

Newspaper column

By George Williams
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Suggested Read-Alouds

The year is just about over and it's been a big one at our house. We have a new baby and, partly because I work at a library and partly because our family loves to read, little Marie ended up getting a bunch of books for her first Christmas. I know, though, that no matter how many books you have it's never enough. To make sure we don't run out of things to read in the new year I asked the people I work with to suggest to me the best books for reading aloud they came across in 2009. I thought I'd pass some of those suggestions along to you.

Betsy, our outreach services manager, had several titles for me. She thought Marie would enjoy *KNUFFLE BUNNY* and *KNUFFLE BUNNY TOO* by Mo Willems. She's been using both of these in her daycare storytimes as a part of the First Book program the library has been involved with for the last two years. Betsy also suggested *TANKA TANKA SKUNK* by Steve Webb. Betsy likes these because they are bouncy rhyming books that play with words and language. Mo Willems also wrote the Pigeon series of illustrated books that my older daughter, Persephone, has enjoyed for several years so the Knuffle Bunny stories are probably going to find their way into our library soon. And since Betsy is suggesting books that have fun with words, I'm going to mention *COW MOO ME* by Stephen Losordo. We haven't read this one to Marie yet because we no longer have our own copy, but it was one of Persephone's favorites when she was a baby.

Our Genesee Branch Supervisor, Connie, and one of our catalogers, Sheila, also had suggestions. Connie liked *POUT POUT FISH*, by Deborah Diesen, as another bouncy rhyming book. It tells the story of a fish who thinks it looks pouty and unpleasant until another fish comes along and sets it straight. Sheila suggested *GRUMPY GRANDPA* by Heather Henson, about a boy's visit to his aunt and uncle's where he meets his grumpy grandpa, and learns that grandpa hasn't always been so grumpy. Sheila also suggested *HOW DINOSAURS GO TO SCHOOL* by Jane Yolen because it's a lively story about how dinosaurs should behave in school.

For reading aloud to an older crowd, our Potlatch branch supervisor, Donna, recommends the Percy Jackson and the Olympians series by Rick Riordan. Donna says her son, T.J., is currently reading the first book, *THE LIGHTNING THIEF*, to his son, Kelton, and they both love it. These books are about 12 year old New Yorker Percy Jackson who learns that he is actually Perseus, son of Poseidon, one of the gods of

Olympus. For older kids I'll also recommend the Ranger's Apprentice books by John Flanagan. Persephone and I didn't read them out loud together, but we did listen to the audiobook version of THE RUINS OF GORLAN and THE BURNING BRIDGE when we were driving to and from southeastern Idaho this summer. This series tells the story of Will, the young apprentice to famed ranger Halt, as he and his master protect the kingdom of Araluen from outside forces.

Finally, for adults, Kathleen suggests K2 by Ed Viesturs (with David Roberts). Kathleen's husband, Bill, has been reading it aloud at their house and Kathleen says that it "Reads aloud like a scary fairy tale for adults: the mountain, the ice, the dark, the danger...a fun book to listen to out loud while snuggled in your own warm bed."

Happy New Year and happy reading to everyone.