
*Best Books for Boys* debunks the myth that "boys just don't like to read". Echoing the sentiments expressed in David Booth’s *Even Hockey Players Read* and Jon Scieszka's *Guys Write for Guys Read*, Matthew Zbaracki posits that "boys are reading -- just not reading what teachers and schools deem 'acceptable'" (p.1). This engaging reference book seeks to expand the cannon.

The first chapter looks at current research in the field of literacy and outlines factors to consider when suggesting books for boys. Above all, hooking reluctant readers involves following a child's individual interests and offering plenty of choice. Often boys will discover authors from peer recommendations so discussion groups can encourage this "social involvement" (p. 5).

The subsequent chapters examine genres with plenty of boy-appeal: humor, realistic fiction, fantasy, historical fiction, poetry, graphic novels, nonfiction and modern classics. Over four hundred books are recommended, from picture books to young adult novels. Most have been published within the last ten years. Each entry includes bibliographic details with suggested grade levels. Titles that have garnered literary awards are noted. Short annotations give pithy plot summaries that often include read-alike suggestions.

Zbararcki has a conversational writing style and he includes helpful caveats. When introducing Jaime Adoff’s *Jimi and Me*, he states: "Don't let the length of this book scare off your boy readers" (p. 23). When describing Margery Facklam's *The Big Bug Book* he cautions, "Adults may be creeped out by the realistic, life-sized illustrations but boys will relish the information and pictures" (p. 113). Comprehensive author, title and subject indexes are also included.

Zbararcki bases his selections on recommendations from public and school librarians and professional reviewing journals. He also draws upon his own teaching experience. He includes thirty eight Gordon Korman titles because of their wide appeal with his students. Likewise, it is refreshing to see *The Adventures of Captain Underpants* on a "Best Books" compilation since librarians can attest to the perennial popularity of Dav Pilkey. Although the focus is on male readers, the recommended titles have universal appeal. Zbaracki notes, "girls will cross over into 'boy books' much more than boys will cross over into 'girl books'" (p. 3).

*Best Books for Boys* provides a plethora of titles to motivate young readers. This reader's advisory tool is highly recommended for public and school library resource collections.

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Works Cited


