

# Around the World in 80 Books

Presented by Keith Schoch

<http://www.squidoo.com/80books>

<http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com>

## Life Skills are Universal

As we begin to focus on 21st Century learning skills, it should be noted that **life and career skills such as initiative, accountability, leadership, and responsibility** can best be expressed and drawn from picture books as **universal themes**. Without specific, concrete models of these skills in action, they're nothing but words! The characters and stories within picture books embody these life and career skills.

## Ways to Share Picture Books

### 1) Teacher to Class Sharing

This strategy is probably as old as reading itself, and most closely mimics the read together experiences shared by many children at home with family. The close proximity, the intimacy of this approach, explains why reading picture books online feels so much less satisfying. I would recommend this approach the majority of the time, no matter what the age group.

The purpose of the shared reading, of course, could be one of many:

- **Picture books allow you to activate not only prior knowledge, but also attitudes, beliefs, and misconceptions.** Picture books then create a bridge between the student's prior knowledge and the newly introduced learning. For example, after students settle down in their Social Studies class, the teacher reads aloud the picture book *The Honest to Goodness Truth* (see summary and lesson suggestions in this handout). After reading, the teacher says, "I thought we all agreed yesterday in our discussion about elections that 'Honesty is the best policy.' Yet this book seems to say almost the exact opposite! So who's right?"
- **Picture books create common ground.** Before reading a novel set in the Depression, for example, the teacher read aloud or show several picture books which deal with that topic. One might be illustrated with photographs and eyewitness reports, one with captioned period murals sponsored by the WPA, and one with illustrations and a narrative by a contemporary author/artist. In just a few minutes, then, students would have a shared set of feelings and understandings about a single topic.
- **Pictures books construct schema.** A teacher wishing to introduce a fantasy genre might share a picture book which exemplifies six traits of that genre. Upon completion of the reading, the teacher asks her students to list the traits they noticed.

How best to confirm or disqualify these traits? Have the students read additional fairy tales in small groups (see below).

- **Picture books can make abstract concepts (such as life skills) concrete.** As teachers we are expected to teach “fuzzy” character concepts such as cooperation, responsibility, and integrity. Where are those lessons in our textbooks? Here is where picture books can play a large role. Through picture books, universal themes such as patience, empathy, teamwork, cooperation, forgiveness, fairness, and responsibility are captured in just sixteen or twenty-four pages, creating a memorable model for children who still think and generalize in very concrete terms.

## **2) Paired Readings**

This type of reading usually occurs with a specific outcome in mind. In lower grades, paired readings allow readers to practice fluency and clarity. It also demands that readers are “attentive” at least 50% of the time. However, many students suffer in comprehension when required to read aloud. They are so concerned with the demands of meeting the needs of an audience that they “check out” from comprehending. It’s not uncommon for a student to read aloud an entire paragraph or page, and then have no clue what was read. So paired readings may also need “checkpoints” for discussion.

## **3) Group Readings**

Again, this type of reading should be chosen for a specific purpose. One purpose, for example, might be to establish common knowledge about a topic through its presentation in a number of diverse picture books. Students might read from a number of baseball picture books, for example, and then report back to the group on the **perspective of the author** in each. In reading for another purpose, students will read a number of picture books containing the same print content (*The Midnight Ride of Paul Revere*) with **different interpretations** of that same content by the various illustrators (see <http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com> for teaching ideas involving this book).

## **4) Independent Reading**

Students read independently for a number of reasons, pleasure being the foremost. But as students mature, they should also read picture books as models for their own writing. This makes perfect sense, as picture books are typically the length of student stories in the upper elementary and middle grades (and the length of writing tasks expected on standardized tests). Students may also read picture books as sources of reference. A student seeking background on the Sioux tribe, for example, could attempt to wade through a difficult nonfiction text, encyclopedia entry, or web site meant for more mature readers. Or, this same student could access similar information through three or four picture books whose illustrations would aid in deciphering and extending difficult terms and concepts.

## Reasons to Share Picture Books

For those teachers who want reasons to share picture books, apart from pure enjoyment of their beautifully concise words and glorious illustrations, I offer the following list.

## 40 Ways to Use Picture Books in the Classroom

When discussing the idea of this workshop with other teachers, they strongly felt that what's needed isn't just another list of book titles, but ways to put those books into action in the classroom. It seems that multicultural book lists can be found all over the Internet, but what teachers **really need** are concrete ways to use those books. So with that in mind, I've started a list of ways to use globally-minded picture books. I got us half way there! With suggestions from you, my fellow teachers, hopefully we can get this list to number 80!

While the list below is pretty helpful as is, be sure to visit the **Around the World in 80 Books** site at <http://www.squidoo.com/80books> in order to click on the live links to other sites, extensions, and downloadable teaching guides available for these ideas.

Picture Books can be used to focus on

1. **universal themes** such as freedom, cooperation, bravery, and compassion;
2. **holiday celebrations** (how do Christmas celebrations differ in England, Mexico, and Poland?);
3. **interpretations of nature** through ancient myths (Native American vs. African myths about the Sun and Moon);
4. **inventions of different cultures** (*Made in China: Ideas and Inventions from Ancient China*, *The Kid Who Invented the Popsicle: And Other Surprising Stories about Inventions*, and *A Native American Thought of It: Amazing Inventions and Innovations* are great books with which to start);
5. **economics** in a child-friendly way;
6. **fairy tale interpretations**;
7. **famous women and their contributions** (*Girls Think of Everything: Stories of Ingenious Inventions by Women* and *No Girls Allowed: Tales of Daring Women Dressed as Men for Love, Freedom and Adventure* are two books I highly recommend for this exploration);
8. **historical events**;
9. **world events** through the eyes of different nationalities (for example, see book suggestions and teaching ideas for the Holocaust);

10. **art and artists** of different cultures;
11. **travel around globe** (the **Virtual Traveler** site allows students to hear about a visit to an exotic place. As they listen, students take notes which they use to later create a summary of the visit);
12. **foods** from around the globe;
13. **manners and etiquette**;
14. **animals**;
15. **poetry** forms;
16. **schooling and education** (a book like *Little Leap Forward: A Boy in Beijing* allows students to contrast their relatively carefree lives with the more difficult lives of children living in countries where freedoms are suppressed);
17. **clothing**;
18. **proverbs** (see **Creative Proverbs** site for thousands of proverbs, sorted by country of origin or type; great for discussion starters or to be tied in with picture books);
19. **transportation**;
20. **childhood**;
21. **music**;
22. **historical time periods** in preparation for reading historical fiction novels;
23. **villains** (one interesting question to pursue is, "Is a villain really a villain if he/she is just an animal following what are natural, inborn traits?" For example, is Shere Khan from Kipling's *The Jungle Book* a villain if he hunts Mowgli, a natural act for a man-eater?);
24. **toys and games**;
25. **folklore**;
26. **alphabet books** (see the recommended titles from **Sleeping Bear Press**);
27. **differing perspectives** (Jane Yolen's *Encounter*, for example, examines Columbus' arrival in the New World through the eyes of its natives);
28. **study of states** in the Union or **countries**;
29. **science and nature topics** (rain forests, human interactions with natural resources);

30. **heroes and heroism** (see a recent post at my picture book blog for titles and ideas);
31. **critical thinking skills** (cause and effect, prediction, comparison and contrast, sequencing, inference);
32. **current events** (tsunamis, 9/11, droughts, homelessness);
33. **family trees**;
34. **word origins** (including the origin of slang, which is covered nicely in Gillian O'Reilly's *Slangalicious: Where We Got that Crazy Lingo*;
35. **heritage days**;
36. **work**;
37. **architecture**;
38. **fables** (see really neat, animated fables online at [Fables from Aesop](#), a site created in conjunction with Tom Lynch's *Fables from Aesop* storybook);
39. **monsters**;
40. **sports**.

### **What about Book Titles?**

But Keith, what about individual book titles? Where can we find those?

At the **80 Books** site (<http://www.squidoo.com/80books>) I've named individual books. Okay, only forty-five books, but there I've provided you with something even better: online resources which will allow you to search for the exact books you need, by theme, country, culture, historical time period, or topic.

Even more importantly, I've been at work over the past year on a blog that focuses on using picture books with upper elementary and middle school students. Teach with Picture Books at <http://teachwithpicturebooks.blogspot.com> features book summaries, guiding questions, suggested extension activities, related links, and recommended companion titles. It's better than a list because a lot of the work is done for you!

The following two pages are a reprint of a post on Patricia C. McKissack's *The Honest to Goodness Truth*, one of the more commonly searched books on the site.

# The Honest to Goodness Truth

written by Patricia C. McKissack

illustrated by Giselle Potter

## Life and Career Skills:

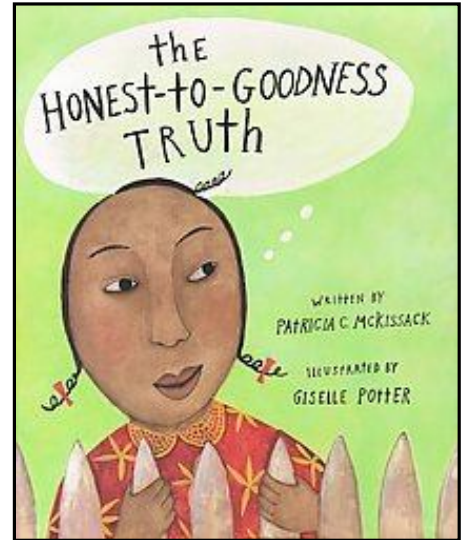
*Accountability Responsibility*

## Universal Themes:

*Compassion Honesty Tact*

## Country/Culture:

*Southern U.S. (dialect)*



## Before Reading Questions

- Who has ever heard the expression, "Honesty is the best policy?" What does that mean?
- Can anyone think of a time when it might be acceptable to not tell the whole truth?
- Why does the book's title appear in that cloud over the girl's head? What does that mean?
- Looking at the back cover, what might be the setting of this story?

## Summary

When young Libby is caught in a lie, she feels better admitting the truth, even though she's punished double. It is the first time she has lied to Mama, and as far as she is concerned, it would be the last. "From now on, only the truth," she decides.

But in her commendable attempts to tell "only the truth," she is tactless and cold; as the girls at church admire Ruthie Mae's dress, for example, Libby points out that there's a hole in Ruthie Mae's sock. Before the end of the day she's told the truth about many of her friends: she tattles to the teacher that Willie didn't do his homework, reminds the class how Daisy had forgotten her lines at the Christmas play, and informs everyone that Thomas doesn't have lunch money and must borrow from Miz Jackson.

Poor Libby can't understand why her friends are all upset with her. Then Mama explains

"Sometimes the truth is told at the wrong time or in the wrong way, and for the wrong reasons. And that can be hurtful. But the honest-to-goodness truth is never wrong."

As Libby feeds and waters her horse, she struggles with the meaning of Mama's words. Just then Virginia Washington sashays out of the fields and remarks, "That horse is older than black pepper... I doubt you could get a dollar for that old flea-ridden swayback." Stung by Virginia's words, Libby finally realizes the wisdom of Mama's words. The remainder of the book sees Libby making it up to her friends through both words and actions.

## After Reading Questions

- Do you think Libby was trying to hurt her friends' feelings when she told the truth?
- If what Libby said was true, then why did it create a problem?
- When might it be wrong to keep a secret?
- What happened to Lilly to make her realize that the truth needs to be told in the right way?

## Extension Ideas: Language Arts

- Ask students to write a poem about honesty. As a starter, tell students that they can include Mama's words as lines in their poem. Other students may prefer to write a story about a time that they told the truth and hurt someone's feelings, or when someone told them the truth and hurt their feelings.
- Have students create a poem-like prose piece called "Instead of... Say..."

For example: Instead of, "That green dress makes you look like a cabbage," say "I like the blue dress better; it brings out your eyes." This activity not only encourages students to think tactfully, it also provides excellent practice writing proper quotation marks, a skill which will transfer to narrative writing.

- Patricia McKissack uses similes and metaphors beautifully. When Libby lies, for example, she is "surprised how easy the lie slid out of her mouth, like it was greased with warm butter." Have students point out other literary devices in the picture book for discussion. Then, present students with some "boring sentences" in need of "dressing up" with similes.

## Extension Ideas: Social Studies

- The illustrator's style is very similar to that of William H. Johnson. Show some examples of the artist's work (many are available on Google image search) and ask students to draw conclusions about the lifestyles of Black Americans in the south. How are Johnson's and Potter's styles similar?
- To follow up on the above activity, have students use one of William H. Johnson's pictures (such as **Going to Church**) as a writing prompt, or ask students to paint in that same style.



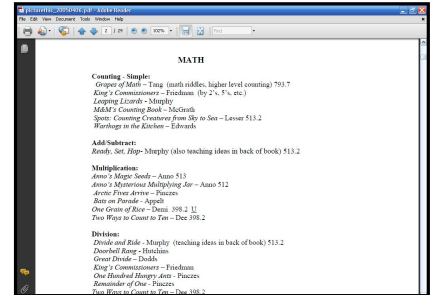


## HOT Downloads!

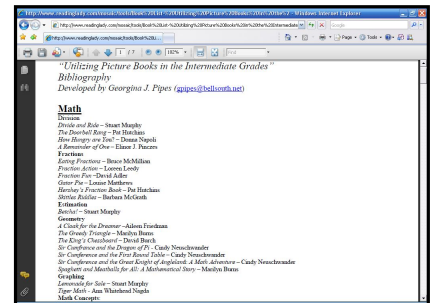
Below you'll find some great resources that you can access directly online, and even save to your own computer. Click on them directly at the **80 Books** site (<http://www.squidoo.com/80 books>).

If you're seeking a good general list of picture books sorted by topics and themes, check out the 39 page pdf document titled **PICTURE THIS! Using Picture Books To Introduce or Teach Skills at**

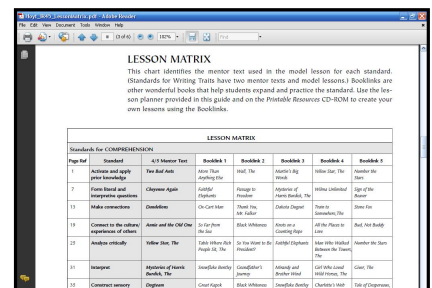
[http://www.lebanon.k12.mo.us/main/profdev/profdev/pdc\\_assets/picturethis.pdf](http://www.lebanon.k12.mo.us/main/profdev/profdev/pdc_assets/picturethis.pdf).



A shorter pdf list aimed at intermediate grades can be found at <http://www.readinglady.com/mosaic/tools/Book%20List-%20Utilizing%20Picture%20Books%20in%20the%20Intermediate.pdf>.

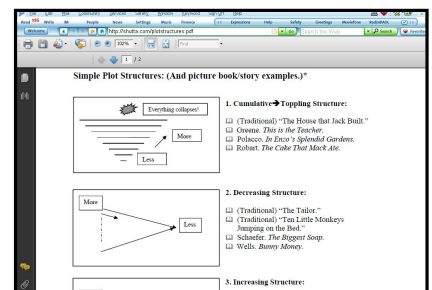


Another great list, nicely categorized, comes from Linda Hoyt, who publishes many materials with Heinemann publishing. Her free 4-5 list is directly located at [http://books.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E01056/Hoyt\\_IR45\\_LessonMatrix.pdf](http://books.heinemann.com/shared/onlineresources/E01056/Hoyt_IR45_LessonMatrix.pdf). Additional samples and her resources for purchase can be viewed at <http://www.interactivereadalouds.com/samples.aspx>.



Simple Plot Structures is a terrific resource from Shutta Crum that graphically illustrates basic story structures: <http://shutta.com/plotstructures.pdf>.

Related to this is her Story Skeletons article, with lots of picture book examples: <http://shutta.com/storyskeletons.pdf>.



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