

Planning Your Classroom Library



Classroom libraries come in all shapes and sizes. Our experiences in planning an effective classroom library as well as those of others (Fractor, Woodruff, Martinez, and Teale, 1993) reveal at least three major considerations: 1) the nature of the collection; 2) the size of the collection; and 3) how you use the collection for responses to reading.

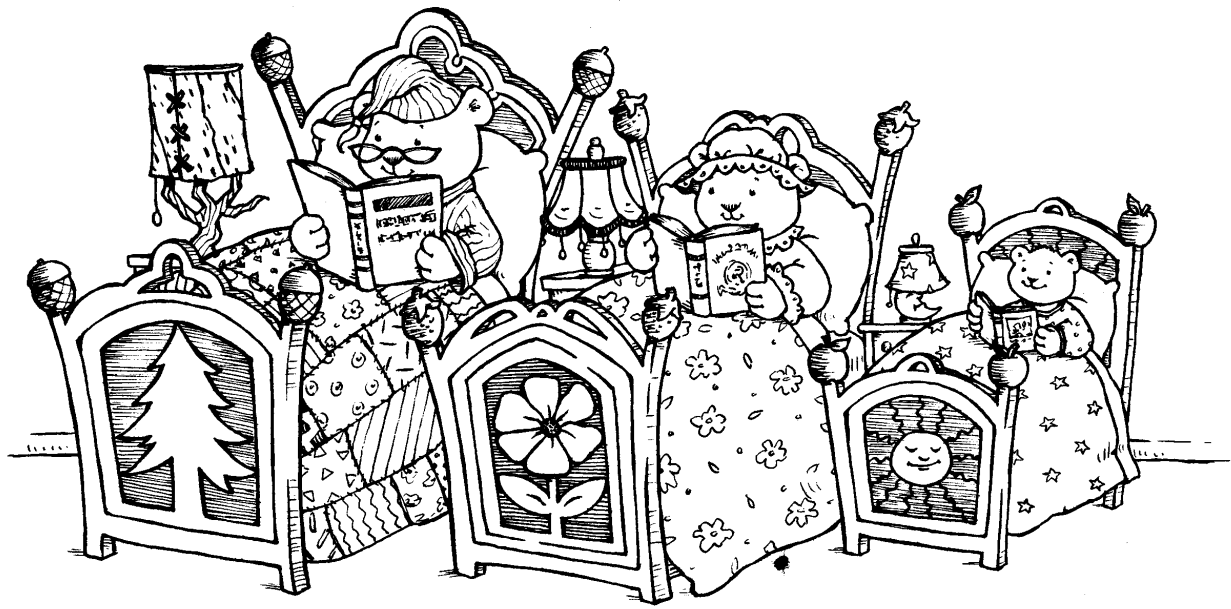
Determine the Nature of the Collection

As you plan for your classroom library, you need to remember that it will be supporting and inviting students of many different abilities to engage in reading a variety of texts, both narrative and expository (Burke, 2000; Report of the National Reading Panel National Institute of Health, 2000; Allington, 2001). Each text type requires a reader to use different strategies. Expository texts require that students gather and organize facts, as well as critically analyze information. Narrative texts invite students to connect with personal experiences and empathize with the characters in a book. Since students should read a variety of text types, we have developed the list at right of varied reading materials to be considered for inclusion in a classroom library.

Classroom libraries should also house a collection of leveled text materials, both narrative and expository, for meeting students' instructional needs. Sufficient quantities of high-interest, leveled books need to be available to comply with the "Goldilocks principle" of achieving a "just right" match between the challenges within the text and each student's interests and needs (Ohlhausen and Jepsen, 1992).

Recommended Categories of Reading Materials for a Classroom Library

- ⊗ Textbooks, including the classroom basal readers
- ⊗ Computers with bookmarked Web pages, including those of the National Archives, the Library of Congress, and other major reference sources
- ⊗ Stories and narrative accounts, e.g., fairy tales, folk tales, and biographies
- ⊗ Picture books with thought-provoking images and unique examples of artistic talent
- ⊗ Tests, quizzes, and worksheets for "test prep"
- ⊗ Miscellaneous reading materials, such as popular magazines, newspapers, catalogs, recipe books, encyclopedias, greeting cards, maps, telephone books, reports, captioned photographs, posters, diaries, and letters
- ⊗ Joke books, comic books, word-puzzle books, and so forth
- ⊗ Essays, editorials, and critiques
- ⊗ Student-authored books and stories
- ⊗ Leveled stories, decodable books, pattern books, and predictable books



Establish the Size of the Collection

The size of the collection depends upon how much monetary support is available in your school and upon how much creativity and energy you can bring to the task. Very often, organizing an effective classroom library requires a multi-year, phase-in plan. Resources are seldom sufficient to immediately provision a classroom library adequately. (One thing you might consider is helping your school apply for a grant. *Get a Grant! Yes You Can!* (Scholastic, 1998) might be a good initial source of information.)

Also, the size of the collection varies with its functions in and out of the classroom as determined in the plan. If, for example, the classroom library exists primarily or exclusively to service students' independent reading selections, then the library collection may include 10 to 12 titles per student (Veatch, 1968; Neuman, 2000). This means that if a teacher has 30 children in her classroom, an adequate library for independent reading would be between 300 and 350 book titles. On the other hand, if the

Recommended Size Ranges for a Library Collection of 300–375 Titles

- ⊗ Poetry collections: 3-5 titles
- ⊗ Pattern/predictable books: 50-60 titles
- ⊗ Leveled books: 120-140 titles
- ⊗ Decodable books: 40-50 titles
- ⊗ Information books: 40-50 titles
- ⊗ Award-winning books: 30-40 titles
- ⊗ Reference books such as dictionaries (5-10), thesauri (1-2), CD-ROM encyclopedias (1-2 disks), and atlases (1-2)
- ⊗ Newspapers (1-2 subscriptions), magazines (1-3 subscriptions), recipe books (1-3), and catalogs (3-4)
- ⊗ Series books: 3-4 series
- ⊗ Scripts for plays, skits, and Readers Theater: 1-3 titles

teacher intends to use the classroom library to support cross-curricular studies, take-home reading, guided reading, shared reading, reading aloud, and professional development for the teacher, the size of the classroom library collection may range from 1,500 to 2,000 titles, including many multiple copies. Below, we recommend size ranges that would provide a varied selection for a minimum classroom library collection of 300 to 375 titles.

Build Your Collection

It is one thing to establish the size limits of your classroom library. It is quite another to actually build your collection. In order to help you get started, we offer here one list of recommended titles for the primary grades and another for the intermediate grades. Each of these lists is based on the categories we presented on page 16. As you look over these lists, keep in mind two important points. These titles represent our own recommendations; there are many other excellent titles out there. Also, they represent only a small portion of the numbers of books a good classroom library should include. But at least these lists should provide you with a start.

Some Recommended Books for Grades K-2

POETRY

A Treasury of Mother Goose Rhymes, Publications International Limited
A Light in the Attic, Shel Silverstein
A New Kid on the Block, Jack Prelutsky

PATTERN/PREDICTABLE BOOKS

The Carrot Seed, Ruth Krauss
We Like Fruit, Millen Lee
I Can See, Adria Klein
I Like, Gay Su Pinnell
A Party, Joy Cowley
The Ghost, Joy Cowley
Lunch at the Zoo, Wendy Blaxland
How Many Fish, Rachel Gossett and Margaret Ballinger
Dan the Flying Man, Joy Cowley
Is it Time? Jane Campbell
Jump Rope, Claudette C. Mitchell, Gracie R. Porter, and Patricia T. Cousin
Monkey See, Monkey Do, Marc Gane
Itchy, Itchy Chicken Pox, Grace Maccarone
My Friends, Taro Gomi
Buzz Said the Bee, Wendy C. Lewison
More Spaghetti I Say, Rita G. Gelman
Noisy Nora, Rosemary Wells
The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the

Big Hungry Bear, Don and Audrey Wood
Knots on a Counting Rope, Bill Martin Jr. and Don Archambault
Chicka, Chicka, Boom, Boom, Bill Martin Jr. and Don Archambault
This Is the Place for Me, Joanna Cole
Mr. McCready's Cleaning Day, Tracey Shilling

LEVELED BOOKS

A
Underwater, Rebel Williams
I Like to Find Things, Gavin Bishop
Dogs, Amy Levin
Painting, Joy Cowley
Moms & Dads, Beverly Randell, Jenny Giles, and Annette Smith

B
Hats Around the World, Liza Charlesworth
Making Mountains, Margaret Ballinger and Rachel Gossett
For Breakfast, Patricia T. Cousin, Claudette C. Mitchell, and Gracie R. Porter
Here I Am, Judy Nayer
Sally's New Shoes, Annette Smith

C

At the Store, Patricia T. Cousin, Claudette C. Mitchell, and Gracie R. Porter
One for You and One for Me, Wendy Blaxland
In the City, Susan Pasternac
Bo and Peter, Betsy Franco
Fishing, Annette Smith

D

The Ball Game, David Packard
Hide and Seek, Roberta Brown and Sue Carey
Where We Live, Brenda Parkes
The Farm Concert, Joy Cowley
Lizard Loses Its Tail, Beverly Randell

E

The Rain and the Sun, Allan Trussell-Cullen
Which Hat Today, Margaret Ballinger and Rachel Gossett
The Red Rose, Joy Cowley
My Dad's Truck, Meredith Costain
Tortillas, Margarita Gonzelez-Jensen

F

My Very Hungry Pet, Debbie Swan
The Best Thing About Food, Fay Robinson
The Jigaree, Joy Cowley
Late for Soccer, Jeremy Giles
Tabby in the Tree, Beverly Randell

G

Knobby Knuckles, Knobby Knees, Jill Carter and Judy Ling
How Have I Grown, Mary Reid
Balcony Garden, Rebecca Weber
Grandpa's Lemonade, Helen Upson
William's Skateboard, Dale Golder

H

Mom's Secret, Meredith Costain
I Was Walking Down the Road, Sarah Barchas
Digging to China, Kathern Goldsby
Robert and the Rocket, Leesa Waldron
George Shrinks, William Noyce

I

Dancin' Down, Evageline Nicholas
The Friendly Crocodile, Monica Hiris
Swimming Lessons, Amy Algie
Big Bad Rex, Betty Erickson

The Witch's Haircut, Mavis Wyvill

J

Stone Soup, Ann McGovern
Dolphins, Marion Rego
There's an Alligator Under My Bed, Mercer Mayer
King Midas and the Golden Touch, Allan Trussell-Cullen
Children of Sierra Leone, Arma Christiana

DECODABLE BOOKS

Sam and Tat, Jane Dude
Dan and the Fan, Jane Dude
A Hat for Nan, Jane Dude
Jog to the Dam, Annette Williams
Tam on Sam, Annette Williams
Tall in the Saddle, Argentina Palacios
The Internet: A Kid's Handbook, Francie Alexander and Nancy Hechinger
Todd's Journal, Kana Riley
The Cat in the Hat, Dr. Seuss
Green Eggs and Ham, Dr. Seuss
In My Bed, Ron Bacon

NONFICTION, INFORMATION BOOKS

What Do Insects Do? Susan Canizares and Pamela Chanko
Monkeys, Susan Canizares and Pamela Chanko
At the Zoo, Beverly Randell, Jenny Giles, and Annette Smith
Who Lives in the Arctic? Susan Canizares and Pamela Chanko
Who Lives in a Tree? Susan Canizares and Daniel Moreton
Moving, Peter and Sheryl Sloan
Hair, Jackie Carter
City Signs, Brenda Parkes
Weather, Pamela Chanko and Daniel Moreton
At Work, Margaret Mooney
My Flag, Brenda Parkes
Over the Oregon Trail, Rita Ramsted
What Lays Eggs? Katherine Grace Stone
Brave Triceratops, Beverly Randell
Stamps, John Parsons
Tides, Eva Petro
Go to the Hospital, Sandra Iversen
Coral, Stanley L. Swartz
Insects, Carolyn MacLulich,
What Do Zoo Keepers Do? Jungle Jack Hanna
A Book About Your Skeleton, Ruth Belov Gross

Louis Braille, Margaret Davidson
Dolphin's First Day, Kathleen W. Zoehfeld

SERIES BOOKS

Woodland Mystery Series, Irene Schultz
June B. Jones, Barbara Park
Frog & Toad, Arnold Lobel
Cam Jansen Mysteries, David A. Adler
The Berenstain Bears, Stan and Jan Berenstain
The Adventures of the Bailey School Kids, Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones

AWARD WINNERS

Have You Seen My Ducklings?, Nancy Tafuri
Uncle Jed's Barbershop, Margaree King Mitchell
May I Bring a Friend?, Beatrice S. DeRegniers
Seven Blind Mice, Ed Young
Miss Rumphius, Barbara Cooney
When I Was Young in the Mountains, Cynthia Rylant
A Visit to William Blake's Inn, Alice and Martin Provensen
Song and Dance Man, Karen Ackerman
Make Way for Ducklings, Robert McCloskey
The Biggest Bear, Lynd Ward
Madeline's Rescue, Ludwig Bemelman
The Snowy Day, Ezra Jack Keats
Sam, Bangs, and Moonshine, Evaline Ness
Jumanji, Chris Van Alsbury
Smoky Night, Eve Bunting
Joseph Had a Little Coat, Simms Tabak

MAGAZINES

U.S. Kids
Ranger Rick
National Geographic World
Nickelodeon

RECIPE BOOKS

Betty Crocker
Martha Stewart Living Cookbook
Cooking for Dummies

CATALOGS

Clothing
Pet supplies
Toys

READERS THEATER SCRIPTS

<http://www.geocities.com/Athens/Thebes/9893/readerstheater.htm>
<http://falcon.jmu.edu/~ramseyil/readersmine.htm>

DICTIONARIES

Macmillan Picture Dictionary for Children, Robert Costello
Scholastic Visual Dictionary, Jean Claude Corbeil and Ariane Archambault
The Oxford Picture Dictionary, Norma Shapiro and Jayme Adelson-Goldstein

ATLASES

World Book Atlas, World Book
Complete Atlas of the World, Raintree Steck-Vaughn
U.S. Atlas for Young People, Kathie Billingslea Smith

THESAURUSES AND SPELLERS

How to Spell It, Harriet Wittles and Joan Greisman
The Clear and Simple Thesaurus, Grosset and Dunlap

CD-ROM ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Encarta
Encyclopedia Britannica

ENCYCLOPEDIAS

Picture Encyclopedia for Children, Grosset and Dunlap
Children's First Encyclopedia, Dempsey Parr Publishers

Some Recommended Books for Grades 3–6

POETRY

Where the Sidewalk Ends, Shel Silverstein
A Pizza the Size of the Sun, Jack Prelutsky

LEVELED BOOKS

K

Buffalo Bill and the Pony Express, Elenor Coerr
Keep the Lights Burning, Abbie, Peter and Connie
Roop
More Tales of Oliver Pig, Jean V. Leeuwen
Nate the Great Goes Undercover, Marjorie W. Sharmat

L

Happy Birthday, Martin Luther King, Jean Marzollo
Katy and the Big Snow, Virginia L. Burton
The Littles, John Peterson
Teach Us, Amelia Bedelia, Peggy Parish

M

Amazing Grace, Mary Hoffman and Caroline Binch
Blueberries for Sal, Robert McCloskey
Cloudy With a Chance of Meatballs, Judi Barrett
Kate Shelley and the Midnight Express, Margaret K.
Wetterer

N

Rumpelstiltskin, Paul O. Zelinsky
Lion Dance, Kate Waters and Madeline Slovenz-Low
The Most Wonderful Doll in the World,
Phyllis McGinley
We'll Never Forget You, Roberto Clemente,
Trudie Engel

O

Gladly Here I Come, Joy Cowley
The Mouse and the Motorcycle, Beverly Cleary
The Bad Dad List, Anna Kenna
The Sock Gobbler and Other Stories, Barbara Berge

P

The T.F. Letters, Karen Ray
A Taste of Blackberries, Doris B. George
The Private Notebook of Katie Roberts, Sonja Lamut
Justin and the Best Biscuits in the World,
Mildred P. Walter

Q

Run Away from Home, Patricia C. McKissack
The Great Brain Does It Again, John D. Fitzgerald

Sara Crewe, Frances H. Burnett
The Story of George Washington Carver, Eva Moore

R

Fourth Grade Rats, Jerry Spinelli
Souder, William Armstrong
The Best, Worst School Year Ever, Barbara Robinson
*The Story of Thomas Alva Edison: The Wizard of
Menlo Park*, Margaret Davidson

S

There's a Boy in the Girls Bathroom, Louis Sachar
Little House on the Prairie, Laura I. Wilder
Stone Fox, John R. Gardiner
The Great Gilly Hopkins, Katherine Paterson

T

The Chronicles of Narnia, C. S. Lewis
Old Yeller, Fred Gipson
The Red Pony, John Steinbeck
Danny, Champion of the World, Roald Dahl

U

The View From Saturday, E. L. Konigsburg
The Long Winter, Laura I. Wilder
Julie of the Wolves, Jean C. George
Tuck Everlasting, Natalie Babbitt

V

Harry Potter (series), J. K. Rowling
Maniac McGee, Jerry Spinelli
Anne of Green Gables, L. M. Montgomery
Mrs. Frisby and the Rats of NIHM,
Robert C. O'Brien

W

I Am a Star: Child of the Holocaust, Inge Auerbacher
The Phantom Tollbooth, Norton Juster
Stowaway, Karen Hesse
After the Dancing Days, Margaret I. Rostkowski

XVZ

Where the Red Fern Grows, Wilson Rawls
Memories of Anne Frank, Alison L. Gold
Carry On, Mr. Bowditch, Jean Lee Latham
Sacajawea, Joseph Bruchac
White Fang, Jack London
A Day No Pigs Would Die, Sylvia Peck
The Hobbit, J. R. R. Tolkien