

HUMANIST LIBRARY AND ARCHIVES

HUMANIST CHILDREN'S BOOKS

From time to time parents ask for advice on humanist books suitable for young children. The Library does not collect children's books, and this list is drawn up from my own knowledge of the subject. It is based on my own collection and is therefore not in the least bit objective, and shows a distinct bias towards historical fiction. It is also not very up-to-date, since I have little time these days for reading children's literature. However, these are all good reads, and most of them can be bought very cheaply from secondhand bookstores.

If there are titles that you think could be included in this list, please contact the Library.

PICTURE BOOKS FOR THE VERY YOUNG

DEATH

CARRICK, Carol and CARRICK, Donald

The accident

After his dog is hit by a truck and killed, Christopher must deal with his own feelings of grief, depression and guilt.

HEWETT, Joan and CARRICK, Donald

Rosalie

A little girl learns to respect old age and infirmity through her relationship with the family's elderly dog, who is deaf and partially blind. She also comes to realise that there will be a time when Rosalie will no longer be there.

VIORST, Judith and BLEGVAD, Eric

The tenth good thing about Barney

A classic of its kind. Barney the cat dies, and his owner's mother tells the boy to think of ten good things to remember Barney by. The boy can think of nine things easily enough, and then finally realises that by being dead, Barney is helping the flowers grow. The book mentions angels and heaven, but says that no one knows if they exist. There is no mention of God, Jesus or any other divine being, or an afterlife.

WARBURG, Sandol Stoddard and WEISGAND, Leonard

Growing time

Another book that deals with death and grief through the loss of a beloved pet, but this one has absolutely no mention of God, heaven, angels or any other religious bias.

FICTION FOR OLDER CHILDREN

ANIMAL RIGHTS

SEWELL, Anna

Black Beauty

First published in 1877, with the aim of bringing the plight of working horses to the attention of adults, this novel has become a children's classic.

HUMAN RIGHTS

BURTON, Hester

No beat of drum

Shortage of work, caused by the introduction of machinery, combined with rising food prices, and poverty and near starvation, were the sad lot of English farm-labourers in 1830. A young man joins a group who rise up in despair and anger over the injustice and grievances imposed upon them by those who owned the land, and finds himself sentenced to transportation to the notorious penal settlement of Van Dieman's Land.

GRICE, Frederick

Nine days' wonder

The nine tense days of the 1926 General Strike form a turning-point in the life of a miner's son.

KING-SMITH, Dick

The stray

Henrietta runs away from an old people's home, and is taken in by a family needing a grandma.

SAMPSON, Fay

A free man on Sunday

A young girl becomes involved in the mass trespass of Kinder Scout in 1932, when workers pressed for the right to roam on private land.

WISEMAN, David

Thimbles

A pair of thimbles enables a young girl to understand the events surrounding the Peterloo Massacre in 1819, when civil rights demonstrators were attacked by the army.

YATES, Elizabeth

Amos Fortune, Free Man

Based on the true story of an African prince who, sold into slavery in America, finally achieved recognition as a free man at the age of 60. Newbery Medal winner.

HUMANISM

BROWN, Marc and KRENSKY, Stephen

Perfect pigs: an introduction to manners

Despite the subtitle, this book focuses on many aspects of life as humanists believe it should be lived. Points covered include moral principles such as treating others as you

wish to be treated, taking responsibility, the value of animals, plants and the environment, fairness, justice, compassion, and tolerance of others.

KING-SMITH, Dick

The sheep-pig

Filmed as *Babe*, this sweet tale is stuffed full of humanist life principles, such as being true to oneself, tolerance, respect, compassion, recognising the value of others despite their 'differences', and plain old-fashioned love. It would be difficult to find a more life-affirming story.

WHITE, E.B.

Charlotte's web

Another life-enhancing children's story whose moral is that everyone has some intrinsic worth.

PERSECUTION

HEST, Amy and LYNCH, P.J.

When Jessie came across the sea

Jessie leaves her home in Russia for a new life in America. Greenaway Medal winner.

KERR, Judith

When Hitler stole Pink Rabbit The other way round A small person far away

A trilogy tracing Anna's life from the time her Jewish family is forced to flee Germany until they settle in England.

LOWRY, Lois

Number the stars

Danish children are caught up in the resistance to the invading Nazis. Newbery Medal winner.

POLITICS

BURTON, Hester

Time of trial

The problems affecting a young woman whose father is imprisoned for publishing an indictment of the social conditions in 1801. Carnegie Medal winner.

BURTON, Hester

The rebel

In 1788, Stephen Parkin's love of freedom and defence of the poor takes him to France and the Revolution.

BURTON, Hester

Riders of the storm

The further adventures of Stephen Parkin and his Radical friends, in 1793, working for social and constitutional reform, which leads to them facing trial on a charge of sedition.

DARKE, Marjorie

A question of courage

A young woman becomes involved in the suffrage movement.

HOLM, Anne

I am David

David escapes from a prison camp in an unnamed eastern European country and travels across Europe to his mother in Denmark.

WISEMAN, David

Badge of honour

A young girl reads the diaries of a suffragette and finds herself haunted by visions of the pain and suffering endured by the women who had to fight for the right to vote.

NON-FICTION

HUMAN RIGHTS

ERICKSON, Paul

Daily life on a slave plantation

This is a detailed portrait of a cotton plantation before the American Civil War, based on a real plantation in Louisiana. With quotations taken from genuine source material, it contrasts the lives of the slaves and the owners.

RELIGION

MILNE, Katharine

Church, synagogue, temple

This book outlines the main beliefs and practices of Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam, and Judaism. It is not biased towards any of them and asks why some people find it necessary to believe in a god.