

Children's Books with Humane Themes

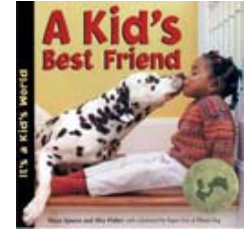
The books listed below were selected based on their literary merit, their depiction of the human-animal bond and kindness toward animals, and their ability to promote empathy and compassion toward animals. Many of these books invite perspective taking and depict responsible pet ownership. (Taken from uan.org)

Domestic Animals

A Kid's Best Friend

Written by Maya Ajmera and Alex Fisher
Recommended for ages 2 and up

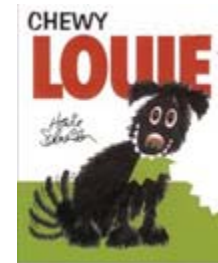
Dogs, just like children, come in all different shapes, sizes and colors. Beautiful photographs of children and dogs from all over the world fill this book. Pictures of children caring for and interacting with dogs abound. Conversations about diversity of humans and different breeds of dogs are sure to arise while reading this book.



Chewy Louie

Written by Howie Schneider
Recommended for ages 2 and up

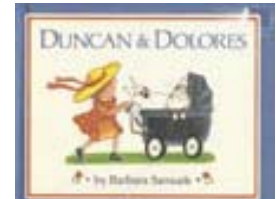
Almost immediately upon being brought home, puppy Louie sinks his teeth into everything from toy trains to the dining-room table. Louie's energy and escapades make for a fun and funny tale.



Duncan and Dolores

Written and illustrated by Barbara Samuels
Recommended for ages 2 and up

Even though Dolores is only four years old and quite a handful herself, she really wants a cat. When she and her sister adopt Duncan, who is also four years old, Dolores learns that making friends with a cat requires patience and that the rewards of a cat's company are worth the wait.



Nico & Lola

Written by Meggan Hill, photography by Susan M. Graunke
Recommended for ages 2 and up

This is the story of a little boy who takes on the great responsibility of caring for his aunt's Pug named Lola. Beautiful and touching photographs fill each page and tell a tale of how the boy learns to be "so kind" to Lola and give her everything she needs to be healthy and happy. This book would be a great way to introduce young children to the responsibilities involved in caring for an animal.



A Home for Nathan

Written by Claudia Roll, illustrated by Finn Rizer
Recommended for ages 3 and up

Follows the story of a cross-eyed kitten who is adopted by a shelter volunteer and goes on to teach kids about responsible pet ownership and the value of caring.



Before You Were Mine

Written by Maribeth Boelts, illustrated by David Walker
Recommended for ages 3 and up

This is a gentle story of a young boy who wonders what his loving dog's life was like before he was adopted from a shelter. Colorful illustrations bring this book to life.



Ginger

Written and illustrated by Charlotte Voake
Recommended for ages 3 and up

Ginger is a lucky cat who loves his basket, his little girl and his delicious meals. When the little girl brings a kitten home as a friend for Ginger, the older cat is not happy about sharing his bowl and basket. Ginger hides in protest, letting the girl know that certain steps must be followed for a settled cat to adjust to life with a frisky kitten.



Ginger Finds a Home

Written and illustrated by Charlotte Voake
Recommended for ages 3 and up

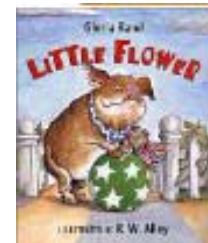
In this story, a heartwarming friendship grows between a little girl and a stray cat she later names Ginger. In his previous life, Ginger foraged for food wherever and whenever he could, and slept in a patch of weeds. As Ginger learns to trust the little girl, he quickly adjusts to his new life as her companion.



Little Flower

Written by Gloria Rand, illustrated by R.W. Alley
Recommended for ages 3 and up

Little Flower is a potbellied pig who lives with an older woman named Miss Pearl. One day Miss Pearl falls and only Little Flower is around to help. Find out how Little Flower comes to Miss Pearl's rescue in this delightful story, and watch how Miss Pearl's neighbors change their perception of the little pig after she helps Miss Pearl.



Freckles and Willie

Written by Margery Cuyler, illustrated by Marsha Winborn
Recommended for ages 4 and up

Freckles and Willie are best buddies until a new neighbor moves in and Willie neglects his four-legged friend. How will Willie show Freckles that he still cares? The story shows the enduring nature of the bond between a person and a dog.



Fred Stays With Me!

Written by Nancy Coffelt, illustrated by Tricia Tusa
Recommended for ages 4 and up

With divorced parents and two separate homes, a young girl's dog named Fred is her constant companion. Fred stays with the girl and the reader sees the friendship they share. The girl sticks up for Fred and finds creative ways to help Fred and her parents feel more comfortable with their living arrangements.

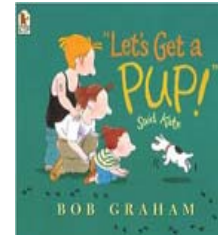


"Let's get a Pup!" Said Kate

Written by Bob Graham

Recommended for ages 4 and up

Following the death of her cat, Kate is lonesome for a new pet. The family goes to the local animal rescue center for a puppy, and falls for a large, older dog in the process. The book extols both the reasons to adopt from a shelter and the rewards of giving an adult dog a second chance.



Max Talks to Me

Written by Claire Buchwald, illustrated by Karen Ritz

Recommended for ages 4 and up

Alex and his dog Max are true friends-the kind that share each other's excitement, comfort each other when they are sad, wait together when parents are away, and have fun wherever they are. By observing and listening to his dog, by sharing good times and bad, Alex and Max are earning each other's love and devotion. Parents will appreciate the information about the dog-child bond that they will find at the end of *Max Talks to Me*. Children will want to share Max and Alex's adventures and friendship over and over as they read the gentle, engaging story and look at the beautiful illustrations.

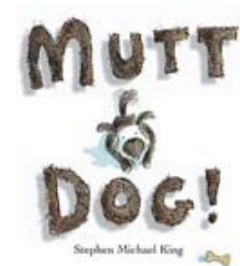


Mutt Dog

Written by Stephne Micheal King

Recommended for ages 4 and up

A stray dog wandered the streets of a busy city cold and lonely until he finds a homeless shelter for people. A kind woman cares for him for one night and then sends him on his way. The kind woman later runs into the dog and asks him if he would like to come home with her to live.

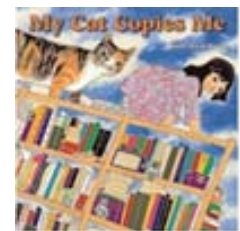


My Cat Copies Me

Written and illustrated by Yoon-duck Kwon

Recommended for ages 4 and up

My Cat Copies Me is an entertaining story illustrating the bond between a young girl and her cat. The cat becomes a source of inspiration and adventure for the girl, while they both provide companionship for and listen to each other. The book features simple storytelling with colorful illustrations.

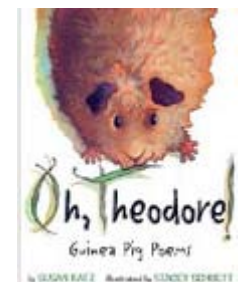


Oh, Theodore!

Written by Susan Katz, illustrated by Stacey Schuett

Recommended for ages 4 and up

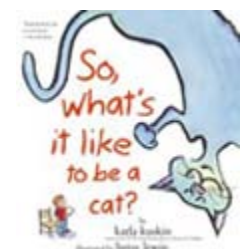
Told with an engaging series of poems that tie together to form a plot, *Oh, Theodore!* is the touching story of the relationship between a boy and his guinea pig. As the boy patiently learns about Theodore's needs through trial and error, a definite bond forms between the two. Fun, colorful and realistic illustrations are abundant throughout.



So, What's it Like to be a Cat?

Written by Karla Kuskin, illustrated by Betsy Lewin

Recommended for ages 4 and up



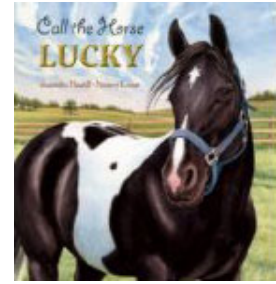
What is it like to be a cat? A curious boy interviews his gray cat in a playful rhyming story of the similarities and differences between cats and people. The story shows that the first step in taking care of a cat is taking the time to observe and listen to learn the cat's likes and dislikes.



Call the Horse Lucky

Written by Juanita Havill, illustrated by Nancy Lane
Recommended for ages 5 and up

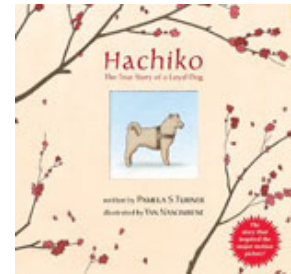
This is a story of a horse who is rescued because of a young girl's kindness. When a young girl named Mel finds a neglected horse alone in a field she tells her grandmother, "We have to help him." Follow this horse, whom Mel named Lucky, as he is rescued, nursed back to health and finds friends along the way.



Hachiko: The True Story of a Loyal Dog

Written by Pamela S. Turner, illustrated by Yan Nascimbene
Recommended for ages 5 and up

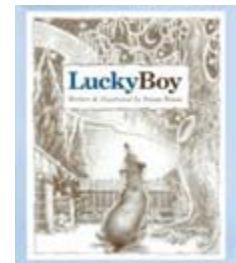
This is a true tale of a loyal dog named Hachiko who walks to the train station with his human companion, Dr. Ueno, every day and then waits patiently for Dr. Ueno to return. A young child takes an interest in Hachiko and brings yummy snacks while he waits, forging a friendship with Hachiko. When Dr. Ueno dies, Hachiko continues to wait diligently for his return, leaving his post only to sleep at Dr. Ueno's home. You may need a box of tissues nearby when you read this heart-warming story to find out what else happens to Hachiko.



Lucky Boy

Written by Susan Boase
Recommended for ages 5 and up

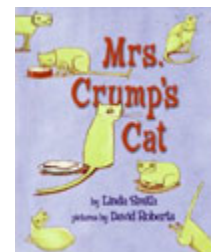
Boy, a small, brown and "kind of stinky" dog, is neglected and bored in his backyard. Mr. Miller is recently widowed and struggling with his loss. One night Boy digs his way under the fence, and when Mr. Miller discovers him in his yard the following morning, it's love at first sight.



Mrs. Crump's Cat

Written by Linda Smith, illustrated by David Roberts
Recommended for ages 5 and up

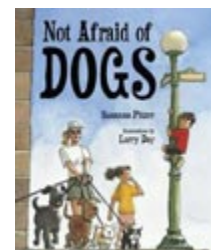
When Mrs. Crump finds a yellow cat on her porch step, she tells the cat to "shoo." She leaves the door ajar, however, and the cat slips into her home and into her life. As Mrs. Crump learns to care for the cat's needs, she comes to appreciate the cat's companionship as well. "Before you know it, you'll be...wondering how you ever got along without [the cat]," Mrs. Crump's new friend Mr. Henry says. Through colorful, playful illustrations, the story shows how cats make good company.



Not Afraid of Dogs

Written by Susanna Pitzer, illustrated by Larry Day
Recommended for ages 5 and up

Although he insists he is "not afraid of anything" Daniel avoids dogs. What happens when Daniel comes home to find his mom has agreed to pet sit for Bandit? After hiding from the small brown-and-white dog all day, he encounters her alone at night cowering from the noise of a thunderstorm. When Daniel sees the dog's fear his own dissolves; he provides her cuddles. In the course of the story Daniel moves from angry and fearful to kind and open-hearted.

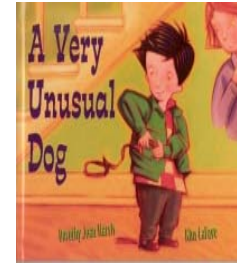


A Very Unusual Dog

Written by Dorothy Joan Harris, illustrated by Kim LaFave

Recommended for ages 6 and up

Jonathan's dog is imaginary, but he still takes good care of him, providing food, walks, affection and a comfortable place to sleep. Jonathan's grandmother shows him a photo of a cat she once loved and tells him her current apartment does not allow pets. To ease her loneliness, Jonathan gives "Dog" to her and tells her how to care for him. The story shows the power of love and memory, and how animals – even imaginary ones – can provide companionship.



Buddy Unchained

Written by Daisy Bix, Illustrated by Joe Hyatt

Recommended for ages 6 and up

Happy in a new home, Buddy tells the story of his former life of neglect, abuse, and finally, rescue, to live a good life with a family that cares about him. Information is included for parents and other adults about resources they can readily contact when they encounter a dog being abused.



Orville: A Dog Story

Written by Haven Kimmel, illustrated by Robert Andrew Parker

Recommended for ages 6 and up

Orville spends all of his days chained in the yard and barking to tell the world how unhappy he is. But when Sally moves in across the street, Orville finds himself getting a second chance at life.

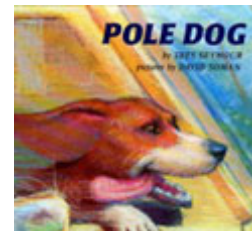


Pole Dog

Written by Tres Seymour, illustrated by David Soman

Recommended for ages 6 and up

How does a dog become a "Pole Dog?" This story follows the life of an older dog in the days after he is left by a pole along the highway until he is spotted by a family driving by. How the dog survives alone and how he feels are poignant themes in this realistic portrayal of the life of an abandoned dog. This book is a reminder of a dog's unwavering desire for security.



Belle's Star

Written by Connie Gotsch, illustrated by John Cogan

Recommended for ages 7 and up

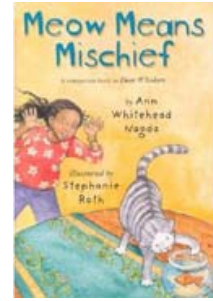
Told from a dog named Belle's perspective, this chapter book is about a young dog who is mistreated by her first owners and finds herself in a loving home with people who understand and care for animals. Find out how Belle learns to trust new people and even saves a little girl because of the bond between them. This book offers young readers a glimpse of what dogs might be feeling and thinking in various situations. Themes of animal cruelty, abuse, trust and friendship are discussed. Belle's Star has been nominated for a New Mexico Book Award.



Meow Means Mischief

Written by Ann Whitehead Nagda, illustrated by Stephanie Roth
Recommended for ages 7 and up

In this chapter book, Rana is adjusting to a new town and new school. When her grandparents come to visit from India, Rana is afraid of being different from everyone. A kitten whom Rana names Tiger helps Rana make friends and grow closer to her grandparents. Rana learns how to take care of Tiger and learns more about her Indian culture too.



Second Chance: How Adoption Saved a Boy with Autism & His Shelter Dog

Written by Sandra J. Gerencer, illustrated by Virginia Cody
Recommended for ages 7 and up

Find out how this shelter dog adjusts to his new home and what happens when he befriends a young boy with autism. This book invites the reader to explore the transition into a new environment from the dog's perspective. The book is filled with softly blended watercolor photos.



The Very Best of Friends

Written by Margaret Wild
Recommended for ages 7 and up

When James died suddenly, his wife Jessie, in her grief, shuts her husband's cat, William, out of her life. But eventually Jessie opens herself up to William and tries to win his trust and affection.



A Day, a Dog

Written by Gabrielle Vincent
Recommended for ages 7 and up

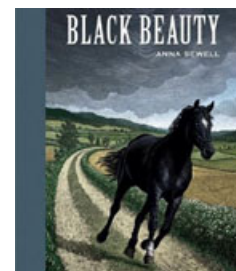
This is the story of an abandoned dog. In remarkable black-and-white pencil drawings, the artist shows us the dog being heedlessly thrown out of a car, chasing after it fruitlessly and giving up, at last, unwittingly causing a major highway accident. Reviewers have described it as "a powerful documentary in picture-book form" and "a passionate condemnation of cruelty to animals and a work of art that shouldn't be missed."



Black Beauty

Written by Anna Sewell
Recommended for ages 8 and up

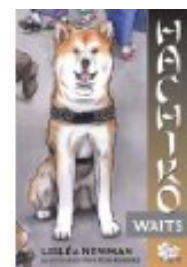
Young readers will follow Black Beauty's fortunes, good and bad, with gentle masters as well as cruel. Children can easily make the leap from horse-human relationships to human-human relationships and begin to understand how their own consideration of others may be a benefit to all.



Hachiko Waits

Written by Leslea Newman, illustrated by Machiyo Kodaira
Recommended for ages 8 and up

This short chapter book supplemented by black-and-white illustrations tells the story of Hachiko, a dog who waits faithfully at the train station for his person to return, not knowing he has died. The station master and commuters step in to help care for Hachiko as he prefers the station to another home. Strangers donate funds to create a statue in his honor after the dog's own death. The story shows how a bond develops when a person respects and understands a dog, and how much a dog in the community affects everyone who comes in contact with him. The book is based on a true story and includes an author's note and a glossary of Japanese words.



The MAGIC SQUAD and the Dog of Great Potential

Written by Mary Quattlebaum

Recommended for ages 8 and up

Calvin is a underachiever who is content to be average ... until the day he visits the local shelter and falls in love with a huge, friendly mutt with "great potential" named Train. Calvin's quest to train Train and find him a good home mirrors his own personal struggle to realize his own potential.



Phantom Stallion: The Wild One

Written by Terri Farley

Recommended for ages 8 and up

Sam moves from the city to live on her Dad's ranch in Nevada where she encounters a mysterious mustang. Through Sam, readers learn about domesticated and wild horses and the difficult choices to be made for their care. They experience the strength of friendships among horses and people and the respect these friendships call for. This book is the first of a series.



Stealing Thunder

Written by Mary Casanova

Recommended for ages 8 and up

Libby has always wanted a horse of her own, and caring for her neighbor's horse is the next best thing. When she discovers Thunder is being abused, Libby knows she has to rescue him, no matter what the risk! In this exciting adventure, Libby finds her own voice as she stands up for what she believes in a world of adults who think they know best.



Straydog

Written by Kathe Koja

Recommended for ages 8 and up

High school misfit Rachel is content just volunteering at the local animal shelter and writing stories, until she meets a feral collie who inspires her to build relationships and confront her own emotions.



Beautiful Joe a Dog's Own Story

Written by Marshall Saunders

Recommended for ages 9 and up

This is a sweet story of a dog who has his tail and ears cut off by a dog abuser but ends up in a wonderful and loving home with a family who takes great care of him. The beginning of this book is quite violent and could frighten young readers, but the story does have a happy ending.



One Unhappy Horse

Written by C.S. Adler

Recommended for ages 9 and up

Jan is dealing with the death of her father and then learns her horse needs an operation. Since her mother does not have enough money to pay for the operation, Jan must find other ways to help her friend get the care he needs. This is a heartwarming story of friendship between a girl and a horse.



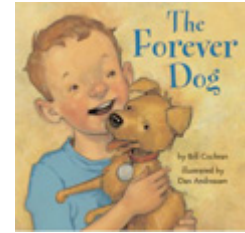
Pet Loss

Forever Dog

Written by Bill Cochran, illustrated by Dan Andreasen

Recommended for ages 3 and up

A young boy named Mike works his way through the grieving process after his beloved dog Cory passes away. This book can help children understand the death of a pet and the feelings that often surround this experience. Soft illustrations bring the character's emotions to life. It is probably a good idea to have a box of tissue handy when you read this book.

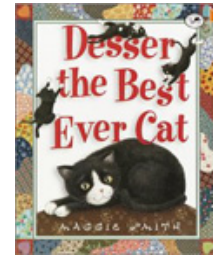


Desser the Best Ever Cat

Written by Maggie Smith

Recommended for ages 3 and up

A touching story of Desser the cat, who comes to live with a man as a kitten, grows up as the man matures. Desser bonds with the man's daughter, watching over her as a baby, playing with her as a young child, then one day Desser gets sick and dies.

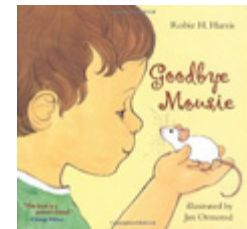


Goodbye Mousie

Written by Robie H. Harris, illustrated by Jan Ormerod

Recommended for ages 3 and up

When a young boy's pet mouse dies, he is in disbelief, then angry and sad. The boy's family helps the young boy understand that Mousie is not alive anymore and together the boy and his family bury Mousie in the back yard. The young boy begins to accept Mousie's death and expresses his emotions surrounding the death of his pet.



Forever Buster: What a Name! What a Dog, We Exclaim!

Written by Martin Babbett, illustrated by Donna Burns

Recommended for ages 4 and up

When his beloved dog Buster passes away, Mr. Rabbett remembers him and shows the reader the beautiful relationship the two shared. Beautiful illustrations fill the pages. Adults and children are sure to enjoy this heartwarming children's book.



Saying Goodbye to Lulu

Written by Corinne Demas, illustrated by Ard Hoyt

Recommended for ages 4 and up

This is a very moving story of a young girl and her aging dog named Lulu. The girl recounts how Lulu and she used to play together when Lulu was younger. The bond between Lulu and the girl is very strong and depicted in several images throughout this book. When Lulu dies the girl is too sad to say goodbye. Time passes and she is able to say "Goodbye to Lulu." Months later the girl and her family plan to get a new puppy. Grab a box of tissues before reading this one.

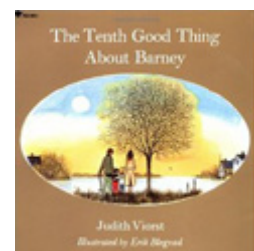


The Tenth Good Thing About Barney

Written by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Erik Blegvad

Recommended for ages 4 and up

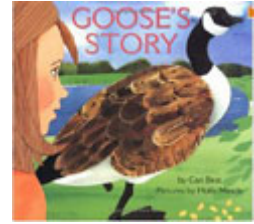
A young boy deals with his beloved cat Barney's death. His family has a funeral and buries Barney in the garden. The boy thinks of nine good things he remembers about Barney. Where is Barney now, cat heaven or the ground? The boy asks his father. The boy's father takes him out to garden and plant flowers and explains that Barney is now helping the flowers grow. Find out what the boy thinks the tenth good thing about Barney is in this touching story.



Goose's Story

Written by Cari Best and illustrated by Holly Meade
Recommended for ages 3 and up

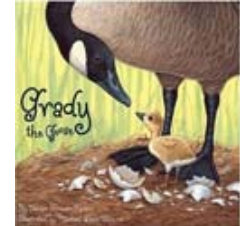
This colorful true tale is about a goose who has lost a foot and has to learn to balance, eat, swim and fly with only one foot. The goose learns to adapt to this challenge with the help of some supportive and compassionate humans and one understanding dog named Henry. Find out what else this goose can do by reading this remarkable story.



Grady the Goose

Written by Denise Brennan-Nelson, illustrated by Michael Glenn Monroe
Recommended for ages 3 and up

When a young goose named Grady gets separated from his family and finds himself tangled in barbed wire and exhausted, a kind farmer helps him and releases him into a field where his family finds him.



Owl Moon

Written by Jane Yolen, illustrated by John Schoenherr
Recommended for ages 3 and up

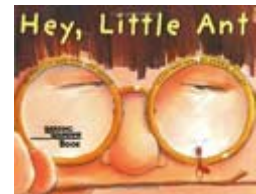
Owl Moon is a charming story about owling -- or owl watching. One cold winter night, a father takes his daughter to search for the great horned owl. Follow the young girl as she learns owl behaviors and the respect for this majestic creature, as well as the importance of not disturbing nature.



Hey Little Ant

Written by Phillip and Hannah Hoose, illustrated by Debbie Tilley
Recommended for ages 4 and up

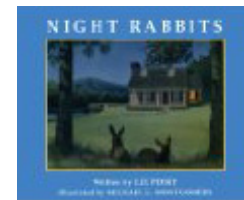
When a boy is about to squish an ant he stops and asks the ant if he can hear him, and the ant begs him not to squish him because he has nest mates and is needed. The ant asks the boy to take his perspective: "If you were me and I were you, what would you want me to do?" The story ends with the boy's foot still up and the question is posed to the reader: "What do you think the kid should do?" This book can be a good conversation starter for parents and teachers to start children thinking about other's perspectives. *Hey, Little Ant* has been added to this list, despite the anthropomorphic ways the ant is depicted, because of its capacity to promote perspective taking and critical thinking.



Night Rabbits

Written by Lee Posey, illustrated by Michael G. Montgomery
Recommended for ages 4 and up

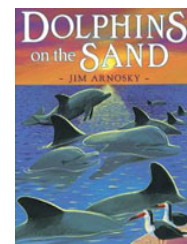
When a young girl and her father visit their cabin and discover that rabbits are eating the lawn that the father had tended to all year long, the young girl creatively decides to put lettuce out for the rabbits so they will not eat the grass and so that the "rabbits can dance on the lawn that belongs to them, to my father and me." Visual imagery helps the reader see this story and appreciate the rabbits.



Dolphins in the Sand

Written by Jim Arnosky
Recommended for ages 5 and up

This story follows a pod of dolphins as they follow fish to a sand bar and become beached helplessly on the shore. A group of rescuers come to the dolphins' aid and show each of them kindness as the dolphins regain their strength and return to the sea when the tide comes back in.



Sparrow Girl

Written by Sara Dennyacker, illustrated by Yoko Tanaka
Recommended for age 5 and up

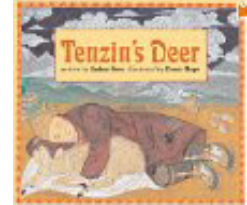
A plan is hatched to get rid of all of the sparrows in China because they are eating all of the grain. But what happens when all of the sparrows are gone? This is a heartbreaking story of a little girl who enlists the help of her older brother to save as many sparrows that they can. This book reminds us of the delicate balance between all living things.



Tenzin's Deer: A Tibetan Tale

Written by Barbara Soros, illustrated by Danuta Mayer
Recommended for ages 5 and up

"This is a story of the power of compassion..." A wise young Tibetan boy finds a young deer who has been struck by an arrow. The boy helps the deer and listens to his intuition and his dreams to help guide the deer's care and healing. A friendship between the boy and the deer develop and then the boy shows that he loves the deer enough to allow her to return to the wild.



The Deliverance of Dancing Bears

Written by Elizabeth Stanley
Recommended for ages 7 and up

Set in Turkey, this story is about a bear who longs to be in the wild but is instead made to dance in front of crowds in the market each day. When an older man sees the bear he pays for him and brings him home with him, takes off the metal rings that have enslaved the bear and shows the bear kindness, allowing the bear to fish in his stream and lounge in the shade. Then one day the old man returns to the market to find a young bear cub being made to dance in front of crowds at the market. Again the old man pays for the bear cub and brings the cub to live on his property.

