

GIVE THE GIFT OF words:

HOLIDAY BOOKS FOR CHILDREN

BY KATHY BUCKWORTH PHOTO BY STEVE UHRANEY

From toddler to teen, books make fantastic Christmas gifts for the kids on your list. But walking into the children's section of a bookstore can be overwhelming as you struggle to choose that perfect book children (and their parents) will love to read over and over again. While there are many new titles to choose from every year, there are also books that remain, if not on the bestseller list, on the best-loved list. Here's a list of recommendations from the "experts": bookstores, and Moms and Dads, of course! (You will note the list deliberately leaves out that "boy wizard" series – way too obvious.)

Baby/Toddler:

The Potty Book for Girls

by Alyssa Satin Capucilli.

"Two and a half year old Kara loves this book. A little girl named "Hannah" goes through all of the stages of learning this new skill. Kara seems to really relate to it." (Wendy Alderdice, Oakville)

A Teeny, Tiny Baby

by Amy Schwartz.

"I love this book!!! It made me laugh so much. It tells you the story from a baby's respective. My son likes this book because it reminds him of his little brother. The illustrations are picture perfect in what we go through with our little one. Totally recommend this book to new moms." (Michelle Salvia, www.OakvilleMoms.com)

Lavender's Blue: A Book of Nursery Rhymes

compiled by Kathleen Lines.

A classic book beautifully designed and illustrated.

(Darlene Collins, Bookers Bookstore in Oakville)

Just Me and My Mom

by Mercer Mayer.

"I love this book because it talks about a little boy and how it's just him and his mom going into the big city and it's hilarious. It highlights how moms are saints." (Rita Dias, Mississauga Mom to Max, 18 months)

Ages 4-6:

Will You Be My Friend?

by Nancy Tafuri.

"It's a heart-warming picture book about a little bird and a rabbit who help each other through a storm and become friends. The reason I really like it is that it is the first book that (six year old) Ryan has been able to pretty much read on his own." (Wendy Alderdice)

Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship

by Craig Hatkoff

"The inspiring true story of two great friends, a baby hippo named Owen and a 130-yr-old giant tortoise named Mzee (Mm-ZAY)." (Bookers' choice)

Fire truck

by Peter Sís.

"My son loves anything to do with trucks! Every simple and easy for him to follow. Making all the sounds effects makes him laugh! He has every page memorized." (OakvillesMoms.com)

Your Favourite Seuss: A Baker's Dozen by the One and Only Dr. Seuss.

Anyone who can rhyme "thorax" and "lorax" and make us all laugh, has still got it going on. (Recommended by Bookers)

'Twas The Night Before Christmas

Pick up a classic version of this one. "We read every Christmas Eve but I think it's more my tradition than the kids. I love it!" (Oakville's Nadine Hughes, mother of Crawford, 2 and Declan, 6)

Where the Sidewalk Ends

by Shel Silverstein.

"The best rhyme in the book is *Lazy lazy lazy Jane*", says my highly relatable daughter Bridget, age eight. A pleasure to read and the kids will have them memorized instantly.



Above Bridget and Nicholas Webster go for the classic Christmas reads at Bookers in Oakville.

Ages 7-9

The Magic School Bus Series

From diving through blood streams, exploring outer space and everything in between, this is a great learning series for kids. "This is hot with my boys (aged six and seven) right now. You know, lots of science and adventure stuff." (Wendy Alderdice)

The Spiderwick Chronicles Complete First Serial Collection by Holly Black and Tony DiTerlizzi. You can get all 5 books in one beautiful hard copy volume, the perfectly presented Christmas gift (Bookers).

Star Wars: A Pop-Up Guide to the Galaxy

I had to fight to get my five year old son Nicholas out of the store without this book in hand, but I'll be going back to pick it up to put under the tree (Bookers).

The Captain Underpants Series

by Dav Pilkey. This is a gross out book that young boys especially love. Loads of bathroom humour and oozing bodily functions. Great fun. "My kids started them at age 5 and still like them." (Mississauga's Lynda Lovett, mother of twins, 10)

Looney Bay Series

by Helaine Becker. The Looney Bay kids travel through time, pick

up a sport along the way, and then solve a mystery...and your kids actually learn some history and have a fun ride along the way. "Hockey playing Vikings...cool", says Bridget, eight.

The Story of Muhammed Ali

by Leslie Garrett. (Over 100,000 sold!) Kids are still interested in this amazing athlete and his inspiring story to from childhood to his being voted Athlete of the 20th Century, and his fight for social justice and civil liberties as well.

Ages 10-12

Silverwing series

by Kenneth Oppel. The boxed set include Silverwing, Sunwing, and Firewing. A great read for both boys and girls, Oppel is a terrific writer and they won't be able put this down (Bookers)

The Great Brain series

by John Fitzgerald. "Loved this when I was a kid. It's a series of books about a boy and his brothers growing up in Salt Lake City in the early 1900s. It's hilarious." (Rita Dias)

Dragon Rider

by Cornelia Funke, is a fun, fantasy book which is a real hit with ten year old girls (Mississauga's Sydney Buckland, age 10 of course)

The perennial favourites are still favourites: My daughter devoured *Nancy Drew*, *The Bobbsey Twins*, and *The Hardy Boys*. Written under collaborative pen names, these series are still going strong and provide light hearted, family oriented mystery solving that never goes out of style.

Teen

Teen girl reads are easy to find – pick up anyone of the series in *The*

Gossip Girls (Cecily von Ziegesar), *The Clique* (Lisi Harrison), *The Mates, Dates Series* (Cathy Hopkins), or any books by Meg Cabot (author of the *Princess Diaries* series, amongst others).

Teen boy reads can be a bit trickier, but the overwhelming favourite with my teenage son Alex's crowd seems to be Darren Shan, who writes gory and macabre books with himself as the lead character. Titles like *Demon Apocalypse* and *Cirque du Freak* (required reading at many senior public schools) keep them on the edge and reading...and away from the electronic diversions. Mississauga 7th Grader Jonathan Dick, an avid reader, likes the fantasy-suspense aspect to the Christopher Paolini titles (*Eragon*, *Eldest*), and can't wait for the third book coming out soon. He's also a fan of NY Times Best Seller *The Bartimaeus Trilogy* (Jonathan Stroud), which is "all about magic and wizardry, but not in the Harry Potter casting "spells" manner. A talented artist himself, Jonathan also admires the cover artwork of these intriguing books.

Buy these books for all the kids on your Gift List – and while they're quietly reading on the afternoon of December 25th, you might even be able to curl up with a classic book of your own.