

## 20 Great Picture Books to Promote STEAM and Creativity

With STEAM programs on the rise, teachers across the country are inspiring students to build, create, tinker, and make. Why not create a springboard for learning with engaging picture books that will hook kids on a plethora of topics? We've gathered some of the best picture books we could find to foster creativity and celebrate science, technology, mathematics, engineering and the arts with children. Beyond using these books to reinforce essential curriculum topics, you'll also find a few other important lessons in our top picks... like perseverance, confidence, innovation, and the importance of making mistakes.

[Sandy's Circus by Tanya Lee Stone](#) is a story about a young boy who was always fiddling with odds and ends and using his imagination to make things. When he got older and became an artist, his fiddling led him to create wire sculptures. One day, he made a lion and then a lion cage. This is a great springboard for making and a must-have book for makerspaces!

[Music over Manhattan by Mark Karlins](#) is about a little boy who has lived his entire life in the shadow of his cousin Herbert. But after his eccentric teaches him to play the trumpet, he no longer has to play second fiddle to his cousin. With a theme of persistence and determination, this is also a great book for integrating the standards of mathematical practice and artistic creativity.

[What Color is My World?: The Lost History of African-American Inventors](#) by Kareem Abdul Jabbar introduces 16 mostly lesser-known African American inventors through a fictional story told by young twins who discover many of the items we use every day were invented or developed by African Americans.

[Rosie Revere, Engineer by Andrea Beaty](#) makes the exploration and experimentation of building things exciting for kids. Rosie loves to invent things, but not all of her ingenious inventions work on the first try. Beaty humorous, heartfelt story combined with the fun illustrations help children understand that the learning is in the process not the final product.

[Iggly Peck, Architect by Andrea Beaty](#) introduces yet another creative character. Iggly's passion is building things. In addition to exploring architecture, this book explores the importance of believing in oneself and pursuing one's passions.

[Ada Twist, Scientist by Andrea Beaty](#) is fun story about a hopelessly curious little girl with a boundless imagination. Ada sets out to answer some of the nagging questions in her head by applying the scientific method. This is a delightful addition to Beaty's Iggly Peck, Architect and Rosie Revere, Engineer.

[A Splash of Red: The Life and Art of Horace Pippin by Jen Bryant](#) is an outstanding picture book biography of a self-taught artist who finds his artistic voice after being wounded in WWI. The story is full of memorable details of Pippin's life such as his early love of art, his thrill of winning an art contest as a boy, and his determination not to give up.

[Me...Jane by Patrick McDonnell](#) shares the early life primatologist Jane Goodall. Told through the eyes of 10-year-old Jane when girls were discouraged to live the life of science and adventure, this heartwarming story shares the determined spirit of a child who was told that her dreams were impossible.

[What Do You Do With an Idea? by Kobi Yamada](#) explores how having a creative, unique idea can be both exciting and uncomfortable. Yamada tells the story of how one child's confidence grows despite discouragement from others, and his idea becomes a reality.

[Philip Reid Saves the Statue of Freedom by Eugene Walton](#) tells the story of a little-known but significant manner in which the Statue of Freedom made it to the top of the Capitol dome. Rich with history, Walton showcases innovative thinking and problem solving to preserve one of our country's most important symbols.

[The Most Magnificent Thing by Ashley Spires](#) is a wonderful story about a young girl who loves to create things. When she tries to create something truly magnificent, things don't go as planned. The story and illustrations impart a great message that encourages kids not to quit in the face of disappointment but that sometimes we just have to find a new perspective.

[On a Beam of Light: A Story of Albert Einstein by Jennifer Berne](#) begins with the birth of an odd little boy who didn't utter a word until he was nearly four years old. However, the awkward little boy discovered an insatiable curiosity in the world around him. In his quest to understand the mysteries in the world, he asked countless questions. The central message of this wonderful picture book is not what Einstein discovered for us, rather his quest for understanding that which we do not understand.

[Summer Birds: The Butterflies of Maria Merian by Margarita Engle](#) and illustrated by Julie Paschkis combines art and science to engage students. Maria Merian, a 17th century naturalist who discovered the process of metamorphosis at the young age of 13. The gorgeous illustrations and thoughtfully told story explain one of the most important contributions to our understanding of entomology.

[Bon Appetit! The Delicious Life of Julia Child by Jessie Hartland](#) delivers a heartwarming illustrated biography of one of the most iconic women of our time. Readers of any age will enjoy the story of this legendary chef that revolutionized cooking long before women had a voice in business or the media.

[The Fantastic Jungles of Henri Rousseau by Michelle Merkel](#) shares the challenges of one of the greatest painters in history. Born into poverty and self-taught as an artist later in his adult years, Rousseau earned money for art supplies by teaching music lessons and continued to paint until he finally paints his masterwork “The Dream” at the end of his life. The central theme of this story, that success is found within ourselves rather than from critics, is a powerful message for young artists.

[The Boy Who Loved Math: The Improbable Life of Paul Erdos by Deborah Heiligman](#) tells the story of “the magician from Budapest,” one of the most prolific mathematicians of the 20th century. Beyond the mathematical theme, Heiligman reinforces the beauty of our unique differences that are often classified as weird or nerdy.

[Your Fantastic Elastic Brain by JoAnn Deak](#) teaches children that they have the ability to stretch and grow their own brains. In fun, easy to understand language and illustrations, Deak explains the parts of the brain and the functions of each. She also delivers the crucial message that making mistakes is one of the best ways to learn and grow.

[Goodnight iPad: a Parody for the Next Generation by Ann Droyd](#) is a humorous look at the technology that we use every day. This book pokes a little fun at our plugged-in lives and provides a great springboard for discussing how technology is changing our lives.

[Hello Ruby: Adventures in Coding by Linda Liukas](#) is part picture book and part activity book. Young learners will learn basic programming concepts, computational thinking, and creating step-by-step plans.

[The Boy Who Harnessed the Wind by William Kam](#) is a great story for older students studying electricity and engineering. This exciting memoir describes how a young boy becomes a successful inventor using scrap metal and old bicycle parts.