



# Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book

*Anita Silvey (Editor)*

**Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book** Anita Silvey (Editor)

"What children's book changed the way you see the world?"

Anita Silvey asked this question to more than one hundred of our most respected and admired leaders in society, and she learned about the books that shaped financiers, actors, singers, athletes, activists, artists, comic book creators, novelists, illustrators, teachers...

The lessons they recall are inspiring, instructive, and illuminating. And the books they remember resonate as influential reading choices for families. EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM A CHILDREN'S BOOK--with its full color excerpts of beloved children's books, is a treasury and a guide: a collection of fascinating essays and THE gift book of the year for families.

## Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book Details

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## From Reader Review Everything I Need to Know I Learned from a Children's Book for online ebook

### Laurie says

All together now: "I should have written this book!"

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### Catherine says

Not quite what I had anticipated but a lovely book where different notable people (authors, actors, etc) discuss what they learned from a particular children's book. The short descriptions of the books were as interesting as the essays from the contributors!

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### Jamie says

This would be a fine gift for a children's literature nerd. And by nerd, I mean the person who NEVER reads anything else ever. This person is not me.

I just felt it was a lot more dry than I'd hoped.

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### Kristy says

This is a compilation of essays from "notable people" who were strongly influenced by a particular book. Includes an excerpt of each of these books, illustrations, and synopses. Brief biographies of each of the notable people in the back. I found myself reading several of these essays out loud to my husband and son. Fascinating and fun and thought-provoking. Notable people include authors, illustrators, poets, politicians, executives, actors, and more.

One example: a heart surgeon who loved the Oz books since childhood now thinks about this Tin Woodman quote all the time: "I will bear all the happiness without a murmur, if you will give me a heart."

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### Tracy says

This is a very good resource to find book titles to share with children. Anita Silvey provides not only a brief description of each book and some information about the author/illustrator, she has wisely included excerpts from each book and a personal story from a notable figure about why it was included in the collection of story titles. The usual suspects---Dave Eggers, Maurice Sendak, etc---provide recommendations, but you will find experts in a variety of fields (marine biology, politics, education, artists...) and even The Woz reveals a childhood favorite he believes influenced him deeply.

What I truly appreciate are the memories and personal ties to the books being shared with the reader.

Because I was a precocious reader and wanted to read "big" books when younger, I turned my nose up at picture books handed to me as a child. The thicker the tome, the least pictures was how I chose books. As a student in school, I was even more arrogant and gave the cutting side-eye to slim volumes when selecting for book reports. The only skinny book that slid under my overbearing radar was "The Scarlet Letter." Hawthorne's dense language made up for the lack of pages. So, it's nice to read such a reference treasure such as this to give me a kick in the pants and bring me back to classics that always deserve a considerate look. I inherited my grandfather's disdain of JFK, so I never read "Profiles In Courage," but I'm eager to do so now because of how it was described to me in this book. This presentation style is a good example of how older readers should share literature with younger readers. They're more likely to come back to you with an opinion or another insight.

My only complaint was how the book's information was visually presented. The left-hand page was given over to excerpts, no matter how much space was used. And, most of the right-hand page was dedicated to the recollections. Squeezed into a color column near the crease in a too tiny font was the book information. I didn't like squinting and tiring my eyes. I would have preferred a different design solution, which would have made that information more equal to the rest.

Otherwise, it's an excellent reference. I hope it makes it out there to people other than educators and librarians. Anyone who loves books and enjoys stories will come away with a significant and challenging list of books to read after consuming Silvey's well-edited volume.

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### **Sylvester says**

My favorite part was the bit by Andrew Wyeth talking about his father (the great author and illustrator N.C. Wyeth) reading Treasure Island to him. Two of my favorite artists right there. Amazing.

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### **Michelle says**

This book was MARVELOUS. I was initially a little nervous, as I've read some pretty bad "famous people commenting on their favorite books" compilations lately. Perhaps the key here is getting intelligent people to comment on their favorite CHILDREN's book, one that affected their lives in some way. Perhaps this helps people lose some of the self-consciousness I've seen in this type of book and gain back some of the joy of a child finding himself in a book. Whatever it is, this book is wonderful. I love the great variety of books cited--from predictable favorites like The Hobbit, or Little House on the Prairie, all the way to some offbeat choices ("Pink Ice Cream" or "The King, The Mice and the Cheese"?) I loved the heartfelt memories shared by the contributors. I spent a lot of time echoing their sentiments (Yes! I remember EXACTLY how I felt when I encountered Jo March) wondering at the books I did not know (hmm, wonder how many my library has), thinking of books left out (What??? No "The Endless Steppe" or "The Hundred Dresses" or "Betsy-Tacy" or "Anne of Green Gables"??? What were they thinking???) and even more time reminiscing about the books that I loved as a child and that still affect me today. Loved this quote from a contributor---"Reason 1,000,001 to have children--you get to read children's books all over again, no apologies or explanations required. And you get to understand them in a whole new way."

Or this one, from author Graham Greene "Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives . . . In childhood, all books are books of divination, telling us the future."

Lovely, lovely book!

## The Reading Countess says

Publisher's Summary: "What children's book changed the way you see the world?" Anita Silvey asked this question to more than one hundred of our most respected and admired leaders in society, and she learned about the books that shaped financiers, actors, singers, athletes, activists, artists, comic book creators, novelists, illustrators, teachers... The lessons they recall are inspiring, instructive, and illuminating. And the books they remember resonate as influential reading choices for families. **EVERYTHING I NEED TO KNOW I LEARNED FROM A CHILDREN'S BOOK**--with its full color excerpts of beloved children's books, is a treasury and a guide: a collection of fascinating essays and **THE** gift book of the year for families.

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In my class, we speak often about books that help mold us, make us a better reader, and resonate with us. The term for these books that touch our souls is "cornerstone book". At the beginning of the year, I kick off reader's workshop with a lot of discussion about cornerstone books. I relay my all-time favorite cornerstone *Where the Red Fern Grows* and share how my fourth grade teacher, Mrs. Wolford, read the book aloud to my class. The years come rushing back to me as I walk down memory lane with them. I gush about how hard I tried in her class to be in the "top reading group" but to no avail. I was, until that fateful year, a "middle group" reader. However, listening to her read and discuss the book aloud that year somehow jumpstarted my reading life. I found myself walking to the library on the army base my father was stationed to check out armloads of books to pour over. By the end of the year, you guessed it, I WAS in the "top reading group". *Where the Red Fern Grows* for me holds true to the memories I have about falling in love with a great story, working hard to improve my skills and the gratifying sense of accomplishment I felt after all of my toil.

The kids are then asked to think about a book or books that hold that same sense of significance in their own lives. We make a timeline (birth/preschool, early elementary years, and late elementary years). To this timeline, the kids are asked to hitch a few cornerstone books to it, and if possible, bring them in by the week's end. I love to see *Pat the Bunny*, *Goodnight Moon*, and *Dr. Seuss* arrive in droves. There is always a mix of books that hold significance, but the common thread among them is the audible "ooohs" and "aaahs" heard when kids get up and booktalk their book(s). This is the beginning of our reading community, and I absolutely love its' bonding qualities.

*Everything I Need To Know I Learned From a Children's Book* reminded me of my beloved cornerstone books. A collection of essays from notable people throughout the world writing about books that touched them, this book is a must-read for both parents and teachers alike despite the high sticker price of the book. Literature we read in our impressionable childhood years help shape and mold us into the people we are today. This simple fact is why it is imperative that we as parents and educators must seek out high quality literature to help in this endeavor.

\*Other personal cornerstone books (either read to me or by myself):

*The Jungle Book* (my father only read this book to me-several times), *The Little House* series and *The Nancy Drew* series (both series I read right after my eventful fourth grade year in the summertime, much to the chagrin of my mother who was continually looking for ways to kick me out of the house to get some fresh air), and *Are You There, God? It's Me Margaret* (sixth grade wouldn't be complete without that one).

Favorite passages:

"Childhood reading can truly have a formative effect on later life." (p. 29)

"Miss Fiske was the librarian at the Urbana Free Library, my own library when I was growing up. She ran the book club, the Saturday morning puppet show, book fairs, and she read stories, She never had to talk to me about her love of books; she simply exuded it and instilled that passion in me." (p. 51)

"Until I met that book, everything I'd read was, in a word, childish. The books were unthreatening and kept me sheltered. And then along comes this novel that smacks me awake, that grabs my insides with one hand and my soul with the other hand, that demands that I pay attention, a book that snarls. 'So you want to see the secret stuff the world is made of? Okay, kid, here it is.'" (p. 57)

"The novelist Graham Greenem who marveled at the now-alien world of his boyhood reading, once wrote, 'Perhaps it is only in childhood that books have any deep influence on our lives...In childhood, all books are books of divination, telling us the future.' The books we happen to latch on to as children help to furnish our imagination and, to a certain degree, our identity." (p. 65)

"Reason 1,000,001 to have children: You get to read children's books all over again, no apologies or explanations required. And you get to understand them in a whole new way." (p. 87)

"I believe that children's books are the last pond in the Serengeti. They are the one place we go to drink for inspiration." (p. 133)

"Exposure to children's books provides verbal and visual material to help us along the way. So subtle and varied can the lessons be that it may take years before we use everything we absorbed." (p. 181)

"The impact of this book on me shows the importance of reading aloud to students. The memory of my teacher and that book has stuck with me for more than forty years." (p. 183)

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### **Dawn Livingston says**

I liked it because seeing a book I know brought back fond memories but the books wasn't as fun as I'd hoped it would. The book lists a book and shows the image of it and a famous person explains why the book had an impact on them. Intereting, but not riveting and certainly not a book I'd want to fork over money for.

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### **Lady Knight says**

This book was a great idea. I loved reading about which books had a profound affect on different famous personalities. Some were clearly books that have affected many people over many generations for similar reasons. Others seemed like odd influences and were clearly made special to that person due to other circumstances in their lives at the time. I personally loved Robert Ballard's discussion of how "20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" affected him. Good read, but I honestly wish it had chronicled some more youthful personalities.

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### **Kate says**

I splurged on this one at Flying Pig Bookstore this weekend, and I'm so glad that I did. Anita Silvey has pulled together a collection of essays from all sorts of notable people in our world -- from ocean explorer Robert Ballard to YA goddess Judy Blume. They talk about the children's books that changed, and in many cases, shaped their remarkable lives. The book is laid out beautifully, with each essay accompanied by an excerpt from the beloved book.

It's the teacher in me who really wanted this book the most. My 7th graders will love reading about some of their favorite authors' and heroes' favorite books, and the essays are fantastic models for students to do some writing of their own about the books that have changed the way they see the world. A must-read for everyone who loves children's books, but especially for teachers.

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### **Debbie Roby says**

A wonderful guide to choosing books for children and grandchildren to read! This book gives the one most meaningful and memorable book experienced in childhood or the teen years by many famous and successful people. A great idea for a book and a real salute to many great books and authors!

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### **Kristina says**

a sweet book filled with favorite childhood books from authors, illustrators and a few celebrities. thanks em :)

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### **Lindsay says**

I despise the title and cover. So ugly, cheesy, and gimmicky. I never would have picked this book up if I'd seen it in the book store or library. If it weren't for the laudatory reviews two friends gave this book, I might never have had the chance to read it. And that reminds me of Emerson's words: "Would that some charitable soul, after losing a great deal of time among the false books and alighting upon a few true ones, which made him happy and wise, would name those which have been bridges or ships to carry him safely over dark morasses and barren oceans, into the heart of sacred cities, into palaces and temples." Thank you, friends!

I haven't finished reading it yet. I savor a few pages per day. I'm adding all kinds of titles to my read-aloud list. The book is heavy on baby boomer entries, which I suppose is to be expected given that generation's penchant for nostalgia and the editor's age. Though I would have liked to see more input from people my age or younger, I recognize that book love is timeless and ageless.

This is a big, heavy book. I was initially dismayed to see that my husband had lugged it all the way across the Atlantic for me. What if it disappoints, I worried. I needn't have. It's worth its weight in gold. (Or, maybe brass. :-))

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### **Lisa Rector says**

There are so many favorites mentioned in this book, such as *The Secret Garden*, *Wizard of Oz*, *David* and

the Phoenix, Wind in the Willows, The Saturdays, Encyclopedia Brown, A Wrinkle in Time, The Diamond in the Window, along with insightful commentary by Katherine Paterson, Dave Eggers, Anne Tyler, Jack Prelutsky, Pete Seeger, Roger Ebert, and several others. There are capsule bio's of the writers, and selected lists of books by them and another list ranging from preschool to older readers in the back.

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