

What do children under the age of 7 look for in a book?

As adults, we all look for books to motivate and inspire young children, perhaps with a strong moral message or an inspirational character. But what are the young children themselves looking for?

In my experience, having taught children within this age range, the first and foremost thing to inspire a child to have an interest in a book is most definitely the cover. The saying 'don't judge a book by its cover' is redundant when talking about children's choices. Their first impression of a book will generally be based on its cover. If the pictures on the front of the book are recognisable, bright and interesting then that will encourage a child to pick it up. If not, then the book is almost directly rejected!

Once the cover has been explored, immediately the child opens the book, focussing on the pictures, almost ignoring the text entirely. For the children that I have taught, the text is secondary to the pictures in telling the story. For a real treat children love the interactive books. Flaps, slides, moving parts and accompanying soft toy characters are always engaging and inspire the children to find out what the text is all about.

The books that children always seem to enjoy have real characters that they can identify with. Young children are always interested in other children, this always makes a text accessible for a child and books featuring a variety of races and cultures are always a hit!

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