

Beginning Chapter Books by Title

A

J Series DAD The Adventures of the Bailey School Kids series, by Debbie Dadey and Marcia Thornton Jones
guided reading level: M

This is a classic monster series about a group of third graders. In each book they believe an authority figure is a monster of some sort, try to prove it, and don't really get any final resolution (or at least that's my take on it). The books are a little creepy, but never too scary.

J GRE The Adventures of Sophie Mouse books, by Poppy Green
guided reading level: N

This is a friendly, gentle series about young animals. The books are sweet and well-written. I appreciate the positive storylines and the strong vocabulary. These are best for young readers; they might feel babyish to older, struggling readers.

J LOO Alvin Ho series, by Lenore Look
guided reading level: P

It's about Alvin, an Asian American second grader who has anxiety about many things. It's laugh-out-loud funny without being mean-spirited. There's some sibling tension, but nothing too serious – and I absolutely love the close relationship between Alvin and his father. I think the content would be a little challenging for young advanced readers, but you could try reading one together first.

J Series DAN Amber Brown series, by Paula Danziger
guided reading level: O

Amber Brown is a fourth grader with divorced parents who is learning to navigate new relationships. There's a fair amount of gross talk ("farting," picking noses, etc.) and some topics that are a bit heavy for really young kids (divorced parents not getting along, etc.). That said, the books are interesting and well written.

J PAR Amelia Bedelia chapter book series, by Herman Parish
guided reading level: O

While I grew up loving the original Amelia Bedelia books by Peggy Parish (JE PAR), I'm less than impressed with this new chapter book series by her nephew.

JE JAC Andy Shane books by Jennifer Richard Jacobson
guided reading level: K

These are very basic illustrated chapter books with large font and spacing. Andy Shane is a nice little boy who lives with his grandmother and faces the typical challenges of childhood. I didn't find the books very interesting, but kids might feel differently. Worth a try for kids ready to read longer text but not longer chapter books.

J ATI Anna Hibiscus books, by Atinuke
guided reading level: P

This is a beautiful series about Anna Hibiscus, a young girl who lives in modern-day Africa with her loving family. The stories are both entertaining and touching, and you'll find many opportunities for discussion. .

J Series ROY A-Z Mysteries, by Ron Roy
guided reading level: N

This is a series of 26 books about three third graders who solve crimes and mysteries. It features one book for each letter of the alphabet. These are quick reads and great for mystery lovers who are new to chapter books.

B

J BRU Bad Kitty series, by Nick Bruel
guided reading level: P

This is a completely bizarre (and frankly, hilarious) set of chapter books that feel more like graphic novels. My older kids laugh out loud when reading these (and frequently read me a funny page). However, I don't recommend them for young readers because of the bizarre (and sometimes off-color) humor,

J GIF Ballet Slippers series, by Patricia Reilly Giff
guided reading level: M

This series combines Rosie's love for ballet with her ongoing relationships with family and friends. The occasional black-and-white illustrations give good support.

JBRA Beneath the Bed by Max Brallier guided reading level:N

The kids at school dare John to visit the old house on the hill at night, and when he and his sister go in they find dusty dishes set on the table, a book open like it is waiting for a reader, and something hiding under the bed in the attic--and that is only one of the five scary stories with unexpected twists that are included in this collection.

.JE DIC Bink & Gollie books, by Kate DiCamillo and Alison McGhee
guided reading level: M

This is a fun series about two best friends – one tiny, one tall. These will be welcomed by kids who are new to chapter books because the pages are mostly full color illustrations (indeed, the pictures tell much of the story). Teachers will like them because they include strong vocabulary and plenty of opportunities for making inferences.

JP THA Black Lagoon Adventures, by Mike Thaler
guided reading level: N

This fun chapter book series mixes school, monsters, and common kid problems. It's a great choice for reluctant readers, as the stories and illustrations are engaging, and the speech bubbles give the series a comic-book feel. One odd thing about the series is that the text is very large, making you think the book is for younger readers.

J Series WAR (Workroom) The Boxcar Children, created by Gertrude Chandler Warner
guided reading level: O

The original *Boxcar Children* is one of my favorite books of all time. It's the story of four orphaned children who run away to the woods and make their home in an old boxcar. The idea of a group of siblings trying to survive on their own in the woods is fascinating for kids of any generation. Warner wrote the original 19 books.

C

J ROY, JCDBK ROY Calendar Mysteries series, by Ron Roy

guided reading level: M

I like seeing author Ron Roy's name on a book cover, because I know that the book will have kind characters, no potty humor, and adults who are patient and dependable. This is a spin-off of the *A-Z Mysteries* series by the same author, but in these books it's the younger siblings who are solving the mysteries – one for each month and an extra one for New Year's. Consider it a big win if your learners get hooked on any of Ron Roy's mystery series.

J Series ADL Cam Jansen series, by David Adler

guided reading level: L

You can't go wrong with this classic series about a fifth grade girl detective with a photographic memory. The first book was published in 1980, and the most recent was published in 2014. I loved these as a kid, and they were the series that got my reluctant second grade reader to start reading chapter books. Quality, clean fiction.

J Series ROY Capital Mysteries, by Ron Roy

guided reading level: N

This series features KC, the president's stepdaughter, and her best friend Marshall as they solve mysteries around Washington, D.C. The stories feel a bit far-fetched at times (like the fact that these two children explore D.C. unsupervised), but young mystery lovers will enjoy them. To my knowledge, the books have no crude humor, sassiness, or name calling.

J PIL Captain Underpants series, by Dav Pilkey

guided reading level: P

This is a hugely popular series, and it gets kids to read, but please read one for yourself before giving it to your kids. There are many, many other series to tempt reluctant readers.

.J LEG Catwings, by Ursula K. Le Guin

guided reading level O

This is a classic set of books that I loved as a child. The books are beautifully written and absolutely enchanting. Mrs. Jane Tabby can't explain why her four kittens were born with wings, but she's thankful that they can fly away from the dangerous city slums where they were born. All children should read or hear *Catwings* before they grow up.

J SNY Charlie & Mouse books, by Laurel Snyder
guided reading level: J

This series features the loving relationship between two brothers, Charlie and Mouse. Each book is a gorgeous blend of picture and chapter book, making the series perfect for kids venturing into chapter books. This charming series worth a permanent spot on your home or school shelf.

J PEN Clementine, by Sara Pennypacker
Level O

This is a quality series about Clementine, an energetic and precocious third grader. The books don't have the same innocence as the classic *Ramona the Pest* series, but the plot lines are pretty tame. I could do without the occasional boyfriend/girlfriend talk among third graders, which is why I recommend this series for older, struggling readers rather than for young advanced readers.

J RYL The Cobble Street Cousins, by Cynthia Rylant
guided reading level: L

This is a gentle, wholesome series about Lily, Tess, and Rosie, three best friends who also happen to be cousins. Young readers may enjoy following the gentle love story between the girls' Aunt Lucy and kind, shy Michael.

JE CHA Cork & Fuzz books, by Dori Chaconas
guided reading level: J

This is a series that deserves to be more popular. It's an easy-reader chapter book series about Cork, a short and serious muskrat, and his friend Fuzz – a tall possum who likes to have fun. The stories are witty, funny, and sweet.

JE SIL Cowgirl Kate and Cocoa books, by Erica Silverman
guided reading level: K

This is a lovely, easy-to-read series about a girl and her horse. The stories are gentle and funny, and the illustrations are wonderful. The books are quite short and similar in difficulty to *Henry and Mudge*, *Poppleton*, and *Mr. Putter and Tabby*.

D-F

J ADL Danny's Doodles books, by David Adler

guided reading level: N

You know a book is good when you, as an adult, will pick it up and enjoy reading it all on your own. That's how I feel about the Danny's Doodles series – and I have no doubt that kids will also enjoy the adventures of Danny and his quirky friend Calvin Waffle, along with the black-and-white doodles on every page. I appreciate that the characters are realistic and relatable while also being kind, honest, and generous. This series is a welcome change from the mouthiness and name-calling we find in so many early chapter books. *Highly* recommended!

J HUG Digby O'Day series, by Shirley Hughes

guided reading level: M

This is a wonderful series about the adventures of Digby and Percy, two dogs who happen to be best friends. I love that there are just a few sentences on each page, and the illustrations by Clara Vulliamy (the author's daughter!) are pure delight. Strongly recommended!

J HAN Dory Fantasmagory, by Abby Hanlon

guided reading level: O

I'll start by saying that the first book in this series made me laugh so hard I cried. I read it aloud to my kids a few years ago, and we *loved* it. Dory is an energetic little sister with a *huge* imagination. She exasperates her parents and annoys her siblings, but we loved her. All that said, Dory's siblings are downright mean. And there is some questionable language ("butt," reference to bathroom talk, etc.). I think the positives outweigh the negatives, but you may not agree.

JP PIL Dragon books, by Dav Pilkey

guided reading level: J

This is the perfect series for early readers who are ready to move past picture books. Bumbling, not-too-bright Dragon is absolutely endearing. Each chapter is short and fully-illustrated with color pictures.

J WES Dragon Masters series, by Tracey West
guided reading level: O

This is a series about children who must become Dragon Masters – to connect with and train their dragons while also discovering their creatures’ secret powers.

J CHA Eerie Elementary series, by Jack Chabert
guided reading level: M

Sam and his friends Lucy and Antonio are students at Eerie Elementary – where the school is trying to eat the students! As hall monitor, Sam’s job is to fight the school and save the students. The premise is a little wacky for me, and you’ll have to decide if the age-appropriate creepiness is too much for your young readers. Do know that the books are quality,

J Series BRO Encyclopedia Brown series, by Donald J. Sobol
guided reading level: P

This classic series was published from 1968 to 1992. Encyclopedia Brown is a very smart fifth grader who helps his father, the Chief of Police, solve cases in the small town of Idaville. Each chapter features a short mystery. My husband enjoyed these as a kid, and he liked seeing how much our 9-year-old enjoyed them as well. Struggling readers may be turned off by the “old” stories and sparse illustrations, but advanced readers will enjoy the unpredictable mysteries and creative storytelling. Good clean fun.

J JAM Fabio, the World’s Greatest Flamingo Detective by Laura James

Flamingo detective Fabio and his giraffe associate, Gilbert, investigate when a singing hippopotamus disappears during auditions for a talent show being staged to save the failing Hotel Royale.

J Series BRO Flat Stanley, by Jeff Brown
guided reading level: M

The original *Flat Stanley* debuted in 1964. It’s the story of Stanley Lambchop, a boy who survives being crushed by a falling bulletin board. Other equally bizarre adventures occur in later books, published from 1985 to 2003.

JE MAR Fox books, by Edward (James) Marshall
guided reading level: J

This classic series (1983-1993) uses easy-reader vocabulary to tell funny and, frankly, brilliant stories about the irrepressible, entertaining Fox. Please note that Fox isn't a great role model (he talks back to his mom), but he faces logical consequences for his actions. *Highly recommended!*

J BEN Franny K. Stein, Mad Scientist series, by Jim Benton
guided reading level: N

Franny K. Stein is imaginative and creative — and also happens to be a mad scientist who wants to take over the world (she just has to finish elementary school first). Franny's adventures are just plain weird, but the series is a welcome change from the cattiness, name calling, and sassiness we find in so many early chapter books. This series will appeal equally to boys and girls.

JE LOB Frog and Toad series, by Arnold Lobel
guided reading level: K

In my opinion, every young reader should read (or listen to) *Frog and Toad*. The simple but profound stories of friendship are funny, interesting, and worth reading again and again. Don't be turned off by the dull colors in the illustrations of these vintage books. The stories are timeless.

G-H

J ORY Galaxy Zack series, by Ray O'Ryan
guided reading level: N

This is a futuristic series about a boy named Zack who lives on Nebulon with his family in the year 2120. Fantasy books can be hard to follow, but this one keeps the sentences short and has a lot of pictures to support comprehension. It's not amazing literature, but it's clean and entertaining.

JP MAR George and Martha books, by James Marshall
guided reading level: L

These classic books (created over 30 years ago) are more picture than chapter books, but I include them because they are divided into short chapters – and these books are both witty and fun. I've long been a fan of George and Martha – two hippos who happen to be best friends. Like any best friends, they get on each others' nerves, humor each other, and look out for each other. Each chapter tells its own story, which makes these books great for kids who are working at comprehension.

J Series STI Geronimo Stilton series, by Geronimo Stilton
guided reading level: O

The stories are told by the mouse Geronimo Stilton, the editor in chief of the Rodent Gazette and author of adventure stories. If this series is new to your reader, I would advise having him/her talk to you about each chapter as s/he reads it to make sure that comprehension is on track.

J LOW Gooney Bird books, by Lois Lowry
guided reading level: N

If your readers are ready to move beyond fairies and puppies, encourage them to try the Gooney Bird Greene books. These are considerably more challenging than most of the books in this list; the font is small, and there are few illustrations. The books are exceptionally well written (Lois Lowry is a Newbery award winner), and the quirky Gooney Bird is an interesting second grader with a knack for storytelling.

J VER Hamster Princess series, by Ursula Vernon
guided reading level: O

This is a hilarious series featuring a hamster who's quite different from your typical glittery princess. Harriet Hamsterbone is a fearsome warrior who slays dragons, jumps off cliffs, and cracks sarcastic jokes at the same time. Definitely worth checking out!

J CLE Henry Huggins books, by Beverly Cleary
guided reading level: O

These funny, timeless books (the first was published in 1950) are still popular with kids today. Henry Huggins is an average 11-year-old boy who often finds himself in unusual situations. Beverly Cleary (now 100 years old as I write this post!) has a gift for understanding children and how they think. Fans of Ramona the Pest will enjoy her appearances in this series as well.

JE RYL Henry and Mudge series, by Cynthia Rylant
guided reading level: J

You can't go wrong with any of the Henry and Mudge books, a wonderful easy-to-read chapter book series about likable Henry and his lovable (big!) dog, Mudge. The books feature simple, screen-free adventures, loving parents, and engaging storylines. This series is the perfect choice for especially young advanced readers!

J KLI Herbie Jones, Suzy Kline
guided reading level: N

Herbie Jones is a likable second/third grader who lives with his parents and big sister. I would say that the book topics and writing style might be a bit over the heads of advanced early readers, but it's a good series for kids in second or third grade or even older struggling readers. Whenever I pick up a Suzy Kline book, I can feel confident that it's a well-written story.

J WIN Here's Hank series, by Henry Winkler & Lin Oliver
guided reading level: O

This is a wonderful series co-written by Henry Winkler (The Fonz from the old Happy Days series) and Lin Oliver. I'm usually not impressed by children's books written by celebrities, but this book is a big exception. Winkler, who has dyslexia, has created a funny and likable character with the same challenge.

J Series Horrible Harry series, by Suzy Kline
guided reading level: L

I had the *Horrible Harry* series in my classroom for years, but I never read one myself. I didn't have high hopes for their quality, and I never actually read one until I listened to my third grader read them aloud to me. What a pleasant surprise! These books are well written, interesting, and engaging – with a host of relatable characters. In fact, this was the series that finally got my second son comfortable with chapter books and launched a big jump in his reading ability.

J SIM Horrid Henry series, by Francesca Simon
guided reading level: N

Henry isn't just horrid – he's heinous. He's horribly rude, lies, is disrespectful to his parents, has an atrocious relationship with his younger brother, and hardly ever experiences consequences for his actions. Please read one yourself before giving them to your child.

JE HOW Houndsley and Catina books, by James Howe
guided reading level: L

This is a sweet series about an unlikely pair of best friends – Houndsley and Catina. These friendly books have charming illustrations and large text with plenty of spacing. Great for kids getting ready for chapter books.

I-J

J ANG Inspector Flytrap series, by Tom Angeleberger & Cece Bell
guided reading level: O

I love that this series is written and illustrated by a husband/wife team, which I always think is cool. I *want* to be able to recommend the books. I like the dry humor and the zany stories about Inspector Flytrap (a Venus Flytrap who also happens to be a detective) and his goat sidekick, Nina. But the book I read had too much crass humor for my taste. If you're sensitive to that sort of thing, I'd skip it.

J Series BAR Ivy and Bean series, by Annie Barrows
guided reading level: M

I'm on the fence about this series. On the one hand, they're funny. Ivy and Bean are two friends who get into a lot of mischief. On the other hand ... Bean can be a bit sassy, and the relationship between Bean and her big sister is very negative (which I always find disappointing in a children's book).

J CLE Jake Drake books, by Andrew Clements
guided reading level: O

Andrew Clements is a wonderful author for young children, so I definitely recommend checking out this series. Jake Drake is a likable second grader dealing with familiar problems – getting into trouble as the class clown, being the teacher's pet, dealing with bullying, and more. A good choice for older, struggling readers.

J MCD Judy Moody series, by Megan McDonald
guided reading level: M

Judy Moody is the spunky, impulsive, and (of course) moody third grader in this popular series. The stories are funny and well-written – and even though Judy can be sassy and mean, the books are fine overall.

J Series PAR Junie B. Jones series, by Barbara Park
guided reading level: M

Ah, Junie B.! People either love or hate this series. The truth is that when I taught 3rd-5th grade I thought these books were hilarious and read them aloud to my students. But now as a mother, I'm not so crazy about them. The books really are laugh-out-loud funny, but Junie is often extremely naughty and not the least bit sorry. I would encourage you to read one before encouraging your learners to read them so you can make your own decision.

J VAI Justin Case, by Rachel Vail
guided reading level: P

This is a hilarious series about Justin, a lovable worrywart who worries his way through elementary school and summer camp. The stories are relatable, and the illustrations really add to the book. I would save it for older, struggling readers because they'll relate better to the third and fourth grade storylines.

K-L

J Series KRU Katie Kazoo, Switcheroo, by Nancy Krulik
guided reading level: M

This is a fun, engaging series about Katie Carew. In each book, a magic wind appears and turns Katie into someone else ... whether that's the girl at the top of the cheerleader pyramid, a hair stylist, or the class hamster. Katie is never prepared for the switch, and each book features one funny adventure after another. Highly recommended!

JE BUT King & Kayla, by Dori Hillestad Butler
guided reading level: L

This is an easy-to-read mystery series about a lovable dog (King) who helps his human (Kayla) solve mysteries. This is the perfect introduction to mystery books for kids who are transitioning to chapter books.

J PES Kylie Jean series, by Marci Peschke
guided reading level: M

I wasn't sure I'd like a series whose main character's dream is to become a beauty queen (and who starts telling you how pretty she is on the second page). Thankfully, this isn't the sole focus of the books; each one explores a different interest. These are cute and wholesome (and moderately entertaining), making them a good choice for young advanced readers.

J RYL The Lighthouse Family, by Cynthia Rylant
guided reading level: O

A lighthouse keeper cat, a shipwrecked sailor dog, and three orphaned mouse children are the Lighthouse Family. Each book features another of their adventures. These gentle books are beautifully written and illustrated, but the stories may move a bit slowly for some readers. I suspect that adults will enjoy the books more than children.

JE MIN Little Bear series, by Else Holmelund Minarik
guided reading level: J

The author wrote these beautiful early-reader books in the 1950's and 60's (with the exception of the last book, written two years before her death). Children have loved reading about Little Bear's adventures for generations – and they haven't lost a bit of their charm.

J BRO Lola Levine series, by Monica Brown
guided reading level: M

This is a wonderful, engaging series about Lola Levine, a half-Jewish, half-Peruvian girl who embraces her multicultural heritage. Lola is smart, feisty and energetic, but she isn't naughty or sassy. The stories are well written, and the characters are well developed.

J KEL Lucy Rose series, by Katy Kelly
guided reading level: O

This book, told in a diary format, is about the adventures of spunky fourth grader, Lucy Rose. Lucy Rose navigates her parents' divorce, not getting the lead in the school play, and multiplication facts. The storytelling and energy are similar to Junie B. Jones – without the sassiness and backtalk. Since the book is written as Lucy would talk, it's full of run-on sentences. This can feel a little exhausting to read, but I liked this series.

J MCK Lulu books, by Hilary McKay
guided reading level: N

This is an absolutely delightful series about Lulu and her friends' adventures as they save animals in their neighborhood. The books are beautifully written, the stories are fun and engaging, and black-and-white illustrations support comprehension. Definitely check these

out!

M

J STA The Magic Mirror by Anna Staniszewki

The Ice Princess's magic mirror is broken, one piece is missing, and without it the Enchanted Kingdom is locked in a terrible, unseasonable, heat wave (even the palace is melting); two children, Kara and Zed, are determined to help, but first they must figure out whether the break is the result of the sibling rivalry between the Ice Princess and her sister the Sun Princess--or did the monkey do it?

J Series OSB Magic Tree House series, by Mary Pope Osborne *guided reading level: M*

I'm a big fan of the best-selling Magic Tree House books because they tell kid-friendly adventure stories while also teaching about science and social studies. A bonus is that the stories are clean and feature a positive brother/sister relationship. Great choice for young advanced readers!

J FRI Mallory books, by Laurie Friedman *guided reading level: O*

This is a well-written series about Mallory, a third/fourth/fifth grader (depending on the book), and the drama that surrounds her and her friends (and their older siblings). Mallory is a good role model but is also relatable and likable; the books teach good lessons without being preachy. I should note that while the books are perfectly appropriate, I'd save them for third grade and up. They focus a lot on older kid themes (owning a phone, older sibling boyfriend/girlfriend breakups, etc.)

J MES Marty McGuire books, by Kate Messner *guided reading level: O*

This is a really great series about an active third grade girl who likes the dirt and doesn't want to dress up like a princess. The books are well-written and should appeal to both boys and girls.

J SAC Marvin Redpost series, by Louis Sachar
guided reading level: M

Marvin Redpost is a likable and relatable third grader. Kids enjoy these books, and I don't have any big issues with them – except that the subject matter (such as teasing about boyfriends/girlfriends and a dog dying when Marvin is housesitting) sometimes feels too much for the targeted age level. Probably a better choice for struggling older readers than for young advanced readers.

J KLI Mary Marony series, by Suzy Kline
guided reading level: M

This is an older series (early 90's), and like any series by Suzy Kline, it doesn't disappoint. Mary Maloney is a clever and creative little girl who's trying to overcome her stutter and the other challenges of second grade. These feature a larger font and black-and-white illustrations. Recommended for young advanced readers.

J BRO The Masterpiece Adventures, by Elise Broach
guided reading level: L

In this charming series, we read about James and his friend Marvin, a beetle. (It's a companion series to the much more difficult chapter book *Masterpiece*.) The text is large with big spacing, and the books have detailed black-and-white drawings. Lots of support for young readers.

.JE DIC Mercy Watson series, by Kate DiCamillo
guided reading level: L

What? You've never heard of Mercy Watson? Please... reserve one of the books at your library, *stat!* These are absolutely hilarious (and brilliantly illustrated) books about Mercy Watson, a pig (excuse me, *porcine wonder*) who is the delight of her owners but a thorn in the side of her neighbor, Eugenia Lincoln. Each book features a hilarious new adventure, quirky characters, and plenty of hot buttered toast.

J MON Milo & Jazz Mysteries, by Lewis B. Montgomery
guided reading level: L

Young mystery lovers will enjoy this clever, fast-paced mystery series about Milo and Jazz, detectives in training. (And I admit it, I loved it too!) Great for fans of Cam Jansen, and a good choice for both young advanced readers and older, struggling readers.

JE CAZ Minnie and Moo series, by Denys Cazet
guided reading level: J

This is an easy-reader chapter book series about Minnie and Moo, two lovable cows who go on silly adventures.

JE GRE Moose and Hildy series, by Stephanie Greene
guided reading level: L

The only bummer about this series is that it took me so long to discover it! It's a wonderfully funny and engaging series about two best friends: Moose and Hildy (a pig). The fantastic black and white illustrations help make this book a great transition to chapter books. Highly recommended!

JE RYL Mr. Putter and Tabby series, by Cynthia Rylant
guided reading level: J

This is a gentle, not-to-miss series about the cautious, elderly Mr. Putter and his cat, Tabby. We love reading about their adventures with his equally elderly (but much wilder) neighbor, Mrs. Teaberry and her dog, Zeke. This a touching, beautiful series – and it's well worth investing in a box set if you get the opportunity.

J CLASSIC MCD Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle series, by Betty McDonald
guided reading level: O

Mrs. Piggle-Wiggle's late husband was a pirate, and her backyard is full of hidden treasure. Children love her, but so do their parents – because she uses magic to solve common kid "ailments" – like refusing to take a bath, backtalk, and dawdling. This classic series may feel a bit dated to today's kids, but I suspect that many young readers will still enjoy them. The first three books were published in the 40's and 50's. Her daughter published the final book in 2007.

J LAG My Happy Life series, by Rose Lagercrantz
guided reading level: N

This is a lovely series translated from Swedish. Charming black and white illustrations accompany stories about Dani, a second grader who lives with her widowed father and faces the ups and downs of everyday life. The books are deceptively simple but are actually quite profound. (Books include *My Happy Life*, *My Heart is Laughing*, *When I am Happiest*, *Life According to Dani*, *See You When I see You*, and *Where Dani Goes, Happy Follows*).

J Series GUT My Weirder School series, by Dan Gutman
guided reading level: O

I wish I could recommend this popular series, but it was quite disappointing. The main character “hates” practically everything (including school), and the books are full of name-calling, negativity, and mean-spirited humor. Many kids will enjoy this series; you’ll have to decide if you want to feed that by filling your shelves with them. I definitely don’t recommend them for young advanced readers.

N-O

J OCO Nancy Clancy chapter books, by Jane O’Connor
guided reading level: O

While I prefer the Fancy Nancy picture books, the Nancy Clancy chapter books (which came later) are also fun to read. Nancy and her best friend Bree are likable third graders with engaging, realistic adventures. I love that O’Connor builds vocabulary in a natural way throughout each of the books.

JE SHA Nate the Great series, by Marjorie Weinman Sharmat
guided reading level: K

This classic series (the first book was published in 1972) is the perfect segue from picture to chapter books. Nate the Great is a boy detective who solves mysteries with the help of his dog, Sludge. Kids will enjoy the clever mysteries and quirky characters. This is a great series for young advanced readers, and the books appeal equally to girls and boys (this was one of my favorite series as a young reader).

J CUM The Notebook of Doom series, by Troy Cummings
guided reading level: O

Alexander has moved to a new town, where he finds an old notebook with the word DOOM on the cover. The notebook contains top secret information about monsters, which Alexander battles in each of the books. I’ll be honest and tell you that while I thought this series was harmless, it’s also really dumb, and I can’t imagine reading it aloud to my kids in place of the many interesting books out there that are actually well-written.

JE VAN Oliver and Amanda Pig series, by Jean Van Leeuwen
guided reading level: L

These tender easy-reader chapter books were published from 1979-2008. They were probably my first chapter books, and I remember checking them out over and over again from the library. Now as a mother, I appreciate those early books even more. The author wrote the first books when she had two young children – no wonder the stories are so relatable! The oldest books of this series are my favorite, but all are good.

J Series ELL Owl Diaries, by Rebecca Elliot
guided reading: level N

This is a brightly illustrated series about Eva Wingdale, a likable little owl who keeps a diary about her adventures at home and at Treetop Owlementary. This is a good choice for second or third graders who struggle with reading but want to read chapter books. The content is perfect for younger readers as well.

P

J Series DEL Pee Wee Scouts series, by Judy Delton
guided reading level: L

I remember how much my younger brother (now 36) loved these books as a third grader. Each book's plot typically focuses on earning a particular badge, and the stories are engaging and interesting. The kids are sometimes mean to each other, but it's nothing over the top. I do have to say that I'm really disappointed by the updated covers; try to find the original series if you can.

JE HOW Pinky and Rex books, by James Howe
guided reading level: L

Pinky and Rex are two best friends; Pinky is a boy whose favorite color is pink. Rex is a girl whose favorite dinosaur is a T-Rex. These books explore friendship in an endearing way. The easy-reader format makes them a great choice for young advanced readers.

J HOL Piper Reed series, by Kimberly Willis Holt
guided reading level: N

This is an entertaining and well-written series about Piper Reed, a child whose family moves every few years because her father is a Navy Chief. Piper navigates new homes, new schools (while dealing with dyslexia), and quarrels with her older and younger sister. Because the older sister is a teen, there are some comments that younger readers won't "get" (and that you won't want them to). Nothing serious at all, but for that reason I'd recommend this for older struggling readers and not young, advanced ones.

J HOL The Polk Street Mysteries, by Patricia Reilly Giff

Dawn Bosco is a second grade detective at Polk Street School. This is an older series (1980's) that's been republished. It's a wonderfully written, engaging set of books without the bathroom humor and snarkiness prevalent in newer chapter books.

JE RYL Poppleton books, by Cynthia Rylant
guided reading level: J

This may just be my favorite children's book series of all time. Together, Rylant's beautiful storytelling and Teague's outstanding illustrations bring us the adventures of lovable Poppleton the pig and his neighbors – Cherry Sue (a llama), Hudson (a mouse), and Filmore (a goat). The stories are pure and wholesome and still laugh-out-loud funny. This is a rare combination, and I highly (HIGHLY!) recommend getting the full set for your home or classroom library. You may just find yourself pulling them off the shelf to read even when no children are around (I know I do).

J HAL The Princess in Black series, by Shannon Hale & Dean Hale
guided reading level: L

Princess Magnolia appears to be the perfect, prim princess – but when monsters attack, she changes into a costume and becomes her alter ego – The Princess in Black. I like the concept of a superhero princess, and kids will love the beautiful full-color illustrations on nearly every page. Personally, I didn't find the stories all that well-written or engaging. But there's nothing objectionable in the series. I suspect these would feel babyish for kids above third grade.

J GAY Princess Pistachio books, by Marie-Louise Gay
guided reading level: M

I wanted to like these books, if only because *Princess Pistachio* is so much fun to say. But I was disappointed in the sassiness of the main character and the unkind teasing by her friends. Still ... the writing is clever, the stories are cute, and the illustrations are great. Worth trying.

R

J Series MEA Rainbow Magic books, by Daisy Meadows
guided reading level: L

The good news is that there is nothing objectionable in the Rainbow Magic books. The bad news is that they are painful to read. They are sickeningly sweet, have mediocre writing (at best), and nearly the same plot in all the books. It's clear that the author dashed these books off very quickly (no wonder there are over 200 in the series!). I couldn't even make it through one (short) book. That said, reading these repetitive books can actually be good for young readers who need to improve comprehension and fluency. I wouldn't discourage kids from reading these books, but do remember that the goal is that they move on to higher quality books when they're ready.

J CLE Ramona Quimby books, by Beverly Cleary
guided reading level: O

When I look back at my childhood, Ramona Quimby plays a prominent role. I absolutely *loved* this series of books about a little girl who starts as a pesky preschooler and grows into a relatable, likable 10-year-old. I loved reading each novel when I was the same age as the Ramona in the book. It's like Beverly Cleary could see into my head ... she "gets" children *so well*. Even though the publication dates range from 1955-1999 (yes, really – Cleary is now 100 years old), the stories are timeless.

J KLE Ready, Freddy! series, by Abby Klein
guided reading level: L

Ready, Freddy is a popular series, so much so that I bought some for my oldest a number of years ago. I regret it and am getting rid of all the ones I find in the house. While I don't dislike this series as much as I despise *Captain Underpants* and *Horrid Henry*, I can't recommend it.

J HAR The Rescue Princesses series, by Paula Harrison
guided reading level: O

This is a friendly series about princesses who live at a princess boarding school, where they learn how to be royalty while also assisting animals in need.

J PIL Ricky Ricotta series, by Dav Pilkey
guided reading level: L

This is actually a really fun series which is part chapter book/part graphic novel. Ricky Ricotta is a mouse who regularly saves the world from invading villains with the help of Mighty Robot.

J APP Roscoe Riley Rules, by Katherine Applegate
guided reading level: M

This was a surprisingly entertaining book about Roscoe, a good-natured first grader who lives with his parents, little sister, and big brother. Roscoe finds himself in trouble a lot, but he's likable and means well. This is a great pick for reluctant readers.

S

J ABB The Secrets of Droon series, by Tony Abbott
guided reading level: O

These are fast-moving, high interest books about kids who discover a magical word under the staircase. The kids have their own magical powers as they battle evil emperors, wicked sorcerers, and more. They're harmless and may be just the thing to get young readers started with chapter books. But just be aware that these are not high quality literature (at all).

JE MAR Sofia Martinez series, by Jacqueline Jules
guided reading level: L

I appreciate the premise of this simple series featuring 7-year-old Sofia Martinez and her family, but I just couldn't get into them. The books mix English with Spanish and include a Spanish to English glossary in the back. The books offer strong reader support with full-color illustrations and large font.

J KLI Song Lee books, by Suzy Kline
guided reading level : L

The Song Lee books are set in the same classroom (3B) as the companion series, *Horrible Harry*. Song Lee may be the quietest person in room 3B, but she's also full of surprises! This is a lovely, gentle series – too bad there aren't more!

J MAS Space Taxi series, by Wendy Mass and Michael Brawer
guided reading level: O

Archie is an 8-year-old boy who discovers that his taxi driver father actually drives aliens through outer space. This is a fun, engaging series.

J SHE Stella Batts, by Courtney Sheinmel
guided reading level: N

Stella Batts is an 8-year-old girl whose parents own a candy store. She loves to write (and tells each book as if she wrote it herself). These are sincere, gentle books that also address mild bullying and other challenges of elementary school.

JMCD Stink books by Megan McDonald
guided reading level: M

This is a fun, harmless series about Stink, Judy Moody's little brother. There's a bit of gross talk (boogers, etc.) but the second grade adventures are light and funny.

J GOL Sugar Plum Ballerinas series, by Whoopi Goldberg
guided reading level: N

A series about ballerinas. A series by a celebrity. These two things meant my expectations were quite low; however, I was pleasantly surprised. Goldberg has written a lovely series about girls at the Nutcracker Ballet School in Harlem. Each book features a different girl who learns both ballet and an important life lesson.

J DOD Super Fly: Revenge of the Roach! by Todd Doddler

When Crazy Cockroach and two dung beetle henchmen try to brainwash the children of Stinkopolis using video games, only Super Fly and his sidekick, Fantastic Flea, can stop them."

T

JE DIC Tales from Deckawoo Drive, by Kate DiCamillo

guided reading level: N

This series is a continuation of the popular *Mercy Watson* series (which is written at a lower reading level). Unlike *Mercy Watson*, this series features different characters from the neighborhood, has more challenging vocabulary, and features black-and-white illustrations. Personally, I love them, and I'm an endless Kate DiCamillo fan, but I think that the jokes and subtlety would go over many kids' heads.

J Series SCI Time Warp Trio, by Jon Scieszka

guided reading level: P

These are fantasy books in which a magic book sends the main characters off to different periods of history. The kids are kind to each other, and I didn't find any bathroom or gross humor. I also appreciate the way the books teach readers about historical events. Personally, I couldn't get into the series, but it's definitely worth a try. Consider reading the first book aloud before asking kids to read subsequent books on their own.

J JENN Toys Go Out, by Emily Jenkins

guided reading level: O

This is one of my favorite series. I absolutely love the story of toys who come to life – Lumphy, Stingray and Plastic (a toy ball, who isn't actually plastic at all). My one objection is that in one of the books the toys are afraid of “ax murderers in the basement.” I always edit that out when I read aloud to my kids. For that reason – and for other subtleties that younger children might not get – I recommend this for older readers.

W-Z

J BER Warren and the Dragon books by Ariel Bernstein

"Warren is a seven-year-old boy. Dragon is a seven-hundred-year-old dragon. Not that most people believe that. Most people are sure that Dragon is a stuffed animal. People such as Warren's twin sister, Ellie, who challenges Warren to a contest at their new school: making 100 new friends. Warren isn't so good at making friends, but he doesn't like losing to Ellie, and Dragon will help him. But the first day of school doesn't exactly turn out the way he'd hoped, and even worse, Dragon disappears! By the time Warren gets home, he's not only not made any friends, he's lost his best friend. First day of school jitters are entertainingly explored in this laugh-out-loud chapter book."--Amazon.com.

J SAC Wayside School series, by Louis Sachar

guided reading level: P

This is a truly wacky series about the kids and teachers at Wayside School. It's an older series (I remember that my younger brother, now 36, *loved* them as a kid), but kids still enjoy them today. Be aware that the stories are outrageous and frequently very funny, but some of the stories are bizarre and a bit mean-spirited, which will be confusing for young advanced readers. Save them for third grade.

J MUR The Worst Witch series, by Jill Murphy

guided reading level P

I had never heard about this series, even though the first book was published in 1974 (and apparently it's also a Netflix series). Mildred Hubble is attending Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches, and she can't seem to get anything right! From crashing her broomstick to mixing up her spells – she feels like the *worst witch*. This series is well-written and entertaining, and if you don't mind witches in fantasy books, I recommend it.

JE ADL Young Cam Jansen, by David Adler

guided reading level: J

Adler took his popular *Cam Jansen* mystery books (up earlier in this list) and created a series of companion mysteries for younger readers. This is a great series for kids who like mysteries but aren't ready for longer chapter books.

J LUP Zach & Zoe Mysteries, by Mike Lupica
guided reading level: N

This is a wholesome series about twins Zach and Zoe Walker, who love playing sports and solving mysteries.

J GRE The Zack Files, by Dan Greenburg
guided reading level: N

Zack is a 10-year-old boy who gets into weird situations. The books are meant to poke fun at popular horror series, but I found them rude, inappropriate, and creepy.

Written descriptions and **partial** commentary from
<https://www.themeasuredmom.com/the-ultimate-list-of-early-chapter-book-series-and-other-review-sites>

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