

## Good Books for Catholics to Read

Some of the children's books that are recommended below are difficult to find, because they are out of print. They may be found on Ebay, Abebooks, Thriftbooks, and other websites that sell old books. The age groups are simply approximations and can be intermixed. We hope to continue looking for and analyzing good (or bad) books so that this list can be expanded. The books listed are those we are confident about recommending.

### For Ages 1-5:

This category contains picture books and board books that include simple words or nursery rhymes to introduce the child to word meaning.

- *Mother Goose Nursery Rhymes*
  - *The Real Mother Goose* by Blanche Fisher Wright
  - *Mother Goose* by Tasha Tudor
  - *The Jessie Wilcox Smith Mother Goose* by Jessie Wilcox Smith
  - *Book of Nursery and Mother Goose Rhymes* by Marguerite de Angeli
- Other Nursery Rhyme Books
  - *Nursery Friends From France* by Olive Beaupre Miller (My Travelship series published by The Book House for Children)
  - *When We Were Very Young* by A. A. Milne
  - *My Very First Winnie-the-Pooh [Padded Board Book](#)* by A.A. Milne
  - *Little Book of Old Rhymes* by Cicely Mary Barker
  - Books illustrated by Randolph Caldecott
    - *The House that Jack Built*
    - *Ride A-Cock Horse to Branbury Cross & A Farmer went Trotting Upon his Grey Mare*
    - *The Farmer's Boy*
    - *Babes in the Woods*
    - *The Three Jovial Huntsmen*
    - *John Gilpin*
    - *Elegy on a Mad Dog*
    - *Sing a Song for Sixpence*
    - *The Queen of Hearts*
    - *The Milk Maid*
    - *Hey-Diddle-Diddle and Baby Bunting*
    - *A Frog He Would A-Wooing Go*
    - *Come, Lasses, and Lads*

- Beatrix Potter
  - *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*
  - *The Tale of Benjamin Bunny*
  - *The Tale of Squirrel Nutkin*
  - *The Tale of Jemima Puddle-Duck*
  - *The Tale of Johnny Town-Mouse*
  - *The Tale of Mrs. Tiggy-Winkle*
  - *The Tale of Jeremy Fisher*
  - *The Tale of Two Bad Mice*
- Alphabet Books
  - *I is One* by Tasha Tudor
  - *A Apple Pie* by Gennady Spirin
  - *The Twelve Days of Christmas* by Gennady Spirin
- Days of the Year
  - *Pelle's New Suit* by Elsa Beskow
  - *Around the Year* by Tasha Tudor
- Short Stories
  - [\*The Little Red Hen\*](#) illustrated by Paul Galdone, an American fable

### **For Ages 5-8:**

This category contains picture books with more words and longer stories to further the child's comprehension of literature.

- *A Child's Garden of Verses* by Robert Louis Stevenson
  - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations
  - Tasha Tudor's illustrations
- *Now We Are Six* by A.A. Milne
- Picture Books
  - *Ox-Cart Man* by Donald Hall
- Picture Books by Jan Brett
  - The books below are beautifully illustrated with talking animals and sometimes people dressed in beautiful folk costumes. Although the prose in these children's books is not the most eloquent, the illustrations alone make them worth the read. However, not all of Jan Brett's books can be recommended, because sometimes she illustrates little girls in pants.
  - *Berlioz the Bear*
  - *Goldilocks and the Three Bears*
  - *The Easter Egg*
  - *Town Mouse, Country Mouse*

- *The Mitten*
- *The Owl and the Pussycat*
- *The Three Little Dassies*
- *Gingerbread Baby*
- *The Twelve Days of Christmas*
- Aesop's Fables
  - *The Aesop for Children* by Milo Winter
  - *Animal Fables from Aesop* by Barbara McClintock
  - *Aesop's Fables* by Michael Hague
  - *Medieval Fables* by Marie de France (translated by Jeanette Beer)
- Fairy Tales
  - *Baba Yaga and Vasilisa the Brave* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *King Midas and the Golden Touch* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *The Adventures of Tom Thumb* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *The Twelve Dancing Princesses* illustrated by K. Y. Craft
  - *The Frog Princess* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *The Crane Wife* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *The White Cat* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *Jack and the Beanstalk* illustrated by Gennady Spirin
  - *Thumbelina* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Ugly Duckling* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Snow Queen* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Little Mermaid* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - *The Nightingale* by Hans Christian Andersen
  - Charles Perrault's Fairy Tales (collected from France)
    - *Little Red Riding Hood*
    - *Puss in Boots*
    - *Sleeping Beauty*
  - [Grimm's Fairy Tales](#) (collected from Germany)
    - *Hansel and Gretel*
      - Paul Zelinsky's illustrations
    - *Rumpelstiltskin*
      - Paul Zelinsky's illustrations
    - *Cinderella*
    - *Little Brother and Little Sister*
    - *King Thrushbeard*
    - *The Goose Girl*
    - *Snow White and Rose Red*
    - *Our Lady's Child*
  - *The Blue Fairy Book* by Andrew Lang

- *Beauty and the Beast*
  - *East of the Sun and West of the Moon*
  - *One Thousand and One Nights* – Arab folk tales
- *The Velveteen Rabbit* by Margery Williams
- Saint's Stories and Holy Books
  - *Little Nellie of Holy God* by Sister John Vianney
  - *The Child To Whom Nobody Was Kind* by Father Faber
  - *A Child's Rule of Life* by Robert Hugh Benson

### **For Ages 8-12:**

- *The Many Adventures of Winnie the Pooh* by A. A. Milne
- *The Selfish Giant* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Happy Prince* by Oscar Wilde
- *The Princess and the Goblin* by George MacDonald
  - Jessie Wilcox Smith's illustrations
- *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Kidnapped* by Robert Louis Stevenson
- *Rikki-Tikki Tavi* by Rudyard Kipling
- *The Wind in the Willows* by Kenneth Grahame
  - E. H. Shepard - the original illustrator
- *The Adventures of Pinocchio* by Carlo Collodi
  - Roberto Innocenti's illustrations
- *The Chronicles of Narnia* by C.S. Lewis
- *The Hobbit* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *Hans Brinker, or The Silver Skates* by Mary Mapes Dodge
- *The Art-Literature Readers* by Eulalie Osgood Grover (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
- Saint's Stories:
  - *The Life of Dominic Savio* by John Bosco
  - *A Flower of Fatima* by Reverend Galamba De Oliveira
  - *Little Therese* by Pere Carbonel, S.J. (reprinted by Lepanto Press)
  - *King of the Golden City* by Mother Mary Loyola

### **For Ages 13-15:**

- *Beowulf* - an Anglo-Saxon epic poem
- *The Song of Roland*
- *The Lord of the Rings* by J.R.R. Tolkien
- *The White Stag* by Kate Seredy (An old legend of Hungary)
- *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow* by Washington Irving

- *The Nutcracker* by Alexandre Dumas
- *The Christmas Carol* by Charles Dickens
- Religious Books:
  - *The Catholic Girl's Guide* by Father Lasance
  - *The Young Man's Guide* by Father Lasance
  - *The Golden Legend* by Jacobus de Voragine
  - [\*Under Angel Wings: The True Story of a Young Girl and Her Guardian Angel\*](#), The autobiography of Sister Maria Antonia, trans. by Fr. Conall O'Leary

### For Ages 15- up: Novels and Stories

- *Everyman* – 15<sup>th</sup> Century morality play
- *Lord of the World* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *By What Authority* by Robert Hugh Benson
- *The Avengers of the King* by Jean Drault
- [\*Trianon, A Novel of Royal France\*](#) by Elena Maria Vidal
- [\*Holding the Stirrup: The Memoirs of Baroness Elizabeth von Guttenberg\*](#)
- *Maria Chapdelaine* by Louis Hemon

### “Great Books” to Read

In the past, the following books would always be read with an instructor and were studied mostly by boys and men in the universities. We do not recommend everyone to read classical works, only if it is necessary for one's education and if one has proper guidance. Catholics should first have a deep understanding of their faith before reading the “Great Books”, and should especially be acquainted with St. Thomas Aquinas before reading any of the Greek or Roman classical works.

- *Ethics* by Aristotle
- *Republic* by Plato
- *The Odyssey* and *The Illiad* by Homer
  - However, these should be read carefully as some scenes are indecent and/or excessively violent. The parent or teacher should look through the books and either cover the pages that include indecent scenes or instruct the child not to read those sections.
- *The Aeneid* by Virgil
- *Oedipus the King* by Sophocles
  - As with Homer's works, a young adult should not read this alone. With a guided reading, it is a good example of a Greek tragedy that formed the mindset of the Greeks.
- *The Divine Comedy* by Dante Alighieri

- *Confessions* by St. Augustine
  
- *The Canterbury Tales* by Geoffrey Chaucer
  - Some of these tales present indecent or immoral scenarios, so a careful perusal of the stories is necessary to discern which stories are acceptable to read. The impure tales such as “The Miller’s Tale” and “The Shipman’s Tale”, as well as the vulgar tales such as “The Summoner’s Tale” should be avoided.
  - Tales that we can recommend are “The Pardoner’s Tale”, “The Clerk’s Tale”, “The Prioress’ Tale”, “The Second Nun’s Tale”, “The Nun’s Priest’s Tale”, “The Parson’s Tale”.
- *The Tempest* by William Shakespeare
  - For all of the Shakespeare plays, we recommend not watching live performances of them, because the actors almost always overemphasize the raunchy jokes and insinuos. When reading the play, you can often overpass the vulgar parts without realizing what was said. The plays we recommend are the least vulgar of them all.
- *A Midsummer Night’s Dream* by William Shakespeare
- *King Lear* by William Shakespeare
- *Macbeth* by William Shakespeare
- *Hamlet* by William Shakespeare
- *Julius Caesar* by William Shakespeare

### “Great Books” to Avoid

- *Faust* by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe
- *Pride and Prejudice* by Jane Austen
  - Although this book - and others of Jane Austen’s -can be read to better understand and critically analyze her times, she promotes romanticism in addition to slightly feminist ideas. Ladies should especially be cautious if they read Austen’s works, because they can easily fall into the trap of sentimentalism.
- *Little Women* by Louisa May Alcott
- *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* by Harriet Beecher Stowe
- *The Red Badge of Courage* by Stephen Crane
  - This book can be read to analyze the Northern soldiers of the Civil War; however, it is very dark, vulgar, and depressing. It does not present the noble ideal of a soldier that should be instilled in young men, even if it is a realistic portrayal of many of the Civil War soldier’s attitudes towards the war.
- *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald
- *Brideshead Revisited* by Evelyn Waugh
  - For reasons why this book is not recommended, [see here](#).
- *The Mists of Avalon* by Marion Zimmer Bradley

- *Gulliver's Travels* by Jonathan Swift
- *The Time Machine* by H. G. Wells
  
- *Brave New World* by Aldous Huxley
  - This book has many impure scenes in it; therefore, women especially should not read it. However, if a man is analyzing it to better understand modern society, it is very thought-provoking, though this should still be done under strict guidance because the impurity in the story constitutes an occasion of sin. We do not recommend high school age boys to read it.
- *1984* by George Orwell
  - The same criteria for the above book applies here.

**The following were on the Index of Forbidden Books:**

- *Les Miserable* and *Notre Dame de Paris* by Victor Hugo
  - These books were on the Index until 1959, when they were removed most likely due to Modernist reasons.
- *Candide* by Voltaire
- *Paradise Lost* by John Milton
- All of Thomas Hobbes' works
- All of David Hume's works
- *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding* by John Locke
- *Critique of Pure Reason* by Immanuel Kant
- *Meditations* by René Descartes
- *The Praise of Folly* by Erasmus
- *The Prince* by Machiavelli

## Songbooks:

Traditional Catholic hymns can be found online at [hymnary.org](http://hymnary.org), where the following recommended old hymnals are available. By searching the internet for these hymnals, it is also easy to find full PDF copies of them.

- *The St. Gregory Hymnal*
- *The Pius X Hymnal* (1953)
- *Laudate Hymnal* (1942)
- *St. Basil's Hymnal* (1953)

Many folk songs from around the world are innocent and melodious, though they should be sung with discretion, for some are over-romantic and/or sensual. There are many folk song books available for purchase online. Below are a few recommendations (all in English):

- *The Golden Book of Favorite Songs* by the Hall & McCreary Company
- *Music Near and Far* by Silver Burdett Company
- *American Folk Songs for Children* by Ruth Crawford Singer
- *The Fireside Book of Children's Songs* by Simon and Schuster
- *The Follett Book of Cradle Songs: Lullabies from around the world* by Lynne Knudsen
- *The Oxford Book of Carols*

There are also a two websites where sheet music for folk songs is available without cost:

[Mama Lisa's World](#) and [Beth's Notes](#)