

The best children's stories have a shelf life of eternity. From 19th-century classics to contemporary sensations, from picture books for wee ones to tomes for teens, here are 100 not-to-be-missed titles for kids

ages 2-4

Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?

by Bill Martin, Jr. and illustrated by Eric Carle, 1967. A page-turner that ignites in readers the desire to glimpse a blue horse, a purple cat and the next brilliant thing that follows.

Can't You Sleep, Little Bear?

by Martin Waddell and illustrated by Barbara Firth, 1992. Warm watercolours capture Big Bear's tender attempts to banish all dark from the cave so Little Bear feels safe enough to sleep.

The Carrot Seed

by Ruth Krauss and illustrated by Crockett Johnson,

1945. Despite warnings that the seed he planted will not grow, a little boy's patience and self-confidence are rewarded with a carrot as big as himself.

Chicka Chicka Boom Boom

by Bill Martin, Jr. and John Archambault, and illustrated by Lois Ehlert, 1989. Infectious, playful rhyme sends the alphabet on a romp up a coconut tree.

Goodnight Moon

by Margaret Wise Brown and illustrated by Clement Hurd, 1947. Wise Brown's quiet poetry has lulled generations of children to sleep and enticed millions of families to hunt for the mouse on every page.

☆ Grumpy Bird

by Jeremy Tankard, 2007. When Bird wakes up, he's too grumpy to eat, play or even fly, and instead starts stomping through the forest on foot. But his oblivious,



happy-go-lucky friends stick to him like happy-go-lucky friends stick to him like glue, turning Bird's walk into an inadvertent game of follow-the-leader that makes Bird even grumpier.

Guess How Much I Love You

by Sam McBratney and illustrated by Anita Jeram, 1995. It's impossible not to sigh and aw-w-w over the sweet illustrations of Little Nutbrown Hare in various stages of sleep and play as he and Big Nutbrown Hare describe their love for each other.

Maisy the Mouse series

by Lucy Cousins, 1990. According to Cousins, Maisy "drew herself" one day when Cousins was doodling, and has since become one of the best-loved characters in children's books.

Max and Ruby series

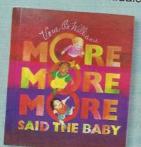
by Rosemary Wells, 1979. The illustrations of curious three-year-old Max and bossy seven-year-old Ruby incite as much fun as the words.

More More More, Said the Baby

by Vera B. Williams, 1990. Three stories of crazy-for-you affection, starting with Little Guy being chased by his daddy, who catches Little Guy and throws him high, swings him all around and gives him a kiss right in the middle of his belly button.

"More," laughs Little Guy. "More. More. More."

The book explodes with colour, each word an assortment of hues, each baby uniquely adored.



We enjoy Marie-Louise Gay's Sam and Stella series. I think my kids see themselves in Sam and Stella, the imaginative older sister and the eternally curious younger brother.

 Annabel Lyon, author of The Golden Mean, short-listed for the Scotiabank Giller Prize and the Governor General's Award in 2009

Night Cars

by Teddy Jam (Matt Cohen) and illustrated by Eric Beddows, 1988. Lyrical prose and rich illustrations portray a tired father's imaginative explanations of the nighttime noises outside the window. Billed as the Canadian Goodnight Moon.

The Real Mother Goose

illustrated by Blanche Fisher Wright, 1916. Despite the plentiful variety of nursery rhyme editions that surface regularly, it is this version, with its beloved illustrations, that is still going strong after nearly a century.

Sam Who Never Forgets

by Eve Rice, 1977. While he has lovingly tended to all the other animals, it appears that Sam the zookeeper has forgotten to feed Elephant. Will Elephant have his hay?

The Tale of Peter Rabbit

by Beatrix Potter, 1902. This quintessential cautionary tale, with its intimate, conversational tone, humorously warns young readers about the perils of misbehaving.

The Very Hungry Caterpillar

by Eric Carle, 1969. Layered under the imaginative diecut pages are lessons about counting, the days of the week and the magic of metamorphosis.

Where's Spot?

by Eric Hill, 1980. The first lift-the-flap children's book has toddlers readily identifying with the rascal puppy Spot, who is hiding from his mother, Sally.

ages 4-8

Alligator Pie

by Dennis Lee and illustrated by Frank Newfield, 1974. Margaret Laurence once said of Lee's inaugural poetry collection that "you can almost hear the skipping ropes slapping on the sidewalk."

The Cat in the Hat

by Dr. Seuss, 1957. Written in response to an article in *Life* magazine that lamented the boring reading lessons in schools, *The Cat in the Hat* employed 223 words from primary reading lists and single-handedly killed "Dick and Jane."

☆ Frog and Toad series



by Arnold Lobel, 1970.
Grumpy Toad and
carefree Frog are best
friends. While Frog's
optimism seems like the
glue that holds them
together, Toad has his
own shining moments
too. Once, finding Frog
looking too green, Toad
goes to great pains to

make him feel better. The friends' great loyalty guides them throughout the four books of their adventures.

Curious George

by Margret and H.A. Rey, 1941. George embodies the irresistibly lovable little monkey in all small children.

Doctor De Soto

by William Steig, 1982. An unscrupulous fox wonders if it would be "shabby" to eat his dentist once his toothache is cured, then finds himself outsmarted by the clever Doctor De Soto.

Franklin in the Dark

by Paulette Bourgeois and illustrated by Brenda Clark, 1986. The story of a turtle who's afraid to climb into his own shell (inspired by the *M*A*S*H* rerun in which Hawkeye Pierce described his claustrophobia) reassures kids it's OK for them to be afraid.

Henry and Mudge

by Cynthia Rylant and illustrated by Suçie Stevenson, 1987. In this winsome first-reader (the first in the series), single child Henry realizes how much he loves his drooling, 180-pound dog, Mudge (who grew out of seven collars in a row), when Mudge goes missing.

The Hockey Sweater

by Roch Carrier, translated by Sheila Fischman and illustrated by Sheldon Cohen, 1979. A classic Canadian parable, based on a real incident in Carrier's childhood, finds humour and horror in the protagonist's predicament of having to wear the hockey sweater of the rival Maple Leafs.

Little Bear

by Else Homelund Minarik and illustrated by Maurice Sendak, 1957. Little Bear's relationships help him learn about love in this warm and witty series.

Love You Forever

by Robert Munsch and illustrated by Sheila McGraw, 1986. This sentimental favourite showcases a mother's undying devotion to her child, which eventually comes full circle.

Madeline

by Ludwig Bemelmans, 1939. It is a lovely moment of drama and fun when Miss Clavel discovers 11 wailing little girls who yearn to have appendicitis just like Madeline.

Make Way for Ducklings

by Robert McCloskey, 1941. A delightful story about a duck family in Boston's Public Garden that crosses a heavily trafficked street with the help of the police department.

Reading to my children was the best part of being a parent. I discovered wonderful books I had never read, my all-time favourite being Beatrix Potter's The Tale of Samuel Whiskers, or The Roly-Poly Pudding, a tiny masterpiece of suspense and darkest humour.

 Elizabeth Hay, author of Late Nights on Air, winner of the Scotiabank Giller Prize in 2007

☆ Where the Wild Things Are

by Maurice Sendak, 1963. After threatening to eat his mother up, Max is sent to his room.

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

Once there, he sails off to where the wild things are. He becomes king of these fearsome and goofy creatures, leads them on a wild rumpus, then returns home to a hot supper.

The honest and

uncompromising nature of childhood lives inside the carefully crafted pages and vivid illustrations of this wonderful and much-loved book.

Mike Mulligan and His Steam Shovel

by Virginia Lee Burton, 1939. The spirited story of a steam shovel named Mary Anne is captivating for its unabashed delight in all things mechanical.

The Paper Bag Princess

by Robert Munsch and illustrated by Michael Martchenko, 1980. Princess Elizabeth rescues, and then dumps, handsome Prince Ronald, who disapproves of the paper bag she wears instead of burnt clothes.

The Polar Express

by Chris Van Allsburg, 1985. The majestic illustrations of this Caldecott Medal winner illuminate the simple, heartwarming story about how believing in Santa Claus keeps us young at heart.

Scaredy Squirrel

by Mélanie Watt, 2006. Squirrel has his share of wacky fears, which he unwittingly confronts in a laugh-out-loud way that inspires young readers to take small risks of their own.

Something from Nothing

by Phoebe Gilman, 1992. A rich retelling of an old Jewish folk tale in which Joseph's cherished baby blanket is transformed into successively smaller but wonderful items over the years.

Stanley's Party

by Linda Bailey and illustrated by Bill Slavin, 2003. Bored canine Stanley discovers that nothing

actually happens when he sneaks up on the forbidden couch, and so dancing, fridge-raiding and a full-blown party ensue.

Stella, Star of the Sea

by Marie-Louise Gay, 1999. Stella's irrepressible "leap before you look" and "invent if you don't know" philosophies make for some creative explanations to her little brother, Sam, about the sea.

The Story About Ping

by Marjorie Flack and illustrated by Kurt Wiese, 1933. Spunky little duck Ping is accidentally left behind on the Yangtze River one night, where his scary misadventures prompt him to be on time the next evening.

The Story of Babar

by Jean de Brunhoff, 1933. A young orphaned elephant rises from wild animal to the toast of high society (in a smart pressed suit) and ultimately to king of the elephants.

The Story of Ferdinand

by Munro Leaf and illustrated by Robert Lawson, 1936. In a lovely testament to self-assured individuality, Ferdinand the bull prefers relaxing under a cork tree and smelling the flowers to the snorting and butting of his peers.

Zoom at Sea

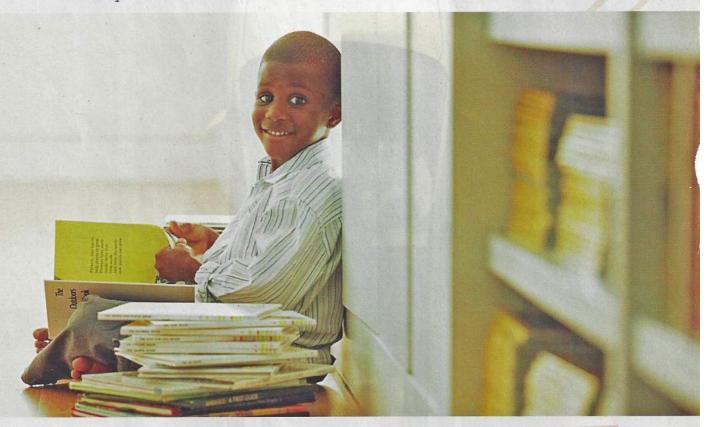
by Tim Wynne-Jones and illustrated by Eric Beddows, 1983. When a cat who loves water finds a map to the sea, he has a thrilling and wholly original adventure.



As a parent reading to my own young children, I was blown away by Arnold Lobel's Frog and Toad stories — so spare, so funny, and such a true picture of friendship.

- Richard Scrimger, author of The Nose from Jupiter, winner of Mr. Christie's Book Award in 1998

I can't wait to share Plain Kate, by Erin Bow, with my kids. It's a brilliant story, with language so poetic and original. Reading Plain Kate inspires me to be a better writer. - Nan Forler, author of Bird Child



Bunnicula

by Deborah Howe and James Howe, 1979. The family dog recounts how the family cat becomes obsessed with saving everyone from a suspected vampire bunny.

Catwings

by Ursula K. Le Guin and illustrated by S.D. Schindler, 1988. Four winged kittens take flight to escape the filth and perils of city life, and discover high adventure and a safe home in the country.

The Cricket in Times Square

by George Selden and illustrated by Garth Williams, 1960. When a country cricket from Connecticut is accidentally transported to the 42nd Street subway station in New York City, he finds friends, shelter and fame.

Henry Huggins

by Beverly Cleary, 1950. Set in small-town America in the 1950s, this tale of eight-year-old Henry's antics with his new-found mutt, Ribsy, evokes a simpler time and plenty of laughs.

★ The Spiderwick Chronicles



by Tony DiTerlizzi and
Holly Black, 2003.
Thirteen-year-old
Mallory and nine-yearold twins Jared and
Simon are forced to
move with their mother
into the dilapidated
Spiderwick Estate
belonging to their great-

aunt Lucinda. Once there, they discover a curious field guide to an array of mythical creatures, and find themselves sucked into the dark and dangerous world of faeries.

Detailed illustrations, deliciously cryptic clues and three strong protagonists (bossy Mallory, eccentric Simon and troubled Jared) combine for a wholly satisfying read.

Jacob Two-Two Meets the Hooded Fang

by Mordecai Richler, 1975. Richler's delightfully dreadful plot, heaped with cheeky humour, finds two-plus-two-plus-two-year-old Jacob in prison for the unpardonable sin of insulting a grown-up.

The Magic Treehouse series

by Mary Pope Osborne, 1992. An addictive blend of fascinating facts, time travel and easy-to-read short chapters where books are the portal to adventurous time periods.

Mr. Popper's Penguins

by Richard Atwater and Florence Atwater, 1938. Eleven "orking" and "gooking" penguins descend on the Popper household to find fame, fortune and more than a little chaos.

The Mouse and the Motorcycle

by Beverly Cleary, 1965. Ralph the mouse's elation that he can actually ride the toy motorcycle of his new human friend, Keith, sparks a night of lively, comic adventure.

My Father's Dragon

by Ruth Stiles Gannett and illustrated by Ruth Chrisman Gannett, 1948. Nine-year-old Elmer Elevator travels to Wild Island to rescue an enslaved baby dragon, armed with two dozen pink lollipops, some rubber bands, chewing gum and a fine-toothed comb. First book in a trilogy.

Ramona Quimby, Age 8

by Beverly Cleary, 1981. Ramona gets herself into a ton of hilarious trouble with her inability to compromise and her fierce need to be understood, qualities young readers will readily see in themselves.

Shredderman

by Wendelin Van Draanen, 2004. A thoroughly enjoyable romp with a modern superhero, class nerd Nolan Byrd, who assumes a secret identity to expose class bully Bubba Bixby.

Sideways Stories from Wayside School

by Louis Sachar, 1978. Thirty quirky short stories about an unconventional school with horrifyingly delicious characters, such as the ghastly Mrs. Gorf, who turns kids into apples until she is turned into one herself...and is then eaten!



The Iron Man

by Ted Hughes, 1968. Nobody knows where the giant Iron Man came from. With a head as big as a bedroom and an insatiable appetite for metal, he enrages the local farmers by eating their tractors and

threshers. Recognizing that the giant is simply hungry and not evil, a young boy named Hogarth befriends him just in time for the Iron Man to conquer a monstrous space dragon that arrives to destroy the world.

This is not simply a rock 'em, sock 'em boy's war story. Former British Poet Laureate Hughes (also famous for his tragic marriage to the American poet Sylvia Plath) writes with spare, evocative language to tell an entrancing story, part science fiction and part fairy tale, about the seductive power of evil and how peace can defeat it.

Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing

by Judy Blume, 1972. The mischievous meddling and annoying cuteness of Peter's little brother Fudge will resonate with anyone who's been bitten by sibling rivalry.

The Velveteen Rabbit

by Margery Williams and illustrated by William Nicholson, 1922. The charming and sentimental story about how a favourite toy becomes real when loved to pieces.

Where the Sidewalk Ends

by Shel Silverstein, 1974. Silverstein's first collection of children's poetry, at once clever, funny and profound, dares all dreamers to try extraordinary things.

Winnie the Pooh

by A.A. Milne and illustrated by Ernest H. Shepard, 1926. Generations of kids have been enchanted by Milne's whimsical stories about the beloved "bear of little brain" and his friends, who find wonder and mystery in the most ordinary things.



The Adventures of Tom Sawyer

by Mark Twain, 1876. Though more than a century old, Twain's self-professed "hymn" to boyhood still captures the abandon of youth.

Alice's Adventures in Wonderland

by Lewis Carroll, 1865. C.S. Lewis said no book is worth reading at age 10 that is not equally worth reading at age 50. Carroll's classic stands this test of time, as adult and child alike identify with poor Alice, who grows and shrinks, and tries to make sense of her nonsensical world.

Anne of Green Gables

by Lucy Maud Montgomery, 1908. The exuberance with which the feisty red-haired orphan accidentally dyes her hair green and bakes a cake full of liniment pulls us headfirst into her quirky hurricane.

The Borrowers series

by Mary Norton, 1952. The idea that tiny people called borrowers live beneath the floorboards of our houses, frame postage stamps as art, and use matchboxes for drawers is the charming anchor for these daring adventures.

Bridge to Terabithia

by Katherine Paterson, 1977. In this powerful story of friendship and loss, the imaginary kingdom of Terabithia is where Jess and Leslie learn to cope with life when it's not so beautiful.

Bud, Not Buddy

by Christopher Paul Curtis, 1999. Guided by his own

☆ Charlotte's Web

by E.B. White and illustrated by Garth Williams, 1952. In the beloved story of a little pig named Wilbur who is saved from an untimely death by Charlotte the spider, readers are



transported into the barn which smells of the "perspiration of tired horses and the wonderful sweet breath of patient cows." White's lyrical prose lulls his readers into a celebration of senses, encouraging them to find the wonder in every moment. The story confronts the reality that the passage of time - and friends - is inevitable, and portrays change not as a tragedy, but as a door to new opportunities.

Rules and Things for Having a Funner Life and Making a Better Liar Out of Yourself," 10-year-old Bud Caldwell's half-baked odyssey to flee his abusive foster home and find his supposed father will make you laugh and cry.

The Chronicles of Prydain series

by Lloyd Alexander, 1964. This quest tale follows the adventures of its fallible protagonists in a mythical world, and is buoyed with more than a pinch of humour.

☆ Tuck Everlasting

by Natalie Babbitt, 1975.
After drinking from a magic spring, the Tuck family became immortal — a fact that 10-year-old Winnie Foster discovers after stumbling upon the



eternally 17-year-old Jesse Tuck in the woods one morning. Compelled to make Winnie understand that the family legacy is more curse than blessing and must be kept secret, the Tucks steal her away.

While Winnie's affection for the family grows

— as does her infatuation with handsome

Jesse — she also comes to see that living
forever means that life passes you by.

Confessions of Georgia Nicolson series

by Louise Rennison, 1999. The diary entries of shamelessly self-absorbed but lovable 14-year-old Georgia Nicolson are snort-out-loud funny.

Harry Potter series

J.K. Rowling, 1997. Perhaps just as magical as his wizarding abilities is the way Harry Potter took the literary world by storm and got kids (and their parents) reading again.

Hatchet

by Gary Paulsen, 1987. A young boy survives a plane crash and goes on to spend 54 days — filled with obstacles and triumphs — alone in the wilderness.

Holes

by Louis Sachar, 1998. Stanley Yelnats' no-gooddirty-rotten-pig-stealing great-great-grandfather started a family curse that is lifted when events as palindromic as Stanley's name lead him to retrace his ancestor's tracks.

The Indian in the Cupboard

by Lynne Reid Banks, 1980. The excitement Omri feels when his toy Indian is brought magically to life is complicated by his growing awareness that the real world presents grave danger to tiny Little Bear.

Inkheart

by Cornelia Funke, 2003. Meggie's father unwittingly reads some nightmarish villains out of a book and into the real world in this dark and gripping fantasy.

The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe

by C.S. Lewis, 1950. J.R.R. Tolkien argued that publishing The Chronicles of Narnia would hurt Lewis's reputation as a serious writer, but few can resist the magic door into a world where animals talk and epic battles are waged.

Little House on the Prairie series

by Laura Ingalls Wilder and illustrated by Garth

Williams, 1932. The physical and emotional struggles of pioneer life captured in these books were largely lost in the TV series, as was the unique character of Pa, truly larger than life on the page.

The Little Prince

by Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, 1943. A timeless tale that explores the essence of love and loneliness while gently exposing the foibles of adulthood.

Peter Pan

by J.M. Barrie, 1911. The "innocent and heartless" tale of Neverland and the Lost Boys, with pirates, crocodiles and the tantalizing concept of never growing up.

Redwall

by Brian Jacques, 1986. This epic adventure of the mice of Redwall Abbey contains the elements of all grand quests — tragedy and comedy, danger and wonder, a despicable villain and an inspiring hero.

The Secret Garden

by Frances Hodgson Burnett, 1911. The story of how spoiled, ill-tempered Mary and lonely, bedridden Colin are transformed through their efforts to bring a mysterious, abandoned garden to life.

A Series of Unfortunate Events series

by Lemony Snicket (Daniel Handler), 1999. The unrelenting bad fortune that plagues the Baudelaire orphans propels you through these books' dark, droll pages like a rubbernecker at a car crash.

The Sheep-Pig

by Dick King-Smith, 1983. When Fly the sheepdog adopts Babe the pig and saves him from the family freezer by teaching him how to herd sheep, Babe teaches Fly about friendship. This book is the basis for the beloved family movie *Babe*.

Silverwing

by Kenneth Oppel, 1997. Daring to look at the sun, Shade (a silverwing bat) endangers his colony and is ruthlessly pursued by owls and vampire bats.

The Wind in the Willows

by Kenneth Grahame and illustrated by Eric Kincaid, 1908. The madcap adventures of Mole, Ratty, Toad and Badger expose lessons of friendship and morality with rich metaphor and comedy.

The Wonderful Wizard of Oz

by L. Frank Baum, 1900. Described as the first truly American fairy tale, Baum's classic story sends us on a weird and wonderful journey to learn that sometimes you have to get lost in order to be found.

A Wrinkle in Time

by Madeleine L'Engle, 1962. Likeable characters who stumble and grow make this more than just great science fiction.

ages 12+

The Boy in the Striped Pajamas

by John Boyne, 2006. A chilling, heartbreaking, punchin-the-gut story set in 1942 Germany about a little boy whose father goes to work at a desolate camp the boy thinks is called "Out-With."

Dust

by Arthur Slade, 2001. A darkly gripping novel with plotting and pacing reminiscent of the best of Alfred Hitchcock and Stephen King.

Eragon

by Christopher Paolini, 2003. Paolini was 15 when he wrote this story of a farm boy who discovers he is a Dragon Rider, destined to defeat the Empire's evil king.

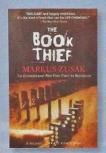
The Giver

by Lois Lowry, 1993. This Newbery Medal winner about a world devoid of memory and emotion has been a cultural lightning rod, both studied in and banned from middle schools throughout North America, with themes on challenging authority and questioning adult rule.

His Dark Materials trilogy

by Philip Pullman, 1995. In this complex fantasy, Lyra navigates her dangerous world, which involves missing children and the mysterious Dust.

The Book Thief



by Markus Zusak, 2005. Liesel Meminger steals her first book at the age of nine from her little brother's grave, and her further thefts punctuate the pivotal points in her life during the Second World War. Her story is narrated by Death, who is burdened, tender, stoic

and haunted by humans who can be "so glorious and so ugly." Zusak's language is breathtaking, with an image or phrase to savour on every page. A stunning, life-altering book.

The Hobbit

by J.R.R. Tolkien, 1937. The seeds of the classic Lord of the Rings trilogy are sown in this compelling fantasy that introduces readers to Bilbo Baggins, Gandalf and Gollum.

I Capture the Castle

by Dodie Smith, 1948. Seventeen-year-old Cassandra's spirited journal entries about her eccentric family and her own stumble into love read like whispered nighttime conversations with your best friend.

☆ The Hunger Games

by Suzanne Collins, 2008.
Each year, the Capitol of
Panem forces its 12 districts to
draw the names of two youths
for the Hunger Games, a
ruthless, televised competition
to the death. When 16-yearold Katniss's young sister,
Prim, is selected, Katniss
volunteers to take her place.



The taut, engrossing action is as much about the loss of humanity as the loss of life; the book (the first in a trilogy) was inspired both by war and reality TV.

The Knife of Never Letting Go

by Patrick Ness, 2008. The pace of this science fiction thriller is relentless as a boy and girl run from a town where all thoughts can be heard and the passage to manhood embodies a terrible secret.

The Maestro

by Tim Wynne-Jones, 1995. What would you do if you were forced to choose between your abusive father's life and the only copy of a brilliant new creation by an eccentric musical genius?

The Maze Runner

by James Dashner, 2009. The initial *Lord of the Flies* feel to this story of an all-boy society trapped in a maze segues into the gripping realization that the boys' frantic attempts to solve the maze are inadequate and each of them will be tested to his limits.

The Sisterhood of the Traveling Pants

by Ann Brashares, 2001. A thrift-store pair of jeans mailed back and forth between four best friends during their first summer apart is witness to the girls' angst and triumphs.

Treasure Island

by Robert Louis Stevenson, 1883. Inspired by a treasure map doodled by Stevenson's stepson one rainy afternoon, this story of buried gold and adventure at sea has had a lasting influence on the popular perception of pirates.

Twilight

by Stephenie Meyer, 2005. The book that lit a fire under the paranormal romance genre arrived just in time for Harry Potter graduates who were ready to sink their teeth into something new. **TP**

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