

# *Raising Courageous Kids* Picture Books on Courage

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*A good children's book makes complex experience available to its readers; a good adult book draws attention to the inescapable complexity of an experience.*

Myles McDowell

## Introduction



Courage is essentially persevering despite adversity and fear. Each of these picture books focus on this important aspect of courage. This determination, spunk, and grit involve willpower, composure, and vigilance, three skills examined in separate chapters in *Raising Courageous Kids: Eight Steps to Practical Heroism*. Each of the books selected for this list are currently in-print. My hope is that **book store managers** and **librarians** will use this list to create in-store and library displays of picture books with the theme of courage and heroism.

**Parents** and **teachers** may find this list useful in selecting books to read to their children.

There are many wonderful books on courage that are out-of-print but available at your library. Check with your local librarian for his or her suggestions. If you have in-print books you would like to suggest for this list, please send your recommendations to me at [casmith@ksu.edu](mailto:casmith@ksu.edu). You can compare the version date at the bottom of this page with the version date for this document at the website (look under “Stories”) to see if a newer, updated list is available.

I may create additional picture book lists that focus on other skills that contribute to heroism—caring, compassion, integrity, honor, and valor. For these new lists and for many other PDF files you can download for leading discussion groups or conducting parent education programs on courage, visit the author’s website at <http://www.raisingcourageouskids.com>.

*Stories, whether read to a child at bedtime or told around a campfire, are powerful tools for promoting understanding of difficult issues. When hearing stories about facing fear courageously, children learn that we value this strength and may begin to think that they too can face fear with a stout heart during a difficult time.*

## Twenty Picture Books on Persevering Despite Adversity

***The Bravest of Us All*** by Marsha Diane Arnold; illustrated by Brad Sneed (Dial, 2000). Ruby Jane thinks that her sister Velma Jean is the bravest person in her family, but when a tornado arrives, Ruby Jane shows that she is very brave herself. (4+)

***The Daddy Mountain***, written and illustrated by Jules Feiffer (Hyperion Books, 2004). A little girl sets out to climb her loving father from the bottom of his leg to the top of his head. (3+)

***Hansel and Gretel***, retold by Rika Lesser and illustrated by Paul O. Zelinsky (Penguin, 1999). A retelling of the well-known tale in which two children are left in the woods but find their way home despite an encounter with a wicked witch. Paul O. Zelinsky's stunning Caldecott Honor Book allows readers to see the story of Hansel and Gretel anew. (5+)

***Little Engine That Could Storybook Treasury***, written and illustrated by Watty Piper (Penguin Group, April 2003). A collection of seven tales featuring the Little Blue Engine who pulls a load of stranded toys over the mountain despite her being so small. (3+)

***Lost! A Story in String*** by Paul Fleischman; illustrated by C.B. Mordan (Henry Holt, 2000). A satisfying tale and a string figure story about a young girl who uses her wits and what is available to help her survive when she gets lost in a blizzard. (4+)

***The Man Who Walked between the Towers*** written and illustrated by Mordicai Gerstein (Roaring Book Press, 2003). A true story of the young French aerialist, Philippe Petit who spent an hour walking, dancing, and performing tricks a quarter of a mile in the sky on a tightrope stretched between the twin towers of the World Trade Center. (4+)

***Pegasus*** by Marianna Mayer; illustrated by K.Y. Kraft (Morrow, 1998). Condemned by a jealous king, Bellerophon must win the trust of the legendary winged horse Pegasus or face certain death. From the poignant meeting and growing bond of friendship between horse and man to the dramatic slaying of the fearsome fire-breathing Chimera, this tale of adventure will stir the imagination of young and old alike. (6+)

***Potatoes, Potatoes***, written and illustrated by Anita Lobel (New York: Greenwillow Books, 2004). A wise mother brings the conflict between two sons engaged in war to a peaceful conclusion. (5+)

***The Princess Knight***, by Cornelia Funke; illustrated by Kerstin Manner (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2002). Violetta wants to be big and strong like her brothers. What she lacks in size and strength, she makes up for in determination to be the cleverest, bravest, most nimble knight in the land. (4+)

***The Red Wolf***, written and illustrated by Margaret Shannon (Houghton Mifflin, 2002). A young princess finds an amazing gift that enables her to escape her overprotective father. (4+)

***The Star-Spangled Banner*** by Amy Winstead; illustrated by Bob Dacey and Debra Bandelin (Nashville, TN: ideals children's books, 2003). A fictional retelling of the dramatic night and dawn when Francis Scott Key wrote the poem that will become our national anthem. (5+)

***Storm is coming!*** by Heather Tekavec; illustrated by Margaret Spengler (Puffin Books, 2002). The animals hear the farmer's warning that a storm is approaching and find protection the barn together. What they fear, however, is that someone scary and mean is marching toward them, not the rain, thunder, and lightning that appears. (3+)

***The Story of Little Black Sambo*** by Helen Bannerman; illustrated by Christopher Bing (Handprint Books, 2003). After 15 years of rediscovering the joy and energy of Bannerman's original story,

Caldecott Honor-winning artist Christopher Bing offers this new version that celebrates Sambo's proud African heritage. (4+)

***The Talking Eggs*** by Robert D. San Soucci; illustrated by Jerry Pinkney (Dial Books for Young Readers, 1989). In this adaptation of an old Creole folktale, a young girl's kindness to an elderly woman leads to a fantastic adventure that ultimately enables her to escape her cruel mother and selfish sister. (5+)

***Thank You, Mr. Falker***, written and illustrated by Patricia Polacco (Philomel Books, 1998). A young girl's frustration about reading and fear of cruelty by her classmates is resolved after meeting a kind and responsive teacher. (4+)

***There's Something in My Attic***, written and illustrated by Mercer Mayer (Puffin, 1992). Convinced there is something making noise in the attic at night, a brave little girl sneaks up the stairs, lasso in hand, to capture whatever it is. (4+)

***Thunder Rose*** by Jerdine Nolen; illustrated by Kadir Nelson (Harcourt, 2003). Unusual from the day she is born, Thunder Rose performs all sorts of amazing feats, including building metal structures, taming a stampeding herd of steers, capturing a gang of rustlers, and turning aside a tornado. (4+)

***The Village that Vanished*** by Ann Grifalconi; illustrated by Kadir Nelson (Dial Books for Young Readers, 2002). The villagers of Yao feel safe in the jungle. But word comes that now slavers are on the way! In this inspiring tale of freedom, young Abekenile finds a way to help save her family and all the people of Yao. (5+)

***When Jessie came Across the Sea*** by Amy Hest; illustrated by P.J. Lynch (Candlewick Press, 1997). A thirteen-year-old Jewish orphan reluctantly leaves her grandmother and immigrates to New York City, where she works for three years sewing lace and earning money to bring Grandmother to the United States, too. (5+)

***Where the Wild Things Are***, written and illustrated by Maurice Sendak (HarperCollins Children's Books, 1988). This special commemorative edition celebrates 40 years of the classic tale of the imaginative journey taken by a boy named Max to "where the wild things are." (4+)

## References for adults

Kathleen Brehony, *Ordinary Grace: An Examination of the Roots of Compassion, Altruism, and Empathy, and the Ordinary Individuals Who Help Others in Extraordinary Ways* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1999).

Eva Fogelman, *Conscience and Courage* (New York: Anchor Books, 1994).

John McCain, *Why Courage Matters: The Way to a Braver Life* (New York: Random House, 2004).

Samuel Oliner and Pearl Oliner, *The Altruistic Personality: Rescuers of Jews in Nazi Europe* (New York: Free Press, 1988).

Charles A. Smith, *Raising Courageous Kids: Eight Steps to Practical Heroism* (Sorin Books, 2004).

Charles A. Smith, *The Peaceful Classroom: 162 Easy Activities to Teach Preschoolers Compassion and Cooperation* (Mt. Rainier, MD: Gryphon House, 1993).

Charles A. Smith, *From Wonder to Wisdom: Using Stories to Help Children Grow* (New York: New American Library, 1989).