

2026 SUMMER READING LIST – ELEMENTARY PICTURE BOOKS

I Am Not Your Hat!

Written & Illustrated by Lisa Bentley

Publisher's Summary: Bert and Dot are the best of friends. Bert is a very large bird, and Dot is a very small one. Bert loves to talk, and Dot loves to listen. Dot also accepts Bert for who he is—even covering up his big secret by staying perched on his head.

But when some other birds mistake Dot for Bert's hat, Bert goes along with it, accepting the compliments, and enjoying the attention. Finally, Dot gets fed up and flies away. Now with his secret out and his best friend gone, Bert must find a way to make things right with Dot...and learn how to stay true to himself.

Buffalo Fluffalo

Written by Bess Kalb

Illustrated by Erin Kraan

Buffalo Fluffalo tries to appear bigger and tougher than the other animals, even though they just want to be his friends. He goes off grumbling but is shocked when a rainstorm pours down on his fluff and reveals him to be a much smaller animal. Buffalo Fluffalo is embarrassed, but the other animals comfort him and reassure him they like him no matter his size.

Don't Trust Fish

Written by Neil Sharpson

Illustrated by Dan Santat

Why, dear reader, must you NEVER EVER trust fish?

1) They spend all their time in the water where we can't see them. 2) Some are as big as a bus—that is not okay.

3) We don't know what they're teaching in their "schools." 4) They are likely plotting our doom.

This nature-guide-gone-wrong is a hilarious, off-the-rails exploration of the seemingly innocent animals that live in the water.

GO and GET with REX

Written by David LaRochelle

Illustrated by Mike Wohnoutka

Publisher's Summary: Jack, Jill, and Rex are excited to play a game of Go and Get! The rules are simple: on the count of three, each player must go and get something that begins with a certain letter. While Jack's and Jill's picks always fit the bill (What starts with F? Frog! Fish!), Rex keeps getting it wrong (a duck?)—or does he?

The Blue Velvet Chair

Written by Rio Cortez

Illustrated by Aaron Marin

Publisher's Summary: In the morning, a young child opens her eyes, and, after one biiiiiig streeeeetch, heads straight for her favorite place in the house: the blue velvet chair. Perched from the chair set by the living room window, the child daydreams about each season of the year and the changes that come with them. A now-snowy roof was once pelted by the slick rain of spring showers. Icy windows will once again transform into conveyors of sunshine and warmth against her skin.

And just as the seasons change, the child will continue to change too. But one thing will always remain the same: the coziness of the blue velvet chair.

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Broken

Written & Illustrated by X. Fang

Publisher's Summary: When Mei Mei accidentally breaks her ama's favorite cup, she's convinced it's the end of the world. What if Ama is angry? What if she yells? What if she kicks Mei Mei out of her house? Mei Mei can't face it. But when Mimi, the innocent cat who witnesses her crime, ends up being blamed, the guilt is too much! Mimi's accusing eyes follow Mei Mei until she just can't take it anymore, and the truth comes spilling out.

I Hear The Snow, I Smell The Sea

Written by Janice Milusich Illustrated by Chris Raschka

Publisher's Summary: A young girl who is blind describes the sounds, smells, and feel of each season of the year, from a cold breeze stinging her cheeks in the winter, to the smell of hyacinths in the spring, to the feel of sand on her toes in the summer, to the skitter-skoot sound of a squirrel in autumn.

Fireworks

Written by Matthew Burgess Illustrated by Catia Chien

Publisher's Summary: When two children wake on a hot day to celebrate Independence Day, they partake in a host of traditions from a parade, to icy watermelon, to dancing to music. When darkness falls, the anticipation grows for the fireworks show--and it does not disappoint--as pops and booms fill the sky with sparkling light before the tired children return home to sleep.

Bats Beneath The Bridge

Written by Janet Nolan Illustrated by Emily Cox

Publisher's Summary: More than one million bats nest under the Congress Avenue Bridge in Austin, Texas, and fill the sky every evening from spring to fall.

Discover how the people of Austin, Texas, stopped being afraid of the more than one million bats nesting under the Congress Avenue Bridge and, instead, welcomed them. This true story includes a foreword by bat biologist Dr. Merlin Tuttle, who came to Austin to advocate for the colony by educating residents about the ways in which bats are good for the environment, and for humans too. Now, tourists from all over the world come to Austin to watch the Brazilian free-tail bats fill the sky every evening in early spring.

Fox and the Mystery Letter

Written & Illustrated by Alex G. Griffiths

Publisher's Summary: In the dense forest, in a lonely cottage, there lives Fox. Fox is perfectly happy all by himself—until one day, a letter arrives: "Dear Fox: I know how much you enjoy puzzles. I bet you can't resist this one . . . Head to the forest path to begin your journey. From an old friend."

Fox doesn't need any mysterious puzzles, adventures, or memories of his old . . . But he stops himself from finishing the thought. Still, it can't hurt to look at the first clue. Of course, one clue leads to the next: Fox follows arrows in the mud, notes taped to trees, swirling smoke signals, a map from a bottle, and gifts from fellow animals—on the trail of a friendship that once was.