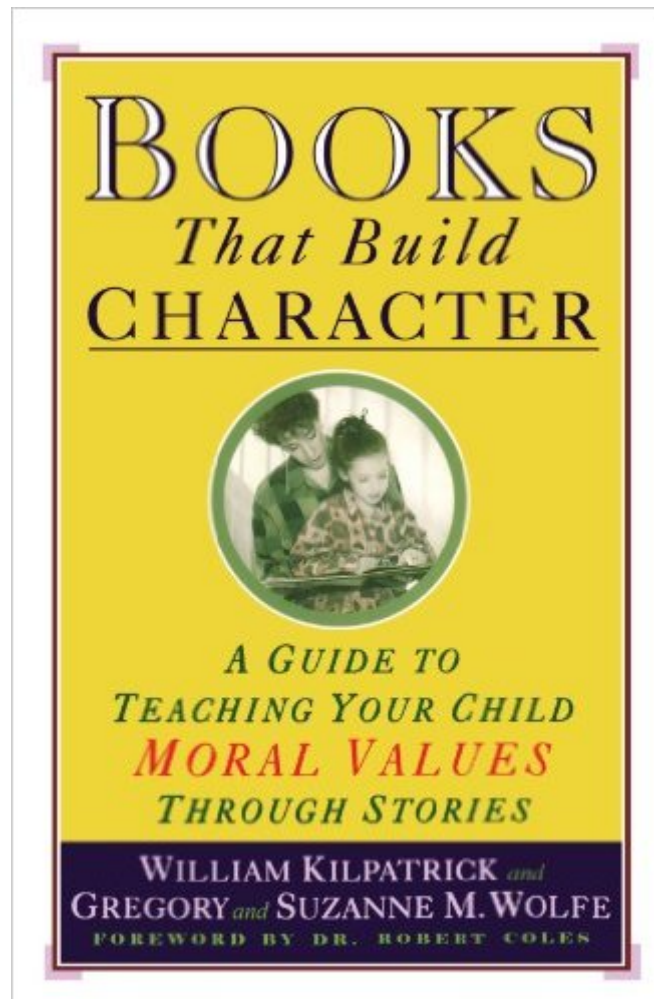


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# Books That Build Character: A Guide To Teaching Your Child Moral Values Through Stories



## Synopsis

Here is a family guide to classic novels, contemporary fiction, myths and legends, science fiction and fantasy, folktales, Bible stories, picture books, biographies, holiday stories, and many other books that celebrate virtues and values. There are more than 300 titles to choose from, each featuring a dramatic story and memorable characters who explore moral ground and the difference between what is right and what is wrong. These books will capture your child's imagination, and conscience as well-whether it is Beauty pondering her promise to Beast, mischievous Max in *Where the Wild Things Are*, the troubled boys of *Lord of the Flies*, generous Mr. Badger in *The Wind in the Willows*, or the courageous struggles of such real-life characters as Frederick Douglass and Anne Frank. With entries arranged by category and reading level, there is something here for all readers-from preschoolers to teenagers-whatever their tastes may be. Each entry features a complete plot summary and publisher information so that you can find the book with ease in your local library or bookstore. It's not always easy to teach a child the difference between right and wrong, but stories-whether they are based on fantasy or rooted in real life-can speak to children more eloquently than any list of dos or don'ts and can impart moral values as they nurture a child's imagination.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

The title of this resource sounds stuffier than it is. The authors' philosophy seems to be one of "less

is more" -- making the case, in an interesting and literate foreword and five introductory chapters, that books can be useful and even important resources for trying to help your child figure out what makes life interesting. These books can help provide role models, teach empathy, and transport the reader to a different world or state of mind. The authors de-emphasize problem novels for young adults, which they feel teach self-acceptance rather than improvement and whose authors often sacrifice story for message, opting instead for the mythic, transportive style. I've read a lot of children's literature and still found a number of new and interesting titles here. Books are divided into genre and then age group (4-8, 8-12, 12+). There is a good science fiction/fantasy section. Other chapters include: picture books; fables and fairy tales; myths, legends and folktales; sacred texts; books for holidays and holy days; historical fiction; contemporary fiction (post WWII); and biography. The book list contains about 300 books and includes title, author, illustrator, publisher, year of publication and number of pages, as well as a one-page summary of the plot and brief discussion of issues or virtues covered in the selection. Also included: a list of the books, in the order they appear, sans commentary; a short chapter about the Book List; a list of twenty videos deemed worthwhile viewing; a notes section in case you want to delve deeper; and an index. The index is the weak link here. For example, on page 35, one sentence ends " ... just as most good parents, whatever their views on censorship, tend to buy their children books by A. A. Milne and Mark Twain rather than books by the Marquis de Sade." Then the Marquis de Sade is in the index (!) while useful subject terms, like 'loneliness' and 'friendship', are not. Later editions should include a thorough subject index. A good companion book to Jim Trelease's *The Read-Aloud Handbook*, and a valuable resource for anyone mentoring children. The commentaries are thoughtful and well written.

As another reviewer pointed out, the title and subtitle of this book may put people off. But this isn't a book that applies a preachy sort of moralism to the task of building a child's character through literature. Far from it. It's a very valuable guide to books that have, and will, stand the test of time as classics. I discovered many wonderful books through this guide and had a great time reading them to my children. The best children's literature is as satisfying on an adult level as it is for the child. This book is valuable not only for the lists and summaries of good books for children (grouped by age level and category) that takes up most of its pages. The first 60 pages contain five short chapters on the importance of reading for children and of selecting the sort of books that will build their character and intellect. It explains why it does matter what your child reads (not just that they read). Don't skip this reading. No matter how convinced you are of the importance of good literature

for a child's development, your conviction and understanding will deepen by reading what the authors have to say in this introductory material. The fifth chapter has some especially useful guidelines on selecting and sharing good books. Distinguish between issues and virtues: "Having enlightened opinions is no substitute for having character". "Good books are people centered, not problem centered." Context of behavior portrayed in a book is crucial. "Character building books are not simply about good people doing good things. ... The question is not whether unethical behavior is present, but how it is presented". Look for stories that "open up new possibilities and stretch the imagination. ... be wary of stories that focus exclusively on narrow teen or preteen preoccupations, or those that offer nothing more than the therapeutic reassurance that everything is okay". "Look for books in which the main character grows". There is an education here to help you discern for yourself the quality of children's literature. There is also some good advice on how to read to your children; a good list of "do's and don't's" that make reading aloud more productive and fun. It won't be long before your kids are turning off the TV and asking you to read to them. You will have plenty of good material to draw from with this book as your guide.

The best argument for this book is watching your child become thoroughly engrossed in one of the recommended books. My son always agonized over which book to read for a book report, changed books midway through due to boredom, and dragged his feet on the writing process. After a careful reading of *Books That Build Character*, I chose about 25 books in the intermediate and young adult titles which I thought he would enjoy. As a first year homeschooling parent, I enjoyed the reviews of each book and the reasons they were recommended. My son is now into the second of the books I allowed him to choose from and I no longer have to hound him about reading for his book report! He reads because the books are well written, interesting, and educational. I also used the book to purchase some picture books and storybooks for our grandchildren as Christmas presents. A wonderful resource! Some books are out of print and you may have to use a book search to find them.

This excellent resource for teachers is intended to introduce the reader to books that help children from age four through high school grow in virtue. Its focus is on the moral dimensions of reading. In their introductory chapters, the authors state that reading is important for four reasons: 1) stories create an emotional attachment to goodness, 2) stories provide a wealth of good examples on how to live, 3) stories familiarize students with the codes of conduct they need to know, and 4) stories help them make sense of life. Presented are chapters on the major categories of books: fables and

fairy tales; myths, legends and folktales; sacred texts; historical fiction; contemporary fiction; biography; etc. Each chapter is divided into general age levels (4-8; 8-12; and 12 and up).

Approximately 200 pages of excellent, annotated books follow

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