Naomi Nye, Stories of the Amutalik, A kick in the head: An everyday guide to poetic forms by Paul Janeczko, If I had a million onions by Sheree Fitch.

- **Library Catalogue subject headings:** Poetry, children's poetry, haiku, free verse, concrete poetry, visual poetry, narrative poetry, limericks, ballads, odes.
- **Recommended reading list:** Poems and Rhymes for Children, Poetry Power, Words to Share: A Bibliography of Poetry for Children and Teens

## Traditional Literature and “Fractured” or “Twisted” Tales

**Definition:** This literature is born of oral tradition, and is passed orally from generation to generation. It often has "retold by" or "adapted by" in front of the author, on the title page of the book. It often starts with the phrase "Once upon a time..." and often has a happy ending. The story often includes patterns of 3 (3 characters, 3 tasks, 3 events, etc.). There are many versions of the same story. Good always conquers evil. Sub-genres of traditional literature include fairy tales, folk tales, Mother Goose rhymes, legends, myths, proverbs, epics, and fables.

- "Fractured" Fairy Tales are traditional tales, told with a new "twist."
- **Authors to explore:** Laszlo Gal, Marie-Louise Gay, Phoebe Gilman, Paul Goble, Steven Kellogg, Gail Carson Levine, Celia Lottridge, James Marshall, Tolowa Mollel, Martin Rafe, Jon Scieszka, C.J. Taylor, Jane Yolen, Ed Young, Paul Zelinsky
- **Library Catalogue subject headings:** fairy tales, folklore, legends, mythology, fables, twisted tales.
- **Recommended reading list:** Folk & Fairy Tales, Cinderella stories, Fractured Fairy Tales

## Modern Fantasy, Science Fiction

**Definitions:**

- **Modern fantasy** is rooted in traditional literature, but has an identifiable author. Modern fantasy also includes modern fairy tales like those from Hans Christian Andersen. In general, modern fantasy stories involve magic, the "quest," and/or "good versus evil." Fantasy creates an alternative universe, which operates on laws different than our own. Sub-genres of fantasy include animal fantasy, quest fantasy, machine fantasy, toy and doll fantasy, time fantasy, comic fantasy, high fantasy, and other world fantasy.

High fantasy are complex stories characterized by recurring themes and often take place in created or imaginary worlds.

- **Science fiction**, or speculative fiction, speculates on what might happen in the future in our universe, so it has some basis in our reality. The books in this genre address themes of love, justice, truth, loyalty, goodness, courage, wisdom, etc. Sometimes the line between fantasy and science fiction is blurred, with elements of both genres in the story.

- **Authors to explore**: Lloyd Alexander, Marion Zimmer Bradley, Orson Scott Card, Suzanne Collins, Lewis Carroll, Kristin Cashore, John Christopher, Susan Cooper, Roald Dahl, Peter Dickinson, Cornelia Funke, Alan Garner, Ursula Le Guin, Monica Hughes, Madeleine L'Engle, C.S. Lewis, Margaret Mahy, Anne McCaffrey, Robin McKinley, Kenneth Oppel, Tamora Pierce, Philip Pullman, Rick Riordan, J.K. Rowling, Richard Scrimger, William Sleator, Cora Taylor, J.R.R. Tolkien

- **Titles to explore**: "Tuck Everlasting" by Natalie Babbitt, "Charlotte’s Web" by E.B. White, "The Velveteen Rabbit" by Margery Williams, "Winnie the Pooh" by A.A. Milne, "The Giver" by Lois Lowry, "Ella Enchanted" by Gail Carson Levine, The lightning thief by Rick Riordan, Eragon by Christopher Paolini, The princess academy by Shannon Hale, Sword of the rightful king by Jane Yolen, Silverwing by Kenneth Oppel, Airborn by Kenneth Oppel, Sorcery and Cecelia or the enchanted chocolate pot by Patricia Wrede, Everlost by Neal Shusterman, Inkheart by Cornelia Funke, Nose from Jupiter by Richard Scrimger.

- **Library Catalogue subject headings**: fantasy, magic fiction, science fiction

- **Recommended reading lists**: [Science Fiction and Fantasy for Children](#), [Wands and Worlds: Fantasy and Science Fiction for Children and Teens](#), and [Science Fiction and Fantasy for Children: An Annotated Bibliography for Educators](#)

### Contemporary Realistic Fiction

- **Definition**: Titles dealing with the problems and joys of living today. There is often an element of character growth or self-realization in the book. Titles can promote tolerance and understanding of others and their experiences. It “extends children’s horizons by broadening their interests, allowing them to experience new adventures and showing them different ways to view and deal with conflicts in their own lives” ([Through the eyes of a child](#), p. 363)

- **Authors to explore**: William Bell, Martha Brooks, Sigmund Brouwer, Betsy Byars, Matt Christopher, Beverly Cleary, Caroline B. Cooney, Sharon Creech, Chris Crutcher, Christopher Paul Curtis, Lois Duncan, Sarah Ellis, Jack Gantos, Martyn Godfrey, Will Hobbs, Julie Johnston, Thomas King, Gordon Korman, Jean Little, Lois Lowry, Roy MacGregor, Walter Dean Myers, Joan Lowery Nixon, Joyce Carol Oates, Gary Paulsen, Katherine Paterson, Louise Rennison, Cynthia Rylant, Arthur Slade, Theodore Taylor, Cynthia Voigt, Eric Walters, Eric Wilson, Tim Wynne-Jones

- **Titles to explore**: "Shiloh" by Phyllis Reynolds Naylor, "Bridge to Terabithia" by Katherine Paterson, "Holes" by Louis Sachar, "Speak" by Laurie Halse Anderson, Odd man out by Sarah Ellis, True blue by Sarah Ellis, Lucas: A story of love and hate by Kevin Brooks, Stones by William Bell, Big mouth and ugly girl by Joyce Oates, Bat summer by Sarah Withrow. All these things I’ve done by Gabrielle Zevin, Fighting Reuben Wolfe by Markus Zusak. One of those hideous books where the mother dies by Sonya Sones, Getting the girl by Susan Juby, A corner of the universe by Ann Martin, The falls by Eric Walter, Ruby Holler by Sharon Creech. Most beautiful place in the world by Ann Cameron, Stink and the incredible super galactic jawbreaker, Marvin’s best Christmas present ever by Katherine Paterson, King of the castle by Kathy Stinson, Akimbo and the lions by Alexander Smith, Horrible Harry and the Goog by Suzy Kline. Ten rules you absolutely must not break if you want to survive the school bus by John Grandits.

- **Library Catalogue subject headings**: humorous stories, detective and mystery stories, school stories, adventure stories, survival stories, sports stories, animals fiction, various subjects + fiction (e.g. death fiction)

- **Recommend reading list**: [Favorite Teenage Angst Books](#), [Adventure and Survival Stories](#), [Young Adult Sports Stories](#), [Humorous Fiction for Teens](#)
Historical Fiction and Biography

- **Definition:** Realistic fiction set in the past. Readers can gain an understanding of the past and relive past events vicariously. Biography includes biographical fiction, fictionalized biography, authentic biography and autobiography.

- **Authors to explore:** Lloyd Alexander, Avi, William Bell, Cathy Beveridge, Karen Cushman, Brian Doyle, Deborah Ellis, Jean Fritz, Linda Granfield, Barbara Greenwood, Joy Kogawa, Iain Lawrence, Janet Lunn, Patricia MacLachlan, Carol Matas, Scott O'Dell, Katherine Paterson, Kit Pearson, Ann Rinaldi, Barbara Smucker, Rosemary Sutcliff, Cora Taylor, Mildred Taylor, Laura Ingalls Wilder, Paul Yee, Laurence Yep

- **Titles to explore:** "The Diary of a Young Girl" by Anne Frank, "Number the Stars" by Lois Lowry, "The Slave Dancer" by Paula Fox, "Little by Little" by Jean Little, "Hana's Suitcase" by Karen Levine, "Our Canadian Girl" (series), "Dear Canada" (series), Shi-shi-etko by Nicola Campbell, Shin-chi's canoe by Nicola Campbell, Pink and Say by Patricia Polacco, Live it series by Molly Aloian, Terror at Turtle Mountain by Penny Draper, Prisoner of Dieppe by Hugh Brewster, no moon by Irene Watts, Yellow star by Jennifer Roy, Megiddo's shadow by Arthur Slade, A company of fools by Deborah Ellis, A rebel's daughter by Janet Lunn, Greener grass by Caroline Pignat, The apprentice's masterpiece: A story of medieval Spain by Melanie Little, The landing by John Ibbiton Haunted by Barbara Haworth-Attard, The convicts by Iain Lawrence, The book thief by Markus Zusak, Milkweed by Terry Spinelli, Elijah of Buston by Christopher Curtis, Blood and iron by Paul Yee, Ann and Seamus by Kevin Major, Eye of the crow by Shane Peacock, Boy O' boy by Brian Doyle, Four steps to death by John Wilson.

- **Library Catalogue subject headings:** Historical fiction, place + fiction, time + fiction, biography, individual's name, war stories

- **Recommended reading list:** Geoffrey Bilson Award for Historical Fiction for Young People, The Scott O'Dell Award for Historical Fiction

Informational Books

- **Definition:** Informational books can also be called non-fiction books. Informational books must be accurate, authentic, up-to-date, factual, clearly organized, and include illustrations when needed. These books should avoid anthropomorphism, stereotypes and generalizations. Sub-genres include photo documentaries, narrative texts, how-to books, question and answer books, activity books, field guides/identification books, survey books, concept books and life-cycle books.

- **Authors to explore:** Isaac Asimov, Vivien Bowers, Hugh Brewster, Joanna Cole, Russell Freedman, Gail Gibbons, Linda Granfield, Barbara Greenwood, Steve Jenkins, Bobbie Kalman, Kathleen Krull, David Macaulay, Elizabeth MacLeod, Frederick L. & Patricia C. McKissack, Milton Meltzer, Jim Murphy, Seymour Simon, Peter Sis, Diane Swanson, Shelley Tanaka, Larry Verstraete

- **Titles to explore:** "Eyewitness books" (series), "Transformed: how everyday things are made" by Bill Slavin, Lightship by Brian Floca, Case files: 40 murders and mysteries solved by science by Larry Verstraete, Transformed: How everyday things are made by Bill Slavin, Animal AhA! Thrilling discoveries in wildlife science by Diane Swanson, The tree of life: Charles Darwin by Peter Sis, Guess what is growing inside this egg by Mia Posada, Explorers who made it...or died trying by Frieda Wishinsky, Burp! The most interesting book you'll ever read about eating by Diane Swanson, Moon landing by Richard Platt, Animals nobody loves by Seymour Simon, Pele by James Buckley, David Beckham by Galadriel Watson,

- **Library Catalogue subject headings:** specific subject (animals, Canada history, etc.)
• **Recommended reading list:** The Children's Literature Roundtables of Canada Information Book Award, NCTE Orbis Pictus Nonfiction Award, The Robert F. Sibert Informational Book Medal, Norma Fleck Award for Canadian Children's Non-Fiction

**Graphic Novels (Format)**

• **Definition:** "A comic book that needs a bookmark" (Art Spiegelman), or, "a form of sequential visual storytelling" (Prentis Rollins), or, more eloquently, "...sequential art, the arrangement of pictures or images and words to narrate a story or dramatize an idea" (Will Eisner). Michael Gorman describes it as "an original book-length story, either fiction or nonfiction, published in comic book style or a collection of stories that have been published previously as individual comic books." Mostly published by very small publishers, graphic novels appeal to the visual-oriented Gen-X and Gen-Y, as well as reluctant readers. Graphic novels are often very long (70+ pages), and tend to deal with real world problems as well as important personal and social issues, and have protagonists who tend to be lonely people who don't fit in. This format raises some concerns with teachers, parents, and librarians.

• **Authors to explore:** Patrick Atangan, Kiyohiko Azuma, Will Eisner, Frank Miller, Alan Moore, Harvey Pekar, Joe Sacco, Jeff Smith, Art Spiegelman, Brian K. Vaughan


• **Library Catalogue subject headings:** Graphic novels, subdivision "Comic books, strips, etc." behind other topics or persons

• **Recommended reading list:** Graphic Novels EarlyWord, search "graphic novel" in ReadWriteThink, Great Graphic Novels for Teens, CCBC Graphic Novels (University of Wisconsin-Madison)

**For More Information:**

The following titles will provide good background information on literature genres and will also introduce you to excellent authors and titles through reading lists:

CALL # 372.64 Kie  
TITLE Charlotte Huck's Children's literature / Barbara Z. Kiefer, with Susan Hepler, Janet Hickman  

CALL # 011.62 Don 2005 Ref.  
TITLE Literature for today's young adults / Kenneth Donelson, Alleen Pace Nilsen.  
PUBLISHER Boston ; Montreal : Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.

CALL # 808.068 Hur  
TITLE Using literature in the middle school curriculum / Carol Otis Hurst.  