We're living in a golden age of young-adult literature, when books ostensibly written for teens are equally adored by readers of every generation. In the likes of Harry Potter and Katniss Everdeen, they've produced characters and concepts that have become the currency of our pop-culture discourse—and inspired some of our best writers to contribute to the genre. To honor the best books for young adults and children, *Time* compiled this survey in consultation with respected peers such as U.S. Children's Poet Laureate Ken Nesbitt, children's-book historian Leonard Marcus, the National Center for Children's Illustrated Literature, the Young Readers Center at the Library of Congress, the Every Child a Reader literacy foundation and 10 independent booksellers. With their help, we've created two all-*Time* lists of classics: 100 Best Young-Adult Books and 100 Best Children's Books. The top 25 in each category are presented here; for the full lists, visit time.com/youngreaders.
TOP 10: YOUNG ADULT
AGES 12 AND UP

1. The Absolutely True Diary of a Part-Time Indian
Sherman Alexie’s coming-of-age novel (illustrated by Ellen Forney) illuminates family and heritage through young Arnold Spirit, torn between his life on a reservation and his largely white high school. The specifics are sharply drawn, but this novel, with its themes of self-discovery, speaks to young readers everywhere.

2. Harry Potter (series)
What more can be said about J.K. Rowling’s iconic franchise? How about this: seven years after the final volume was published, readers young and old still go crazy at the slightest rumor of a new Potter story.

3. The Book Thief
For many young readers, Markus Zusak’s novel provides their first in-depth contemplation of the Holocaust. Although terror surrounds Liesel, a young German girl, so does evidence of friendship, love and charity—redeeming lights in the darkness.

4. A Wrinkle in Time
Madeleine L’Engle’s surrealistic adventure has provided generations of children with their first-ever mind-blowing experiences, as Meg travels across the fifth dimension in search of her father. But the sci-fi also has a message: Meg learns self-sufficiency and bravery in the process.

5. Charlotte’s Web
Readers are still drawn to the simplicity and beauty of arachnid Charlotte’s devotion to her pig pal Wilbur. Though family farms may be less common than they were in 1952, E.B. White’s novel remains timeless for its enduring meditation on the power of friendship and of good writing.

6. Holes
Louis Sachar’s story of a family curse, fancy sneakers and poisonous lizards moves forward and backward through time-telling of how Stanley Yelnats IV ended up in a juvenile prison camp. It’s an introduction to complex narrative, suffused with fun, warmth and a truly memorable villain.

7. Matilda
With apologies to the lovable Charlie and the Chocolate Factory, this may be Roald Dahl’s most compelling read for young people. Poor Matilda feels thwarted and ignored by her family—a sense that many preteens share. They don’t share her magical powers, but that’s the enduring appeal of this escapist frolic.

8. The Outsiders
Published when author S.E. Hinton was just 18, this coming-of-age novel offers proof that even the youngest writer can provide valuable insight. Her striking look at Ponyboy and Angst life in the 1960s has resonated for decades with readers of all kinds, whether they identify more with the Greasers or the Socs.

9. The Phantom Tollbooth
In a witty, sharp fairy tale that illuminates language and mathematics through a picaresque story of adventure in the Kingdom of Wisdom, Jules Feiffer’s whimsical drawings do as much as Norton Juster’s plain-language interpolations of complex ideas to carry readers through Digitopolis and the Mountains of Ignorance.

10. The Giver
Lois Lowry’s tale of self-discovery in a dystopian society has a memorable central character, Jonas, and an indelible message—that pain and trauma have an important place in individual lives and in society, and to forget them is to lose what makes us human.

Michael Lewis
author of Flash Boys

The Hardy Boys
by Franklin W. Dixon

“As a kid I lived on a steady diet of The Hardy Boys and Archie comic books, without the slightest sense there was anything better I might be doing with my time.”

Daniel D’Addario

AND 15 MORE

Are You There God? It’s Me, Margaret
Judy Blume

To Kill a Mockingbird
Harper Lee

Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry
 Mildred D. Taylor
When novelist Meg Wolitzer began writing *Belzhar*, her first book for a YA audience, she turned to Sylvia Plath and *The Bell Jar*:

In which *The Bell Jar* plays a part, *Belzhar* (pronounced bel-zhar, a play on Plath's title) is about a troubled girl, Jam Gallahue, who tragically loses her boyfriend and is sent to a therapeutic boarding school where she's placed in a class that reads only one writer over the whole semester. This year, the teacher has decided they will read Plath.

Plath told the truth in *The Bell Jar*—I don't mean only the autobiographical truth, though that was part of it—but also a larger truth about how emotional suffering can...
make people feel isolated under their own airless glass jars. Because of this truth, young readers like me were deeply affected and in some ways transformed. Had Plath been a famous suicide but not such a fine writer, her reputation would likely have fizzled out after her death. But she was uncommonly good, so she stuck. Teenagers read her when I was that age, and I sense that many teenagers still read her now.

And so, for research purposes, I read Plath again. But now, instead of responding only to the young narrator’s despair and despair, as I had long ago, I also found myself, to my surprise, responding to the woman Sylvia Plath would never become. The writer who would never continue to mature with age. The mother who would never see her children off into the world. The person who wouldn’t have the chance to live a long life.

Younger me tended to take the short view, feeling everything along with the narrator as it happened and never thinking about that nebulous thing called the future. But now, as a middle-aged woman, I definitely took the long view. It occurs to me that not only readers but also writers often fall into the habit of taking either the short or the long view when they work. I’m a novelist whose fiction has mainly been for adults; my most recent adult book, *The Interests*, lavishes a lot of time on its characters when they’re young. Then it keeps going, following them from age 15 all the way into their 50s—an age I can relate to well these days, as my elderly teacher, a woman who must remind myself to schedule mealtimes, her absolutely certain, and my convictions about what had happen to her.

But *Belzhar*, a novel about adolescent readers written for adolescent readers (although these days plenty of adults read *YA* too), takes place over the course of only one semester at school and while were two versions of me who should be writing *Belzhar*: one who was still close to the intensity of adolescence, for whom everything felt fresh and raw; the other, who was still close to the intensity of adolescence, for whom everything felt fresh and raw. And if not, where do their characters come from? My best, and not my best, parts in which I needed to drag them through the slow process of their characters forming.

Letting her tell her story in a particularly close-grained way. Jam is someone who need to talk, who is breathless and single-minded; making her a first-person narrator. That version, which still exists in me, took care of the ideas that came from my best, and not my best, parts in which I needed to drag them through the slow process of turning what’s going on, empathy has quietly been forming—it’s almost a chemical process.

And if you’re a writer, you’ve also been reading. A lot. And while *Belzhar* isn’t a rip-off of a re telling *The Bell Jar*, it reflects on Plath’s novel and owes a debt to it. It’s not that you want to imitate the book; you admire; you just want to do your version of what that writer did; you want to tell the truth, fiction-style.

There are quite a few of us former teenagers—women in the middle of their lives (and some men, for sure)—who have never forgotten what it felt like to read *The Bell Jar* for the first time. So what are we supposed to do with all that leftover feeling?

Me, I decided to write a book.
1. Where the Wild Things Are by Maurice Sendak is an instructive read for any age. The story of Max, a young child who's ever felt like a wild animal, or perhaps just a young man, is a timeless tale of the inner monsters children let out of the nest. Silverstein's tale of a tree that gives its life for a boy turned self-centered tion of children to let out their inner monsters, even if they're raising one. Moving from nature and the natural world to the world of imagination, Silverstein tells a story of a boy and a bear who find comfort in each other's company.

5. Little Bear (series) by Else Holmelund Minarik and Bruce Degen is a classic story of the beauty of its underlying theme of generosity. Little Bear, a young cub who returns from his reverie of yearning for his absent friend, learns that his mother has saved him for a hot dinner. His mother's illustrations that catch the light in Lane Smith's ironic, witty eye and allow for endless readers. The book, which revises the story of the pigs as an exploration of the imaginations of life among the woodland critters, is a welcome corrective to more saccharine tales of friendship. It also introduces young readers to the notion of finding the elusive great and sharing it.

9. Tuesday by Mo Willems is a memoir by the author of The Eleventh of November. The book is memorable for its sheer beauty of its color and the evocative woods that the text invites us into. The illustrations by David Wiesner, who "wrote" the very few words that make up the text, are also inspiring. The pictures do almost all the talking.

3. Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown is a soothing bedtime story that has been a favorite for generations. The illustrations, with their quirky, hidden doodles, provide amusement on the thousandth reading.

4. Blueberries for Sal by Robert McCloskey's block-printed illustrations show just how similar families of different species can be, as Sal and a baby bear covet Maine blueberries on a berry hunt with their respective mothers. It's an

10. Where the Sidewalk Ends by Shel Silverstein was just good at tales of lively self-sacrifice. His loopy poems have been speaking to kids' concerns and sparking their imaginations for decades. Any child who's ever fantasized about playing "hug o' war" instead of tug-of-war will find a kindred spirit in these pages.

Dave Eggers
Author of The Circle

Adèle & Simon and Adèle & Simon in America by Barbara McClintock
"McClintock's artwork is ridiculously beautiful, and because readers are asked to find objects that Simon has lost during various trips—including turn-of-the-century Paris and the USA—the books reward very close attention."

AND

15 MORE

Harold and the Purple Crayon
Crockett Johnson (author and illustrator)

Make Way for Ducklings
Robert McCloskey (author and illustrator)

Olivia (series)
Ian Falconer (author and illustrator)
Madeline (series)
Ludwig Bemelmans
(author and illustrator)

Anno's Journey
Mitsumasa Anno
(author and illustrator)

Frog and Toad (series)
Arnold Lobel (author and illustrator)

Click, Clack, Moo
Doreen Cronin (author),
Betsey Lewin (illustrator)

The Story of Ferdinand
Munro Leaf (author),
Robert Lawson (illustrator)

Don't Let the Pigeon
Drive the Bus!
Mo Willems
(author and illustrator)

The Lorax
Dr. Seuss
(author and illustrator)

Corduroy
Don Freeman
(author and illustrator)

I Want My Hat Back
Jon Klassen
(author and illustrator)

Miss Rumphius
Barbara Cooney
(author and illustrator)

Brave Irene
William Steig
(author and illustrator)

Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
Judith Viorst (author),
Ray Cruz (illustrator)

Photograph by Andrew B. Myers for TIME
Hey Baby, Can I Get You a Beer?
What I learned about making people laugh on the set of America's Funniest Home Videos

When I was in second grade, I asked my parents what the Vice President did. They told me that the second most important person in the country didn't have any responsibilities whatsoever. For the next five years, I told people that when I grew up, I wanted to be the Vice President.

So when Tom Bergeron announced he was stepping down as the host of ABC's America's Funniest Home Videos (AFV) after 14 years, I applied. I could be on network TV every week, introducing a few clip packages while making tons of money and getting invited to lots of parties — many of which, admittedly, would have guest lists consisting of cats or men with ice packs on their groins.

I walked onto the AFV stage feeling surprisingly nervous, so I asked Bergeron for advice on how to be funny when hosting a family show. "Relax, have fun and remember your role is to service the videos. Which sounds dirtier than I intended," he said. In other words: make jokes that sound edgy but are actually safe because they don't make sense.

To prepare, I watched Bergeron tape a show, during which I noticed many surprising details, like the fact that the show is an hour long. It turns out I'd never actually seen America's Funniest Home Videos, which made me even more anxious. When the show ended, I walked out to great applause, which — along with the bright lights and my loud, distracting heartbeat — made it hard to remember which cameras to look at, though I'm pretty sure there wasn't one in my shoes.

Then I brought two audience members up for a game called "Pick the Real Video," in which I asked them if I was about to show a clip of a hose oddly stuck to a frozen hot dog, a penguin swimming in a hotel fountain or a leprechaun falling down an escalator. One of the contestants picked the leprechaun. The show is not called America's Smartest Home Video Watchers.

Vin Di Bona, the show's creator and executive producer, told me he's leaning toward hiring someone famous and talented. Still, he said, while I was unpolished, I had some of that Bergeron magic, compared with the blunter skills of previous host Bob Saget. "He had to have laughter to know it was right," he said. "You didn't need that. You just presented and moved on." Yes. That is exactly what I was trying to do. I was not just being quiet because all the jokes I could think of with a fly, a penguin and a leprechaun were racist.

Di Bona, however, thought I might be a better fit as a writer. So a few weeks later I spent an afternoon working for head writer Todd Thicke, who has been with the show since 1989. He has the same good looks and deep voice as his brother Alan Thicke and nephew Robin Thicke and, I'm guessing, other Thickes. I sat at a table with three other writers, looking at walls covered with index cards, on which were written things like "A boy comments on how to impress the ladies in the car. Then suddenly screams in a panic when he sees a spider" and "A dog shows its teeth and growls while a woman rubs its butt with her foot indoors." This was going to be easy.

We stared at a screen and watched the very best 10% of submitted videos, as culled by screeners who I'm assuming work in Chinese prison camps. And they were still insanely boring — just cute pets, cute babies and uncute tweens dancing in their bedrooms. It took 90 minutes before we saw the first guy get hit in the testicles, which was the first time we laughed. "It's weird," I said. "As soon as someone gets hurt, people laugh." Writer Mike Falleschi looked around the room and said, "I think that's our fault."

The writers had an amazing ability to predict, within just a few seconds, what would happen in the clips we watched, all of which provided me with valuable life lessons: don't wear socks on kitchen tile; don't run near the buttocks of an obese woman; use extreme caution when weight lifting at home alone; don't leave flour in an area accessible to toddlers. Since AFV is a family show, the writers can't use a lot of the best stuff, like a baby smiling widely after tasting a beer. "You can barely give a monkey a cigarette, no less a baby a beer," said Erik Lohla. "The world has changed," agreed Jordan Schatz.

So to make the clips seem more exciting, they combine them using clever frames like "Failed football entrances vs. babies knocked over by sneezes." Thicke also set us to work creating alternative meanings for NSFW besides "not safe for work" that he could print below clips. At first I tried to write for clips we'd seen, such as "nice sprinkler fart, wanker" for the guy with the sprinkler stuck in his pants and "new style feline revenge" for the cat who attacked a dog, but the other writers simply searched for new topics in their 25-year database of clips. They found me lots of guys falling off stripper poles for "never strip for women," but Thicke thought that it wasn't in great taste. And they didn't seem excited about my suggestion that we take absolutely any clip anyone submitted and just write "no sense from within."

It's been several months, and I haven't heard back about either job. Luckily, I have some pretty adorable footage of my son that I'm sure will win $10,000.

Illustration by Thomas Nast

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