

Cultural Daily

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Favourite Four | Books for pre-schoolers

Our Friends · Wednesday, April 7th, 2021

As a parent, there's nothing more rewarding than reading to, or with, your child – and there's no such thing as too young. The beauty of books is that the fairytale lands and mystical creatures can stimulate imagination, and help create an understanding of the world around us. Books teach so much – whether it's numbers, the alphabet, shapes and colours, or life lessons and important morals.

With World Book Day over for another year, don't let that creativity stop. Let's carry on celebrating literature, and help our little ones to develop their minds further. To help you along the way, there's a great resource here from nursery chain, Kiddi Caru, about popular [books for under 5s](#). What's more, simply read on, as we share our own top picks for pre-schoolers.

1. **Dear Zoo by Rod Campbell**

Dear Zoo is a wonderfully easy-to-read story, with large text and bright illustrations. Combining a young child's love for familiar zoo animals with a 'hide and seek' style lift the flaps format; it encourages children to understand the characteristics of common animals. For example, giraffes are tall, and snakes are scary.

Repetitive phrases make it easy for your child to pick up and be able to recite with you. Each page ends: "*I sent him back*" before the next page begins: "*So they sent me*". There's an opportunity to combine the reading with roleplay, as your child makes the sounds and movements of each animal, and parents can encourage this by asking questions like: "Can you stomp like an elephant?" or "Can you roar like a lion?"

2. **The Very Hungry Caterpillar by Eric Carle**

The Very Hungry Caterpillar is a classic, and a must-have on your pre-schooler's bookshelf. The bright illustrations are easy to understand, and will make you feel hungry as you follow the caterpillar on their food journey. The bite marks in the pages are also a great way to engage your child. Not only is the book a great way of teaching your little one to count from one to five, it also teaches the growing cycle of the caterpillar, into a butterfly. But also, subliminally, it teaches the days of the week, colour recognition, and popular food items.

When reading together, your child will quickly understand the number patterns – one apple, two pears, three plums, four strawberries, five oranges – and you could also ask them what their favourite fruit is. *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* has also been made into [an animated film](#).

3. We're Going on a Bear Hunt by Michael Rosen

We're Going on a Bear Hunt combines rhyme and rhythm with suspense, for a wonderful story which can be read out loud, or fully performed! Whether you're reading one-to-one at bedtime, or part of a larger circle, young children can easily be engaged with this story.

From the repetition of "We're going on a bear hunt. We're going to catch a big one. What a beautiful day. We're not scared" to acting out the sounds and movements of each obstacle – whether it's the long, wavy swishy grass, or the thick, oozy squelchy mud. Why keep the magic to story time? Recreate the bear hunt in your back garden or on your next nature walk too. This [read-along with the author](#), Michael Rosen, is a great resource for joining in with.

4. Oi Frog! By Kes Gray

Just to round-up our animal theme, the 'Oi Frog! and friends' series of books by Kes Gray are thoroughly entertaining. The rhyme makes it really engaging, but gives you a chance to also be silly – and suggest other rhymes for other animals, or even your child's name. The cat acts as the rule master, and believes that every animal has its rightful place to sit somewhere. The frog should sit on the log, but he doesn't want to – because sitting on woods causes splinters in your bottom, of course! The narrative explains how: "*Hares sit on chairs. Mules sit on stools. Gophers sit on sofas.*" It's a wonderful story to read aloud, and it's laugh-out-loud funny.

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