

**HAI SLN RECOMMENDED READING LIST 2026**  
**Preschool, Prekindergarten, Kindergarten**

*All book summaries are provided by the publisher or written by committee members.*

*Any available unabridged edition of a title is acceptable.*

Águila, María Dolores. ***Menudo Sunday: A Spanglish Counting Book***. Dial Books, 2025. When a little girl accidentally breaks her grandfather's bowl of menudo during a lively Sunday family gathering, everyone works together to make a new batch while readers learn to count from 1-15 in Spanish and English.

Avery, Sean E. ***Frank's Red Hat***. Walker, 2025. Frank, a penguin known for his terrible ideas, creates a bold red hat—an object entirely unexpected in the cold, colorless Antarctic world—making his fellow penguins immediately nervous about his strange creation.

Awan, Jashar. ***Towed by Toad***. Tundra Books, 2024. A busy toad mechanic is always helping Others, but he learns when his own tow truck breaks down that even the helpers sometimes need help.

Blackall, Sophie. ***If We Were Dogs***. Little, Brown, 2025. At a birthday party, one child commandeers another to pretend to be dogs.

Boldt, Mike. ***Cantaloupe and HoneyDo Ride a Bike***. Dial Books, 2024. Two adventurous fruit friends, Cantaloupe and HoneyDo, have a delightful journey of discovery, friendship, and laughter. *Series*

Boss, Todd. ***The Boy Who Said Wow***. Beach Lane Books, 2024. Ronan has never spoken a word, but when his grandfather takes him to a concert, he is so moved by the music that he speaks aloud for the first time.

Brockington, Drew. ***Kitty Camp***. Abrams Books, 2025. A girl accidentally boards the wrong bus and ends up at a chaotic summer camp full of kittens, where she discovers unexpected ways to have fun despite the mayhem.

Browne, Anthony. ***Big Gorilla: A Book of Opposites***. Candlewick, 2024. This picture book uses a variety of primates—from large gorillas to tiny capuchins—to introduce and celebrate the concept of opposites for young readers.

Buchet, Nelly. ***Dog vs. Strawberry***. Random House, 2024. In a humorous race between an energetic dog and a motionless strawberry, Dog's frantic antics and mid-race nap allow the calm fruit to maintain its position, leading to a thrilling finish.

Bunting, Philip. ***The Wonderful Wisdom of Ants***. Crown, 2024. Combining information, comedy, and warmth, this factual book brings readers into the realm of ants, revealing how these small insects accomplish impressive feats through teamwork.

Burgess, Matthew. ***Fireworks***. Clarion, 2025. Two siblings spend a hot summer day anticipating a colorful fireworks display.

Cáceres, Andrea. ***My Dog Just Speaks Spanish***. Candlewick, 2023. Aurora's dog Nena can only understand Spanish, so Aurora teaches her friends at the park how to use Spanish commands to communicate with Nena.

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- Campbell, Chelsea M. *When You Go to Dragon School*. Feiwel and Friends, 2025. A human child attends dragon school and discovers that despite lacking scales, wings, or fire-breathing abilities, you can fit in and thrive using your own courage and special talents.
- Catchpole, Lucy. *Mama Car*. Little, Brown, 2025. A child celebrates how her mother's wheelchair transforms everyday moments into adventures, emphasizing that the best part is simply having Mama there.
- Cherrix, Amy. *Animal Superpowers!* Beach Lane Books, 2023. Animals use physical and behavioral traits in amazing ways. Some are expert escape artists, while others subdue their prey with electricity or even with bubbles!
- Cordell, Matthew. *To See an Owl*. Random House, 2025. A young girl learns patience and perseverance as she searches for months to spot an elusive owl in the wild, finally succeeding when she quietly observes the snowy woods with her mother.
- Cornwall, Gaia. *Fairy Walk*. Candlewick, 2025. Three children and their dog explore the woods in search of fairies and discover that imagination and nature reveal their own kind of magic.
- Cutler, Marcus. *I Do Not Eat Children*. Little, Brown, 2024. A misunderstood monster tries to convince others that he is not dangerous.
- Denise, Christopher. *Knight Owl and Early Bird*. Little, Brown, 2024. Owl, captain of the Knight Watch is dismissive of Early Bird, an energetic and talkative bird who aspires to be a Knight Owl, until her bravery shines through during a wolf attack. *Series*
- DiPucchio, Kelly. *Becoming Charley*. Alfred A. Knopf, 2023. Unlike all the other caterpillars, Charley sometimes wonders what it would be like to be a fawn or a waterfall, so when the day comes to form her chrysalis, Charley must decide who she will become.
- DiTerlizzi, Angela. *The Curious Why*. Little, Brown, 2024. A bored child is visited by the Curious Why, a whimsical creature who inspires the child to explore the world, ask questions, and discover how curiosity transforms boredom into adventure. *Series*
- Dockrill, Laura. *Gray*. Candlewick, 2024. A child feeling “gray” uses color similes and poetic metaphors to express a down mood, comparing the feeling to scribbles and puddles while demonstrating the importance of embracing difficult emotions.
- Dominguez, Angela. *I'm Not Sleepy! ¡No Tengo Sueño!* Holt, 2023. Lolo the T. rex insists he's not sleepy and is too busy to be, but he gradually completes his bedtime routine with help from his friend.
- Donaldson, Julie. *Jonty Gentoo: The Adventures of a Penguin*. Scholastic, 2024. Are you ready for a pole-to-pole adventure? Jonty, a plucky little gentoo penguin, is setting off on the adventure of a lifetime. But can he really waddle all the way to Antarctica?
- Dubuc, Marianne. *Everyone Gets a Turn*. Princeton Architectural, 2024. Four forest animals take turns caring for an egg that hatches into Little Bird, who learns from each friend before building her own house.

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- Fang, X. *Broken*. Tundra Books, 2025. Mei Mei breaks her grandmother's favorite cup and lets the cat take the blame, but guilt eventually forces her to confess the truth.
- Ferry, Beth. *A Moving Story*. Harper, 2024. Brothers and movers Tiny and Pete handle everything with care, but when a young panda's turtle vanishes during their biggest job, even their dedication might not be enough to find the missing pet.
- Flake, Sharon G. *You Make Me Sneeze*. Astra Young Readers, 2024. When Duck appears allergic to Cat during their camping trip, they try various remedies until they discover the real cause of Duck's symptoms.
- Fleming, Meg. *The Everything Trail*. Beach Lane Books, 2025. Some young explorers' journey through the forest and discover the endless wonders of nature, from giant redwoods to tiny creatures, learning to appreciate both the big and small marvels around them.
- Flett, Julie. *Let's Go!* Greystone Books, 2024. A child watches skateboarders, practices until he feels ready, hesitates at the park due to insecurity, then gains confidence when other new kids arrive.
- Forsythe, Matthew. *Aggie and the Ghost*. Simon & Schuster, 2025. When Aggie moves into her new house and discovers it's haunted, she challenges the rule-breaking ghost to a game of tic-tac-toe to determine who gets to stay.
- Freedman, Deborah. *Partly Cloudy*. Viking, 2024. Two bunnies go cloud watching; one sees the science of the clouds and the other sees imaginative forms.
- Gehl, Laura. *Frog Can Hop*. Simon Spotlight, 2023. One energetic friend and one laid-back friend discover the value of switching their usual routines when they swap roles.
- Goade, Michaela. *Moon Song*. Little, Brown, 2025. A girl tells her worried cousin a story about moonlight in the forest, bioluminescence by the shore, and northern lights in the sky.
- Hahn, Sabina. *I Am a Dragon!* HarperCollins, 2023. Little frogs insist that a dragon is a frog based on their logical reasoning about green, wet, amphibious creatures, until he breathes fire on them.
- Hall, Michael. *Punch!: A Story About Kindness*. Greenwillow, 2025. Badger shoves, kicks, and pokes the other animals in his way until Bear decides to teach Badger a lesson, which is an example of empathy for others.
- Hare, John. *Duck, Duck, Goose!* Greenwillow, 2024. A simple game escalates into a wild, rhyming adventure featuring a moose on the loose and a chaotic journey with trains and trucks.
- Harris, Shawn. *Let's Be Bees*. Neal Porter, 2025. A parent and child use their imaginations to transform into various elements of nature, creating playful sounds together in this whimsical adventure.
- Harrison, David L. *A Tree is a Community*. Holiday House, 2024. A tree is more than just a plant, but a whole ecosystem hiding in plain sight, on street corners and in backyards everywhere. Discover how one tree provides shelter, food, and clean air to a host of animals and insects.

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- Hartman, Brooke. *All Aboard the Alaska Train*. Red Comet Press, 2024. Travel on the Alaska train to discover Alaska's animal treasures such as buffalo, otters, sheep, grizzly bears, and more.
- Henkes, Kevin. *Finding Things*. Greenwillow, 2024. An invitation to reflect on the simple treasures that are in plain sight but often go unnoticed.
- Hest, Amy. *Big Bear and Little Bear Go Fishing*. Holiday House, 2024. Little Bear accompanies Big Bear on a fishing trip where they wait patiently for fish.
- Hevron, Amy. *Poo Pile on the Prairie*. Beach Lane Books, 2025. On the prairies of North America, bison poo creates tiny ecosystems that fertilize soil, spread seeds, and house hundreds of species, forming an essential building block for diverse grassland life cycles.
- Higgins, Ryan T. *We Don't Lose Our Class Goldfish*. Disney-Hyperion, 2023. Penelope Rex, terrified of Walter the class goldfish, must overcome her fear when he goes missing under her care.
- Hulse, Patrick. *At Our Table*. Little, Brown, 2024. The book celebrates community, generosity, and gratitude through cozy illustrations of family gatherings.
- Iwai, Melissa. *Perfect Paper Cranes*. HarperCollins, 2024. At the Japan Day Festival, Gigi attempts to create an origami crane like her grandfather's, but becomes discouraged and must decide whether to quit or persevere. *Series*
- Kalb, Bess. *Buffalo Fluffalo*. Random House, 2024. A grumpy buffalo tries his hardest to pretend He is bigger than he really is, but realizes others like him, no matter his size. *Series*
- Könnecke, Ole. *Diggers, Dozers, and Dumpers*. Gecko, 2025. Introduces a variety of construction vehicles through humorous animal-filled stories, blending real facts with imaginative adventures and a fairy-tale ending.
- Laden, Nina. *Seeds of Change*. Roaring Brook, 2024. This rhyming, lyrical picture book about investing in the future of ourselves and our community teaches an invaluable lesson about having the patience to see that, in time, effort will blossom into a more peaceful and loving world.
- Laminack, Lester L. *A Cat Like That*. Peachtree, 2025. A sociable island cat makes her daily rounds through town, visiting familiar places and people in a predictable rhythm that encourages young readers to engage with the story and create their own narratives.
- LaRochelle, David. *Mr. Fox's Game of "No!"* Candlewick, 2024. Try to beat Mr. Fox in this interactive picture book using yes-or-no questions.
- Lee, Gee Eun. *The Red Fruit*. Levine Querido, 2023. A hungry baby bear climbs a tall tree searching for red fruit, mistaking various objects along the way before being mesmerized by the setting sun.
- Levington, Rebecca Gardyn. *Some Days I'm the Wind*. Barefoot Books, 2025. A young girl explores different emotions and imaginative play throughout her day at home, pretending to be various elements like the sun and sea.
- Lies, Brian. *Cat Nap*. Greenwillow, 2025. A kitten chases a mouse through a framed poster on the wall, embarking on an epic adventure through time, art, and history in what may be a dream.

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- Liu, Linda. *Sour Apple*. Holt, 2024. A lonely, unpicked apple questions why it was left behind at harvest.
- Long, Loren. *The Yellow Bus*. Roaring Brook, 2024. The journey of a school bus is shown, from transporting children, to seniors, to goats, and she never loses her sense of joy and purpose.
- Mack, Jeff. *Scaredy Cats*. Holiday House, 2023. Three kittens discover a gift-wrapped present and let their imaginations run wild as they wonder what might be inside.
- Maconie, Kat. *What Kind of Shoes Does a Hippopotamus Choose?* Flamingo Books, 2025. Animals throughout a busy town wear creative footwear—from dogs in clogs to cats in kitten heels—as they gather at a hippo’s party where the mystery of what hippos wear is finally revealed.
- Madan, Vikram. *Owl and Penguin: Here and There*. Holiday House, 2024. Best friends Owl and Penguin make pizza, build snowbirds, and hike in this beginning graphic novel.
- Más Davidson, Rachel. *The Helping Sweater*. Little, Brown, 2024. When Maya’s beloved sweater unravels after her cat pulls a thread, she discovers it can help others in magical ways before school starts.
- Mensah, Bernard. *Jollof Day*. Dial Books, 2025. A boy and his father celebrate Jollof Day by cooking a traditional Ghanaian rice dish together, dancing through each step of the recipe.
- Naylor-Ballesteros, Chris. *Frank and Bert*. Nosy Crow, 2023. Frank and Bert play hide-and-seek, but when Bert’s scarf unravels and leaves a long pink yarn trail, Fox pretends not to find him.
- Nyeu, Tao. *Exactly as Planned*. Rocky Pond Books, 2024. This reversible picture book can be read from either side, with each half showing the story through a different friend’s eyes.
- Otis, Chad. *The Bright Side*. Rocky Pond Books, 2023. An unhoused boy faces some struggles as he enters school for the first time, but discovers his resilience and imagination, learning to define “the bright side” for himself.
- Paul, Chris. *Basketball Dreams*. Roaring Brook, 2023. NBA All-Star Chris Paul shares how his grandfather Papa Chilly taught him essential values like respect, faith, and determination.
- Perkins, Mitali. *Between My Hands*. Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2024. Maya is bored at the beginning of her summer vacation, so she goes on a quest to discover the ways her neighbors give back and how she can also namaste the world.
- Pett, Mark. *I Eat Poop: A Dung Beetle Story*. Roaring Brook, 2021. Dougie, a dung beetle who secretly eats poop, must decide whether to hide his identity or stand up for himself and a friend when the lunchroom crowd discovers what they eat.
- Portis, Antoinette. *To Activate Space Portal, Lift Here*. Neal Porter, 2025. This book is an interactive experience where the pages become an interstellar portal that allows Zrk and Blrg to meet an alien through the pages...who just happens to be the reader!

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- Preller, James. *Two Birds...and a Moose*. Simon Spotlight, 2024. A moose attempts to reach birds in a tree using daring methods such as a pogo stick, a helium balloon, and a high-wire walk.
- Rayner, Catherine. *Molly, Olive, and Dexter: Who's Afraid of the Dark?* Candlewick, 2025. As night falls, three friends hear and see strange things that cause them to worry until they realize there is nothing they need to be afraid of in the dark.
- Reynolds, Peter. *The Gift of Words*. Orchard Books, 2025. A young boy, disappointed by the uninspiring words he finds around his town, creates his own collection of uplifting messages to decorate a tree with positive words for everyone to share.
- Rinker, Sherri Duskey. *Construction Site: Taking Flight!* Chronicle Books, 2023. The Construction Site crew teams up with airport vehicles to expand the airport, build new runways, service planes, and clear snow. *Series*
- Rosen, Michael. *Oh Dear, Look What I Got!* Candlewick, 2025. A boy's shopping trip goes awry when each store gives him animals instead of the items he needs.
- Rothman, Scott. *Warm and Fuzzy*. Tundra Books, 2025. As Warm and Fuzzy prepare for a new adventure, Fuzzy has many questions but overcomes his fear, allowing him to enjoy trying new things.
- Rylant, Cynthia. *Hornbeam All In*. Beach Lane Books, 2023. A lovable moose navigates three adventures with his animal companions.
- Salas, Laura Purdie. *Zap! Clap! Boom!* Bloomsbury, 2023. Three children experience a building thunderstorm from sunny skies through dramatic thunder and lightning.
- Saltzberg, Barney. *A Delicious Story*. Hippo Park, 2023. This delightful book, ideal for beginning readers, follows a small mouse on a quest to find a story, only to discover a new friend along the way.
- Sayre, April Pulley. *Happy Sloth Day!* Beach Lane Books, 2022. See the rainforest through a sloth's eyes using real photographs, while learning about sloths and the other animals that share their delicate canopy ecosystem.
- Sidman, Joyce. *Dear Acorn (Love, Oak): Letter Poems to Friends*. Clarion, 2025. Through paired poems between connected elements—like an oak tree and its acorn, or a brick and its schoolhouse—this collection explores how everything in a community ecosystem supports and depends on one another.
- Silverman, Buffy. *Starlight Symphony*. Millbrook, 2024. This charming book uses rhyming text and vivid animal photos to compare the nighttime sounds on a peaceful pond to orchestra instruments.
- Smith, Lane. *Stickler Loves the World*. Random House, 2023. A stick-covered creature and its friend explore the world together, marveling at everyday wonders like the sun and overlooked details like falling seed pods. *Series*
- Sobel, June. *First Day, Hooray!* Clarion, 2024. This back-to-school picture book teaches young children to identify, name, and use their feelings as helpful tools when navigating new experiences like the first day of school.

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- Sterer, Gideon. *Treehouse Town*. Little, Brown, 2024. Children create and inhabit an idyllic treetop community where everyone works together and resolves conflicts peacefully.
- Stewart, Melissa. *Shape Search*. Reycraft Books, 2024. Readers are invited to look closely at various shapes found in nature, and to extend their curiosity by hunting for more shapes both in the book and in their own world.
- Tabor, Corey R. *Ursula Upside Down*. Greenwillow, 2024. A contented catfish enjoys her aquatic life until another fish's criticism about how she swims suddenly turns her perspective and her world upside down.
- Taltec, Olivier. *A Better Best Friend*. Gecko, 2024. A squirrel and mushroom friend experience the seasons together until new friends arrive, making the squirrel question whether it's okay to have more than one best friend.
- Tatsukawa, Maya. *Mole is Not Alone*. Holt, 2023. Mole is invited to a party, but he worries as he travels through the tunnels about whether he can overcome his shyness.
- Taylor, Sean. *Five Little Friends: A Collection of Finger Rhymes*. Candlewick, 2025. This unique collection offers parents and caregivers simple ways to sing and play with their little ones and encourages both children and grown-ups to use their fingers, hands, arms, legs, and even feet to become a stomping elephant, falling snow, or bursting fireworks!
- Timmers, Leo. *The Monster in the Lake*. Gecko, 2025. Although Eric the duck worries about monsters in the water, a courageous dip turns his fear into wonder as he discovers the spectacular life beneath the surface.
- Varchol Perron, Lisa. *All the Rocks We Love*. Rise x Penguin, 2024. This book celebrates children's fascination with rocks and shares a multitude of playful possibilities.
- Vere, Ed. *The Artist*. Doubleday, 2023. A dinosaur artist travels to a gray city where she creates vibrant murals and learns that mistakes are essential to the creative process.
- Walker, David. *The Not-So-Sleepy Little Panda*. Atheneum, 2025. When Little Panda resists bedtime due to fear of the dark, her creative parents find a natural solution to help her feel safe and comfortable at night.
- Wallace, Chelsea Lin. *Dare to Be Daring*. Abrams Books, 2024. This book encourages children to face their anxieties by showing them that each act of courage will build their confidence.
- Ward, Jennifer. *Sleepy: Surprising Ways Animals Snooze*. Beach Lane Books, 2024. Using rhyming couplets paired with informational text, this book describes the different ways animals sleep.
- Weeks, Sarah. *Sketty and Meatball*. HarperCollins, 2024. After a fun day at a dog show, making new friends, Meatball and Sketty curl up for a nap under their favorite tree.
- Wiley, DeAnn. *Homegrown*. Holt, 2024. A Black child explores the concept of "home" through family wisdom and learns that home provides a sense of belonging.

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Willems, Mo. *Are You Big?* Union Square Kids, 2024. This book helps children understand relative size and reassures them of their own significance in a big universe.

Wilson, Rachel Michelle. *How to Pee Your Pants: The Right Way.* Feiwel and Friends, 2024. A light-hearted, humorous look at how to get through the embarrassing moment of peeing your pants.

Wong, Jack. *All that Grows.* Groundwood Books, 2024. In a delightful, nuanced story about cultivating patience and letting knowledge grow, a boy discovers how vast the universe is and how much there is to learn ... until he resolves to let his knowledge grow in its own way and time, just like the mysterious plants he has decided to nurture in the garden.

Worsley, Justin. *Henry is an Artist.* Flamingo Books, 2025. Henry, a dog who creates daily sculptures on his park walks, he feels unappreciated when people throw away his artwork until an unexpected admirer finally recognizes his talent.

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Compiled by:

Monica Garcia, *St. Francis Episcopal School*

Kaitlin Holy, *The Regis School*

Jennifer Jaeger, *St. Martin's Episcopal Preschool*

Ruth Stubbs (Chair), *St. Francis Episcopal School*

Kristin Uptmor (Chair), *St. Mark's Episcopal School*

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