Selecting Books for Young Children

The first plane of development is the time you want children to fall in love with books! Children are more interested in reading when they are read to daily, particularly by people they care about.

When selecting a book for the Montessori Infant-Toddler or Early Childhood (Primary) class, there are many things to consider, from the quality of the illustrations to the richness of the vocabulary, to the diversity shown. Below are some guidelines to consider. When selecting books for your prepared environment, it is also important to use a hardback book whenever possible. It is more substantive, feels like a material, will be treated with more care, and will last longer than paper backs. Design and give lessons on how to pick up and put down the book, store it properly, and turn the pages (top, upper right hand corner).

Books:

* Good stories – classics (Newbury Medal books are for best content).
* Quality, realistic illustrations related to text (Caldecott Winners are good choices)
* Wordless books
* Books with cumulative text
* Question/answer books for participation
* Books containing repetition of words or phrases or rhyming
* Books with both shorter text AND those with longer stories.
* Books with a vocabulary up to three years past the age of the children to whom you are reading.

* Books representing a variety of content:
  - books paralleling the class experiences and activities
  - concept books (colors, shapes, groups of things)
  - counting and number books
  - science books
  - rhyming and poetry, tongue twisters (to draw attention to sounds and enunciation)

- grammar such as different nouns, adjectives or actions (depicting verbs)
- humorous books
- anti-bias books
- holidays or special occasion books
- stories which connect to the child’s life (family, common objects, ethnicity;
common experiences like going to the doctor, a vacation, holidays, etc.)
- books which connect the child to the greater world (different ethnicities, family lifestyles, cultures)
- similar stories from different countries (Cinderella stories, for example)
- the same story told in more than one way
- the same book in two languages
- several books by the same author
- selecting books from different genres (fiction, non-fiction, fables, poetry, etc.)

**Early Childhood Authors and Illustrators**

Anno, Mitsumasa
Appleton-Smith, Laura (Montessori teacher who writes simple readers)
Asch, Frank
Brett, Jan
Brown, Marc
Carle, Eric
dePaola, Tomie
Eastman, P.D. (don’t overdo this because of the cartoon characters; best choice: Go, Dogs, Go!)
Ehlert, Lois
Freeman, Don
Henkes, Keith
Hoban, Tana
Hoff, Syd
Keats, Ezra Jack
Kellogg, Stephen
Krauss, Ruth
Lionni, Leo
Lobel, Arnold
Martin, Bill (Jr.)
Mayer, Mercer
Miura, Taro
Ormerod, Jan
Oxenbury, Helen
Pinkney, Sandra L.
Potter, Beatrix
Rey, H.A.
Rogers, Fred (handling real life situations like going to the dentist, doctor)
Rylant, Cynthia
Scarry, Richard
Seuss, Dr. (don’t over-do this because of the cartoon characters; best choices are Cat in the Hat and the 500 Hats of Bartholomew Cubbins)
Sendak, Maurice
Steig, William
Tafuri, Nancy
Tresselt, Alvin
Van Allsburg, Chris
Ziefert, Harriet
Zolotow, Charlotte
Note: A great source for good children’s books in many categories is the catalog “The Book Vine.” Also, there are many websites for children’s literature, including Caldecott (illustration) and Newbury winners. Additional books can be found in the American Library Association (ALA) website.

Wordless Books
* Ah! (Josse Goffin)
* Carl Goes Shopping (Alexandra Day)
* Frog Goes to Dinner (Mercer Mayer)
* Good Dog, Carl (Alexandra Day)
* Oh! (Josse Goffin)
* Opposites (Monique Félix)
* Snowman, The (Raymond Briggs)
* Zoom (Istvan Banyai)
* Thunderstorm

One Word Books
* Oink (Arthur Geisert)
* Oink, Oink (Arthur Geisert)

Books with Repeating Words or Patterned Rhyme
* Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day (Judith Viorst)
* All Kinds of Kisses (Nancy Tafuri)
* Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See? (Eric Carle)
* Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom (Bill Martin, Jr.)
* Chicken Soup with Rice (Maurice Sendak)
* Cow That Went Oink (Bernard Most)
* Dark, Dark Tale, A (Ruth Brown)
* First The Egg (Laura Vaccaro Seeger)
* Fortunely (Remy Charlip)
* Important Thing, The (Margaret Wise Brown)
* Go, Dog, Go! (P.D. Eastman)
* Goodnight, My Duckling (Nancy Tafuri)
* Goodnight, Moon (Margaret Wise Brown)
* Goodnight Mr. Beetle (Leland Jacobs)
* Green Eggs and Ham (Dr. Seuss)
* Grouchy Ladybug, The (Eric Carle)
* I Like to be Little (Charlotte Zolotow)
* Jacket I Wore in the Snow, The (Shirley Neitzel)
* Jump, Frog, Jump! (Robert Kalan)
* Mitten, The (Jan Brett)
* Owl Babies (Patrick Benson)
* Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear? (Bill Martin, Jr., Eric Carle)
* Runaway Bunny, The (Margaret Wise Brown)
* Seven Blind Mice (Ed Young)
* Shoes from Grandpa (Mem Fox)
* Silly Sally (Audrey Wood)
* Stone Soup (Brown)
* Very Busy Spider (Eric Carle)
* Very Quiet Cricket (Eric Carle)
Rhyming Books
* Bear in a Square (Stella Blackstone)
* Cat in the Hat, The (Dr. Seuss)
* Just How Long Can a String Be? (Keith Baker)
* I’m a Duck! (Stella Blackstone)
* Madeline (Ludwig Bemelmans)
* Nuts to You! (Lois Elhert)
* Orange Pear Apple Bear (Emily Gravett)
* One, Two, Three, Me! (Jeremy Fitzkee)

Poetry Collections
* April Bubbles Chocolate: An ABC of Poetry (Lee Bennett Hopkins)
* Here’s a Little Poem (Jane Yolen)
* It’s Raining Pigs and Noodles (Jack Prelutsky)
* The Llama Who Had No Pajamas (Mary Ann Hoberman)
* My Very First Mother Goose (Iona Opie)
* Talking Like the Rain: A First Book of Poems (Dorothy M. Kennedy)
* Ten Potatoes in a Pot (and other counting rhymes)
* Wake Up House: Room Full of Poems (Dee Lillehard)

Books with Cumulative Text
* Bringing the Rain to Kapiti Plain (Verna Aradema)
* Drummer Hoff (Ed and Barbara Emberley)
* Jacket I Wear in the Snow (Shirley Neitzel)
* Little Old Lady who Was Not Afraid of Anything, The
* Napping House, The (Don and Audrey Wood)
* Rose in My Garden, The (Arnold Lobel)
* This is the House That Jack Built (Simms Tabak)
* Why Mosquitoes Buzz in People’s Ears (Verna Aradema)

Question/Answer Books
* Have You Seen My Cat? (Eric Carle)
* Have You Seen My Duckling? (Nancy Tafuri)
* Is Your Mama a Llama? (Deborah Guarino)
* Mama, Do You Love Me? (Barbara Joosse)

Classic Stories
* 500 Hats of Batholomew Cubbins, The (Dr. Seuss)
* Babar (Jean de Brunhoff)
* Blueberries for Sal (Robert McCloskey)
* Brown Bear, Brown Bear (Bill Martin)
* Caps for Sale (Esphyr Slobodnik)  
* Corduroy (Don Freeman)
* Goodnight, Moon (Margaret Wise Brown)
* Harold and the Purple Crayon (Crocket Johnson)
* If You Give a Pig a Pancake (Bill Martin)
* Madeline (Ludwig Bemelmans)
* Snowy Day, A (Ezra Jack Keats)
* Umbrella (Yashima)
* Whistle for Willy (Ezra Jack Keats)
* White Snow, Bright Snow (Alvin Tresselt)
More Great Tiles
* Dot, The (Peter H. Reynolds)
* Gorilla (Anthony Browne)
* Guess How Much I Love You (Sam McBratney)
* I Like Cats! (Patricia Hubbell)
* I Like to Be Little (Charlotte Zolotow)
* Jump, Frog, Jump! (Robert Kalan)
* Peter’s Chair
* Quilt Story, The (Tony Johnston)
* Tools (Toro Miura)
* Very Hungry Caterpillar, A (Eric Carle)

Longer Stories with Good Vocabulary
* Animals Should Definitely Not Wear Clothing (Ron Barrett)
* Apple Cake, The (Nienke Van Hichtum)
* Ball Bounced, The (Nancy Tafuri)
* Big, Hungry Bear, The (Don and Audrey Wood)
* Gift of the Tree, The (Alvin Tresselt)
* Make Way for Ducklings (Robert McCloskey)
* Man Who Didn’t Wash His Dishes, The (Phyllis Krasilovsky)
* Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel (Virginia Lee Burton)
* New Coat for Anna, A (Harriet Ziefert)
* Night in the Country (Cynthia Rylant)
* Polar Express, The (Chris Van Allsburg)
* Pumpkin Blanket, The (Deborah Turney Zagwyn)
* Rosie’s Walk (Pat Hutchins)
* Strega Nona (Tomie dePaola)
* Tikki, Tikki, Tembo (Arlene Mosel)
* Tree is Nice, A (Janice May Udry)
* When I was Young in the Mountains (Cynthia Rylant)
* White Snow, Bright Snow (Alvin Tresselt)

Humor
* Alexander’s No Good Very Bad Day (Mercer Mayer)
* Boy with Square Eyes (Juliet Snape)
* Ghost’s Dinner, The (Jacques Duquennoy)
* Go, Dog, Go! (P.D. Eastman)
* Goodbye Book (Judith Viorst)
* One Two Three Me (Jeremy Fitzkee)
* Orla’s Upside Down Day
* Piggy (Mark Teague)
* Quiet Book, The (Deborah Underwood)
* There’s a Monster in My Closet (Mercer Mayer)

Nature
* Carrot Seed, The (Crockett Johnson)
* Cloud Book, The (Tomie dePaola)
* Egg is Quiet, An (Dianna Hutts Aston -for older readers)
* Flower Grows, A (growth of amaryllis, flower in ‘parts of a flower’) (Ken Robbins)
* Gift of the Tree, The (Alvin Tresselt)
* Giving Tree, The (Shel Silverstein)
* Gotta Go! Gotta Go! (Sam Swope)
* Great Kapok Tree, The (Lynne Cherry)
* Growing Vegetable Soup (Lois Elhert)
* Have You Seen My Duckling? (Nancy Tafuri)
* It Looked Like Spilt Milk (Charles Shaw)
* Let's Read and Find Out Science Books
* Nuts to You! (Lois Elhert)
* On Earth (G. Brian Karras)
* Owl Moon (Jane Yolen)
* Planting a Garden (Lois Elhert)
* “Slowly, Slowly, Slowly,” said the Sloth (Eric Carle)
* Splash! (Ann Jonas)
* Tree is Nice, A (Janice May Udry)
* Umbrella, The (Jan Brett)
* Very Grouchy Ladybug, The (Eric Carle)
* Very Hungry Caterpillar, The (Eric Carle)
* Yucky Worms (Vivian French)
* Where Do Chicks Come From? (Amy E. Sklansky)

Colors
* Color of His Own, A (Leo Leonni)
* Colors of Us, The (Karen Katz)
* Color Zoo (Lois Elhert)
* Ghost’s Dinner, The (Jacques Duquennoy)
* Is It Red, Is It Blue? (Tana Hoban)
* Planting a Rainbow (Lois Elhert)
* Mouse Paint (Ellen Stoll Walsh)
* White is for Blueberry (George Shannon)
* White Rabbit’s Color Book (Alan Baker)

Numbers
* 500 Hats of Batholomew Cubbins, The (Dr. Seuss)
* Anno’s Counting Book (Mitsumasa Anno)
* Can You Count to a Googol? (Robert E. Wells)
* Chicka Chicka 1, 2, 3 (Bill Martin)
* Counting Birds (Alice Melvin)
* Doorbell Rang, The (Pat Hutchins)
* Each Orange Had 8 Slices (Donald Crewes)
* Eating Fractions (Bruce McMillan)
* Fish Eyes (Lois Elhert)
* How Much Is A Million? (David M. Schwartz)
* Icky Bug Counting Book, The (Jerry Pallotta)
* Inch By Inch (Leo Leonni)
* Lebanon 1-2-3: A Counting Book in Three Languages (Marijena Boueri)
* Moja Means One (Muriel Feelings)
* One Child, One Seed: An African Counting Book (Kathryn Cave)
* Teeth, Tails and Tentacles (Christopher Wormell)
* Ton (Taro Miura)
* Very Hungry Caterpillar, The (Eric Carle)

Shapes
* Same Same (Marthe Jocelyn)
* Circles and Squares Everywhere (Max Grover)
* I Spy Shapes in Art (Lucy Micklethwaite)
* Round Like A Ball (Lisa Campbell)
* Shape of Things, The (Dayle Ann Dodds)
* Shapes, Shapes, Shapes (Tana Hoban)
Diversity and Anti-Bias
* Colors of Us, The (Karen Katz)
* Goodbye Book, The (Judith Viorst)
* Gracias * Thanks (Pat Mora)
* Hats Hats Hats (Ann Morris)
* Houses Houses Houses (Ann Morris)
* I Love My Hair (Natasha Anastacia Tarpley)
* Mama Zooms (Jane Cowen-Fletcher)
* Max (Rachel Isadora)
* My Father’s Shop (Satomi Ichikawa)
* On Mother’s Lap (Ann Herbert Scott)
* Shades of Black (Sandra Pinkney)
* Shoes Shoes Shoes (Ann Morris)
* So Much (Trish Cooke, Helen Oxenbury)
* Tucking Mommy In (Morah Loh)
* What Can You do With a Rebozo? (Carmen Tafola)
* Yum Yum Dim Sum (Amy Wilson Sanger)
* Yo? Yes? (Chris Razchka)

Fables, Traditional Stories and Fairy Tales
* Emperor’s New Clothes, The
* Ming Lo Moves the Mountain (Arnold Lovel)
* Three Little Javelinas, The (Susan Lowell)
* Tunjur! Tunjur! Tunjur! A Palestinian Folktale (Margaret Read MacDonald)
* Why Mosquitos Buzz in People’s Ears (Verna Aardema)
* Yeh Shen: A Cinderella Story From China (Ai-Ling Louie)

Singing Books
* Ants Go Marching, The (Berniece Freschet)
* I Ain’t Gonna Paint No More (Karen Beaumont)
* Skip Count, Skip Count
* This Jazz Man (Karen Ehrhardt)

Books You Can Find in Two Sizes (make sure any small book is complete)
* George Shrinks (William Joyce)
* Gorilla (Anthony Browne)
* How Does a Dinosaur Say Goodnight? (Jane Yolen)
* Very Hungry Caterpillar, A (Eric Carle)

Vocabulary – function of words

Nouns
* One, Two Three, Me! (Jeremy)
* Merry-Go-Round (Heller)
* Tools (Taro Miura)
* Goodnight, Moon (Margaret Wise Brown)

Verbs
* All Clean!
* Kites Sail High (Heller)
* You Push, I Ride! (Abby Levine)
Adjectives
* Shades of Black (Sandra Pinkney)
* Many Luscious Lollipops (Ruth Heller)
* Fish Eyes (Lois Elhert)
* Long Night Moon (Cynthia Rylant)
* I Like Cats
* Round Like A Ball (Lisa Campbell Ernst)

Adverbs
* Up, Up, and Away (Heller)

Prepositions
* Behind the Mask (Heller)
* Go, Dog, Go (P.D. Eastman)
* All About Where (Tana Hoban)