

Raising a Reader

without pulling your hair out

Bedtime Stories



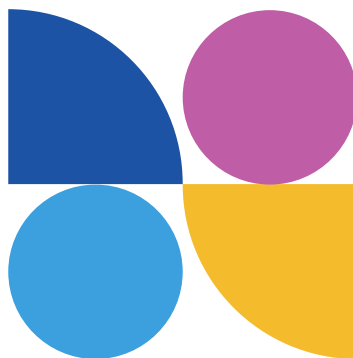
Introduction

I'm Frances Wong, and I've been a teacher since 2005. In that time, I've had the joy of helping thousands of children discover the magic of reading, including my own two!

I'm also the award winning author of a number of children's books, which means I get to see reading not just from the classroom, but through the wonder of stories themselves.

I am so passionate about bedtime stories, because I truly believe they are vital for children. A simple story at the end of the day does so much more than help them fall asleep. It builds their language, expands their imagination, and gives them the comfort of connection. For many children, this becomes the most magical and secure moment of the day. The story routine gives structure, a safe space to unwind, and the chance to explore new worlds from the safety of home.

I know how busy family life can be, especially when parents are working and juggling so many demands. It isn't always easy to carve out that time, but even ten minutes makes a difference. The best part is that bedtime stories don't need to be long or complicated. Just a short story together builds confidence, sparks curiosity, and strengthens the bond between parent and child. Those small, nightly moments create a love of books that lasts a lifetime.



Frances Wong

Children's Author
Teacher with over 20
years experience
teaching children to
read

(C) Frances Wong

Why Bedtime Stories Matter

Children who never have a bedtime story at home, start school with a 4622 word vocabulary.

Children who have a bedtime story 3 - 5 times a week have a vocabulary of 169,520 words, on average.

Children who read with an adult daily for their first five years have a vocabulary full of a whopping 296,000 words.



But, why does that matter?

These differences in vocabulary make a huge impact when children start school.

A rich vocabulary means a child can understand what the teacher is saying, join in class discussions, and pick up new learning more easily.

Bedtime stories also support early reading, because the more words a child knows, the quicker they can recognise them in print.

Beyond academics, having the words to express themselves helps children build friendships, manage their emotions, and feel more

confident in a classroom setting.

That confidence carries over into their friendships too, as language helps them join in games, explain how they feel, and solve little disagreements.

Bedtime stories don't just prepare children for school. Bedtime stories prepare your child to thrive once they get there.



Creating a Routine



Creating a bedtime routine that includes reading every day helps make stories a natural part of family life. When reading happens at the same time each evening, it quickly becomes a habit your child looks forward to.

After the busyness of the day, the routine of washing, brushing teeth, getting into pyjamas, and then sharing a story signals to your child that it's time to slow down and feel safe. Even just ten minutes of reading together can give children comfort, consistency, and connection. Over time, this daily story becomes more than just a routine. It becomes a treasured moment of bonding that your child will remember.

Tips for Bedtime Routines

- Pick a consistent time each evening so your child knows when storytime happens.
- Create a calm, cosy space with pillows, blankets, or a special reading nook.
- Let your child choose the book sometimes to give them ownership and excitement.
- Keep the routine simple: wash, brush teeth, pyjamas, then story.
- Limit distractions like screens or loud noises to help your child focus.
- Keep it short and enjoyable. Even 5–10 minutes every night builds a lifelong habit.

Tips for Busy Parents

I know how difficult it can feel to read with your child when you're juggling work, household tasks, and everything else life throws at you.

As a working parent myself, I've been there. Finding time feels impossible some days, and it can be frustrating when the hours in the day aren't enough.

But even a short story, just ten minutes before bed, can make such a difference. It's not about long sessions or perfect reading.

- **Same time every night**
- **Cozy reading spot**
- **Let your child pick**
- **Simple routine: wash, teeth, pyjamas**
- **Turn off screens**
- **5–10 minutes is enough**

Top Tip



Bedtime stories are all about those small, consistent moments of connection that support your child's language, imagination, and love of reading.

Even when life is busy, carving out this little time is an investment that pays off in confidence, learning, and precious shared memories.

Anytime is valuable reading time.



Let Your Child Choose

Giving your child the choice of what to read at bedtime is a small but powerful way to give them ownership of their reading. It makes them feel more grown up and involved, even if the options are limited or it's the same book for the hundredth time.



When children can choose, they become more invested in the story, more excited to read, and more confident in their preferences.

This simple act also encourages independence and decision-making while reinforcing that their opinions matter.

Over time, these little choices help them develop a lifelong love of reading and learning.

It's completely okay if your child chooses the same book over and over again.

Repetition is a key part of learning. Hearing the same story multiple times helps children understand the language, predict what happens

next, and notice details they might have missed before. It also builds confidence, because they feel familiar with the words and the story, and they can join in with reading or retelling it.

Choosing the same book again and again shows that they are enjoying it and engaging deeply, which is exactly what you want to encourage a love of reading.

Repetition also strengthens memory and comprehension, helping your child internalise new vocabulary and sentence structures.

Over time, this repeated reading builds a strong foundation for independent reading and a lifelong love of books.

Making it Fun and Engaging



It really doesn't matter if it feels a little silly or over the top. Children love energy and enthusiasm, and your excitement makes the story come alive. Using silly voices, noises, props, or gestures not only makes reading fun, it helps your child understand the story, remember new words, and feel connected to you.

Using silly voices and gestures when reading bedtime stories is more than just fun. They help bring the story to life, making it easier for your child to understand and follow the plot.

Gestures and actions give context to the words, helping children connect language with meaning. Voices and movements also hold attention, making reading a more engaging experience, and encourage children to join in, repeat words, or act out parts themselves.

This interactive approach strengthens comprehension, vocabulary, and listening skills while making the story a memorable and enjoyable part of their day.

Tips for Being Engaging

- Use silly voices for different characters to bring the story to life
- Add sound effects or noises for actions in the story
- Include gestures or movements to act out parts of the story
- Use props like toys, puppets, or household items to represent story elements
- Pause and ask questions to make your child think and predict what happens next
- Encourage your child to join in with repeated phrases or rhymes
- Let your child choose the book or page to give them a sense of ownership
- Re-read favourite books to build familiarity and confidence

Books for All Ages



All children develop at their own pace, so the books they enjoy and benefit from will vary. For babies, very short books are ideal. High-contrast images and simple text, often just one word per page, help babies focus and pay attention. These books are less about the story and more about introducing your little one to the act of reading. Babies start to notice patterns, colours, and shapes, and they learn that reading is a fun, engaging experience.

As children grow into toddlers and preschoolers, they often enjoy picture books that are bright, colourful, and full of rhythm or rhyme. The repetition and musicality of these books help children

anticipate words and sounds, building early language skills. The illustrations give visual clues about the story, making it easier for children to follow along and develop comprehension. These books encourage interaction, with children pointing to pictures, repeating phrases, and joining in with the story.

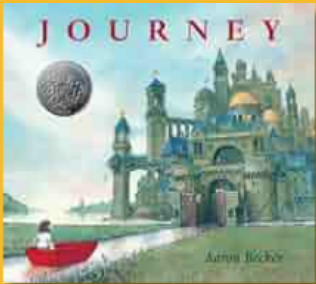
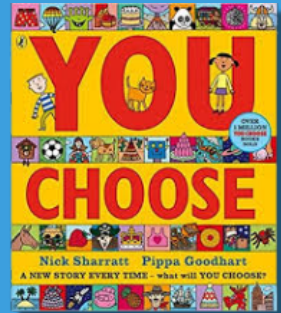
No matter the age, the right book at the right time helps children develop confidence, a love of reading, and an understanding that books can be entertaining, comforting, and inspiring. By offering books that match a child's developmental stage, parents can support their child's growth while creating joyful reading experiences.

My Favourite Wordless Books

You Choose by Nick Sharratt

Technically not a wordless book, but this book is full of conversation starters and suggestions for ideas.

Its playful illustrations and open-ended prompts make it perfect for encouraging children to talk about choices, describe what they see, and create their own stories.

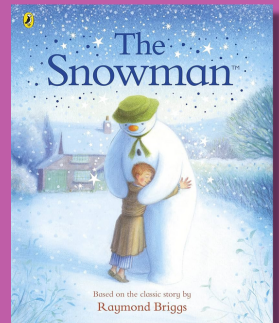


Journey by Aaron Becker

Journey is a gorgeous wordless book that takes children on a magical adventure. As they follow the girl through colourful, detailed scenes, you can encourage them to talk about what's happening, guess what might happen next, and make up their own story.

The Snowman by Raymond Briggs

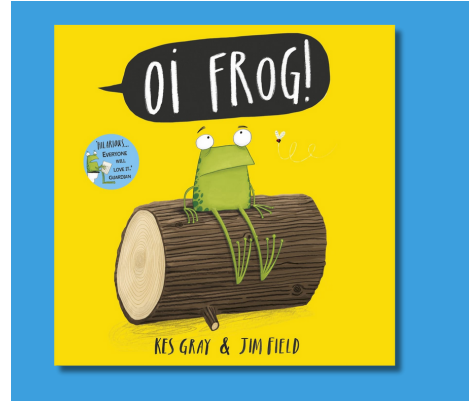
We have all grown up watching The Snowman at Christmas with the iconic song, and the book is just as magical. Its gentle, wordless story encourages children to explore the illustrations, talk about the characters' adventures, and use their imagination to create their own version of the story.



My Favourite Picture Books

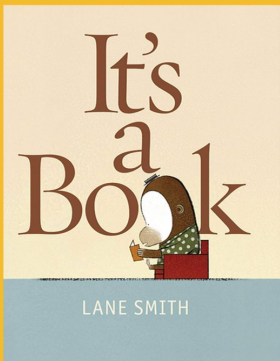
The Oi Frog Series by Kes Gray and Jim Field

I'm not sure who loved these books more, me or my children, but we ended up collecting all the Oi Frog books and reading them together. The rhymes are so much fun, the story is absolutely hilarious, and the illustrations are bright and full of energy. A truly wonderful addition to any home library.



It's a Book by Lane Smith

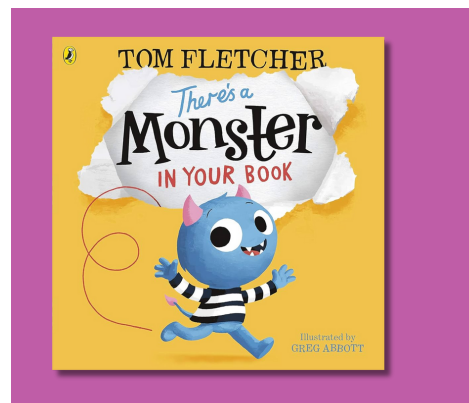
I love this book. It's so funny and the illustrations are incredibly cute and clear. The story not only entertains but makes the reader think, especially about how they consume screen media. This is such a fun book and it's on my shelf.



There's a in My Book by Tom Fletcher

This is a fantastic series of books that are so much fun. It's very interactive, with the child completing the story as you read together.

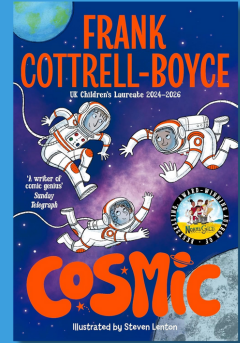
The illustrations are lively and playful, making every read an adventure and perfect for shared reading time.



My Favourite Chapter Books

Cosmic by Frank Cottrell-Boyce

I love this book. It's funny, thoughtful and full of adventure. The characters are memorable and the story captures both children's imaginations and parents' hearts. A brilliant choice for older readers ready to move into chapter books.



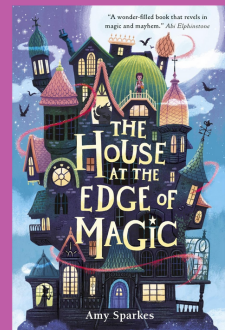
Tasha's Christmas Wish by Frances Wong

Tasha's story is the perfect read for Christmas. With 24 chapters, it's designed so you can enjoy one chapter each day of December, leading to the big, magical finale on Christmas Eve. Tasha is a young girl with a big heart who discovers that Christmas itself is breaking. It's up to her to step in and make sure everyone receives their gifts in time. A cosy, heartwarming story to share as part of your family's festive tradition.



The House on the Edge of Magic by Amy Sparkes

This book is pure magical adventure. It follows Nine, a scrappy pickpocket who stumbles across a tiny magical house hidden inside a music box. The story is fast-paced, funny, and full of heart, with a cast of quirky, memorable characters that children adore.



How to Read with Your Child



I Read, You Read Books

I talk a lot about I Read, You Read books, but what exactly does one look like? On this page, I've included an example. In these books, you read one part, and your child reads the next. I love them because they give children a sense of control while still being supported.

I Read, You Read books are designed to make reading interactive and fun. Typically, your child reads the larger, bolder words, while you, the adult, read the smaller or differently styled words. This split gives children a clear, manageable portion of the text to tackle themselves, building confidence and a sense of achievement.

Because they can read part of the story independently, children feel empowered and proud, which naturally encourages them to want to read more. They start to associate reading with success and enjoyment, rather than pressure or struggle.

These books also foster turn-taking, listening, and comprehension skills, since



children must pay attention to the story while waiting for their part.

Sharing a story this way makes reading a team effort, it's playful, engaging, and full of opportunities for conversation, laughter, and learning.

Most importantly, these books show children that reading can be fun and rewarding.

How to Read with Your Child



Step 2 - Choosing the Book

If your child brings home a school book, start with that — it supports what they're learning in class. But don't stop there. Give them the chance to choose other books too, whether it's a favourite story, an "I read, you read" book, or even a wordless book to explore together.

Having a say in what to read makes children feel empowered and more motivated. Mixing school books with fun choices keeps reading fresh, enjoyable, and never a chore.

When it comes to choosing a book, variety is key. **Your local library** is a treasure trove. It's free, full of choice, and constantly refreshed with new titles.

Bookshops can be magical too; even a quick browse lets your child feel the excitement of discovering stories.

While it's important to explore fun books at home, don't forget the school book. I know from 20 years of teaching that these books can sometimes feel repetitive and uninspiring, but they serve a purpose. They're carefully matched to your

child's phonics level, helping them practise exactly what they're learning in class. Even if your child finds the school book dull, read it once or twice.

Then, balance it with something they choose and love. That mix, a little bit of practice, a lot of enjoyment, keeps children progressing while still seeing reading as joyful.

Don't forget the joy of shared reading. Wordless books, "I read, you read" books, or picture books spark conversation, imagination, and confidence, giving children a sense of control and fun.

It's important to remember, not all books you read with your child need words.

How to Read with Your Child



Step 3 - Read Together

Now it's time to read! Let your child attempt words themselves. Don't jump in too quickly. Encourage them to use strategies like looking at the word in context, checking the pictures, or sounding it out. Give them time to self-correct; if they mispronounce a word, allow them to try again before offering guidance.

The goal is to build independence and confidence. Praise their efforts, celebrate successes, and remember that making mistakes is part of learning. Step back when possible, and let your child take the lead, while you support quietly. Reading together should be enjoyable, not stressful, so keep it playful, relaxed, and full of encouragement.

Over time, these small moments help children become capable, confident readers who feel proud of their achievements.

- Do: Praise effort, encourage independence, let them sound out words, and make reading fun.
- Do: Use pictures and context for clues.
- Don't: Rush, correct immediately, or make reading feel like a test.
- Don't: Read only aloud to them. Involve your child actively. Keep it playful, patient, and positive.

How to Read with Your Child

Step 4 - Talking About the Book

Once you've finished reading, take time to talk about the story together. This helps your child understand that reading isn't just about saying the words. It's about meaning, ideas, and imagination. Ask open-ended questions like, "What do you think



For younger children or those reading wordless books, simply narrating the story together can be very effective.

Let your child lead the narrative, using their imagination and language skills. You might also ask your child to act out a scene, draw a favourite character, or

create an alternative ending. Talking about books develops comprehension, vocabulary, and critical thinking, while keeping reading fun and interactive. Most importantly, it shows your child that their ideas and opinions matter.



will happen next?" or "Why do you think the character did that?" Encourage your child to describe the pictures, retell parts of the story, or guess what might happen.

You can also link the story to real life: "Have you ever felt like that character?" or "Does this remind you of something we saw today?" This makes the story more relatable and helps children build connections between text and the world around them.

Top Comprehension Questions

- What do you think will happen next?
- How is the character feeling? Why?
- What was your favourite part?
- Can you retell the story in your own words?
- Did the story remind you of anything in your life?

Reluctant Readers

If your child isn't used to a bedtime story, you might find they initially resist this new routine. Perhaps, your child finds bedtimes very challenging or they have an irregular bedtime, it can be challenging to start this routine.

Don't give up.

If you remain calm, consistent and positive, set up a warm and loving reading environment, you will soon see a big change. It's all about sharing that quality one on one time with your child.

Step 1: Start Small

Choose a very short, fun book or even just a few pages. Keep it light and positive, ending before your child loses interest. The aim is to make bedtime stories feel enjoyable, not like a chore.

Step 2: Share the Experience

Make it cosy. Snuggle up, dim the lights, and read together. You can read most of the words while encouraging your child to join in with repeated phrases, rhymes, or even sound effects.

Step 3: Build Consistency

Read every night, even if it's just five minutes. Consistency turns it into a routine, and over time your child will begin to look forward to that special moment with you.

Consistency is key, even if it's just a few minutes each evening. A calm approach shows your child that reading isn't a battle to be won, but a shared experience to be enjoyed. Over time, those small, regular moments add up and can transform reluctance into confidence.

Reluctant readers often need a little more encouragement to find the right story, the right format, or even the right way of sharing a book. Sometimes this means experimenting with comics, audiobooks, or even taking turns reading pages together. By showing your child that reading can take many different forms, you take away the pressure and invite them to explore at their own pace.

Above all, celebrate every effort. Even a single page, a new word, or a spark of interest in a character is a step forward. When children see their progress acknowledged, no matter how small, it builds self-belief and shows them that their efforts are worthwhile.

With time, patience, and plenty of encouragement, even the most hesitant reader can grow into a confident one.

You've Got This!



Committing to a bedtime story every night seems like a huge undertaking but don't fret!

Even though it feels like something huge, once bedtime stories are part of your routine, it will soon feel like second nature.

Introducing a New Routine

It can be easy to feel pressured when it comes to reading with your child, especially if you imagine it needs to be a long session every single evening. The truth is, bedtime stories don't have to take more than five or ten minutes, and even that small amount of time has an incredible impact on your child's development.

A short story, a few pages from a chapter book, or even a rhyme or poem is enough to build routine, expand vocabulary, and create a calm moment of connection at the end of the day.

Children thrive on consistency, not length. Five minutes of focused,

enjoyable reading will always be more valuable than trying to push through a long book when everyone is too tired. Over time, these little moments add up, and your child will begin to associate reading with warmth, fun, and comfort.

Celebrate the small victories along the way. If your child listens to one page, joins in with a rhyme, or chooses the story, those are all wonderful steps forward.

And remember, if you are making the effort to introduce bedtime stories into your routine, you are already doing a fantastic job.

Start Tonight!

If there is one message I hope you take away from this booklet, it's that bedtime stories really do matter. They don't have to be long or complicated. Even a short picture book, a nursery rhyme, or just a few pages from a chapter book can make all the difference. Bedtime stories give your child the gift of language, imagination, and connection.



So my invitation to you is simple: start tonight. Snuggle up together, choose a story – even if it's a familiar favourite, and enjoy those minutes of calm before sleep. It might be five minutes, it might be fifteen, but the important thing is to make it part of your routine. Over time, those little moments will grow into something magical.

If you would like to explore further, I've included links to resources, recommended books, and more ideas for weaving reading

into daily life. These will give you practical tips and inspiration, but remember that the most important ingredient is your presence and willingness to share a story.

I'd like to leave you with a quote that always inspires me:

"Children are made readers on the laps of their parents."

— Emilie Buchwald



Thank you for joining me on this journey. I wish you and your family many happy nights of reading together.

Useful Links



[BBC Nursery Rhymes](#)

[The Book Trust](#)

[The National Literacy Trust](#)

[Reading Fairy](#)

[My Website](#)

[The Alphablocks](#)

Don't forget to check back to my website for more resources, tips, and book recommendations to support your child's reading journey.

If you have any questions, want to share your experiences, or need a little extra guidance, feel free to reach out on Threads, Instagram, or through the contact form on the site. I love hearing from parents and carers, and I'm here to help make reading a fun, joyful part of everyday life for you and your child.