

## Empathy-Focused Children's Books (page 1 of 3)

### Primary

Bourgeois, Paulette. *Oma's Quilt*. Kids Can Press, 2001.

The time has come for Emily's grandmother to move from her house, filled with a lifetime of memories, to a retirement home. Oma complains about everything at the home until Emily, sorting through her grandmother's possessions, discovers the perfect way to keep Oma's memories by her side—by stitching a one-of-a-kind quilt. A lovely story about empathy for the elderly. Ages 5–8

Christiansen, Candace. *The Mitten Tree*. Fulcrum, 2009.

On a snowy day, an old woman notices that a little boy at the bus stop does not have any mittens. Worried that he can't join in the winter fun, she knits mittens for him, placing them on a tree at the bus stop the next day. She continues to knit mittens for the children who need them, and though she uses up all her yarn, she returns home with a full heart and discovers a wonderful surprise waiting on her porch. A great book for teaching kindness and compassion. Ages 4–8

Fox, Mem. *Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge*. Kane/Miller, 1985.

Wilfrid Gordon McDonald Partridge is a small boy who has a big name—and that's why he likes Miss Nancy Alison Delacourt Cooper, because she has one too. So when he finds Miss Nancy has lost her memory, Wilfrid is determined to discover what memories are so he can find it for her. A gentle story about a child's willingness and ability to find a way to connect with an aging friend. Ages 4–8

Fox, Mem. *Whoever You Are*. Harcourt, 1997.

Every day all over the world, children are laughing and crying, playing and learning, eating and sleeping. They may not look the same. But inside, they are alike. This is an inspiring celebration for all children, whoever they are, and is an excellent book for teaching acceptance of our similarities and differences and understanding of others. Ages 2–6

Hoose, Phillip M. *Hey, Little Ant*. Scholastic, 1998.

What would you do if the ant you were about to step on looked up and started talking? Would you stop and listen? What if your friends saw you hesitate? Originally a song by a father–daughter team, this conversation between two creatures, large and small, is bound to inspire important discussions around empathy. It might even answer that classic childhood question: to squish or not to squish? Ages 4–8

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Otoshi, Kathryn. *One*. KO Kids Books, 2008.

BLUE is a quiet colour. RED is a hot head. RED likes to pick on BLUE. YELLOW, GREEN, PURPLE, and ORANGE don't like what they see, but what can they do? When no one takes a stand, things get out of hand. Until ONE comes along and shows all the colours how to stand up and COUNT. A clever introduction to bullying and how to deal with those who try to make you feel bad about yourself. Ages 6+

Scieszka, Jon. *The True Story of the Three Little Pigs*. Viking Kestral, 1989.

A funny and clever retelling of the classic fairytale from the wolf's point of view, making it a valuable lesson in perspective-taking. Ages 6+

Upjohn, Rebecca. *Lily and the Paper Man*. Second Story Press, 2007.

Walking home with her mother one day, Lily runs into a gruff and untidy-looking man selling papers on the street. Lily is afraid of the man, but when the weather turns cold, she sees the Paper Man differently. A gentle and compassionate story about homelessness and one child's way of helping make a difference. Ages 4–8

### Primary and Junior Grades

Cleary, Beverly. *Ramona the Pest*. HarperCollins, 1968.

The engaging tale of young Ramona Quimby's first days in Kindergarten, with all its trials and delights. Ramona's energetic take on life appeals to children who have passed through this stage, or who are dealing with a kindergarten-age sibling who is exhibiting Ramona-ish tendencies. Ages 7+

Estes, Eleanor. *The Hundred Dresses*. Harcourt, 1944.

Wanda Petronski, a little Polish girl in an American school, is laughed at because she always wears a faded blue dress, until her classmates learn a lesson about kindness, compassion, and standing up for what's right. Ages 6+

Silverstein, Shel. *The Giving Tree*. HarperCollins, 1964.


A moving parable for readers of all ages. Every day a boy comes to a tree to eat her apples, swing from her branches, or slide down her trunk...and the tree is happy. But as the boy grows older he begins to want more from the tree, and the tree continues to give. About the gift of giving and acceptance. Ages 10+

White, E. B. *Charlotte's Web*. HarperCollins, 1952.

The classic children's story about friendship and compassion, caring for those different than you, the generosity of good friends, and the nobility of the seemingly insignificant. A book that parents and children can read together and discuss for years. Ages 7+

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### Junior and Intermediate Grades

Cleary, Beverly. *Dear Mr. Henshaw*. William Morrow, 1983.

A young boy's personal life and struggles are revealed through the letters he writes to his favourite author. This award-winning novel invites readers to reflect on and sympathize with the many issues the main character must face. Ages 8+

Draper, Sharon. *Out of My Mind*. Atheneum, 2010.

Melody cannot walk or talk, but she has a photographic memory and she can remember every detail about everything she has ever experienced. Although some classmates in her integrated classroom dismiss Melody as mentally challenged, she refuses to be defined by cerebral palsy. Ages 10+

Erskine, Kathryn. *Mockingbird*. Penguin, 2010.

Caitlin has Asperger's. The world according to her is black and white and anything in between is confusing. When things got confusing, Caitlin always went to her older brother, Devon, for help. But Devon has died, and Caitlin's dad is so distraught that he is just not helpful. Then she comes across the word closure—and in her search for it, Caitlin discovers that the world may not be black and white after all. Ages 10+

Lord, Cynthia. *Rules*. Scholastic, 2006.

Twelve-year-old Catherine just wants a normal life, which is near impossible when you have a brother with autism and a family that revolves around his disability. A lovely story about acceptance, and feeling and being different. Ages 10+

Palacio, R. J. *Wonder*. Knopf, 2012.

August Pullman was born with a facial deformity that, up until now, has prevented him from going to a mainstream school. Starting Grade 5, he wants nothing more than to be treated as an ordinary kid—but his new classmates can't get past Auggie's extraordinary face. A portrait of one community's struggle with empathy, compassion, and acceptance. Ages 10+

Philbrick, Rodman. *Freak the Mighty*. Scholastic, 1993.

The heartwrenching story of two "special ed" boys who pair up to form a unique and empowering friendship. One, a slow learner stuck in the body of a teenage giant, the other a tiny Einstein in leg braces, forge a unique friendship when they pair up to create one formidable human force. Ages 10+