



# KEEP 'EM READING **DISCOVERING TREASURE IN THE LIBRARY**

GRADES  
K-5

Every book is a treasure waiting to be discovered. Tempt your students into new worlds where a wealth of words, ideas, and stories can provide riches that last a lifetime.

A book's hidden treasure is what brings a child back to the book again and again. Reasons for these personal connections vary, but when the story embeds a universal theme, it creates a powerful bond between the story and the child. It opens the door into unknown cultures and new experiences.

The hunt for library treasures evolves from finding books on the shelves to finding the themes within the books. Let the treasure hunt begin.

## **Book Pirates (Grades K-1)**

At the beginning of the year, primary students need to learn simple but important skills in navigating the library and choosing books. Turning these skills into a treasure hunt makes it fun and helps students remember procedures.

Choose an array of books to display for read aloud. Explain that you searched through many books to find these treasures. What makes them treasures? That depends on the reader. Model your personal considerations when choosing books. Explain how the cover and pictures give hints to a book's hidden treasure, but that to find the pearls of wisdom, the book must be read. Ask questions about the pictures, and talk about the emotions the pictures evoke. Engage the class in choosing one of the books to read aloud and, when finished, discuss what individuals treasure about the story.

Choosing a book also requires special treasure-hunting techniques. Demonstrate any practices you want students to follow, such as how to use a shelf marker to identify where the treasured book belongs on the shelf. Let students practice in pairs finding their own treasures and checking them out. As students leave the library, demonstrate how to hug their treasures as they carry the books to the classroom.

## **Tried and True Treasures (Grades 1-3)**

Treasured books are read over and over until they are memorized or fall apart. Show an example of a well-loved book. Ask each student to introduce a favorite book as if it were an old friend. For a visual, students can bring their favorite books from home, find them in the library, or create their own book jackets.

## **Wordless Treasures (Grade 3)**

Distribute two wordless picture books to groups of three students. (See suggestions in the bibliography, available online at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com).) Ask groups to read both books and choose the most treasured of the two. Dig a little deeper to identify the "golden message" the author/illustrator wants the reader to understand at the end.

Copy the doubloons handout (at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)) on yellow

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paper, and give each group one of the gold doubloons. Each group writes the book's "golden message" on the coin and tapes the coin to the book cover. Display these books for primary students to use as guides in selecting books.

## Treasure Maps (Grades 3 & 4)

Book characters search for their own "treasures" during the course of a story. Identifying and mapping a character's struggles will help students understand the structure of the story and begin recognizing theme.

*Themes are life messages common to all humanity.*

Let students work in groups of three to create a picture book's treasure map. After reading a picture book together, the group decides what "treasure" the character is searching for by identifying either the author's message or what the character learned at the end. Write this on the treasure chest (reproducible available at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)). Then the group identifies at least three steps (or difficulties) the character had in the journey to discover the treasure.

Give each group a large piece of butcher paper for creating a treasure map. Draw a map that includes three stops along the way toward the

end of the story. Illustrate and label the stops (the character's attempts and failures at solving the problem). Add a legend if desired. Glue the treasure chest on the map at the end. Decorate the map with drawings about the story. Using the treasure maps as visuals, groups retell the stories to the class.

Classroom teachers might want to follow up this activity by asking students to create a treasure map for their own stories and then use the map as a guide when writing the stories.

## Treasure Troves: Understanding Theme (Grades 4 & 5)

Folklore and picture books provide a good laboratory for older students to deepen their knowledge of theme. Skills can be modeled and practiced in short time frames, since stories are succinct in plot and character development. Common Core standards require that fourth and fifth graders identify the theme of a story using text details. By systematically identifying character actions, thoughts, and conversations, the reader reveals the theme and creates a valuable "text to self" connection.

When themes are not explicitly stated, they can be difficult for intermediate students to discern. By providing scaffolding activities and letting students work with peers, theme identification becomes more inherent.

### Activity #1

Folklore has been around for thousands of years because it contains treasure—a little pearl of wisdom that is innately human. Try starting with a few Aesop fables in which the story moral is the theme.

*All morals are themes, but themes may not always be morals.*



### Suggested Fables

Title	Theme
<i>The Tortoise and the Hare</i>	Slow and steady wins the race.
<i>The Ant and the Grasshopper</i>	Prepare today for the wants of tomorrow.
<i>The Wind and the Sun</i>	Persuasion works better than force.
<i>The Lion and the Mouse</i>	No act of kindness, however small, is ever wasted.



## Folktales Examples

Title	Theme
<i>The Three Little Pigs</i>	When you do a job, do your best work.
<i>Goldilocks and the Three Bears</i>	Show respect for the property of others.
<i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i>	Small and clever can conquer big and strong.

Distribute a different fable to each student group. After reading, discuss how the characters' actions support the moral. Then make the moral personal by asking the group to compose a contemporary story that conveys the same moral. This can be written or shared orally. Find examples of these fables at [www.aesopfables.com](http://www.aesopfables.com).

### Activity #2

Expand the treasure hunt to find themes in well-known folktales. These longer stories contain themes that are usually not explicitly stated.

Student groups can discuss the following questions to help identify the theme:

- At the end of the story, what has the main character learned about how to behave?

- Has the main character learned an important life lesson?
- If the main character hasn't learned anything, what does the reader learn from the character's actions?

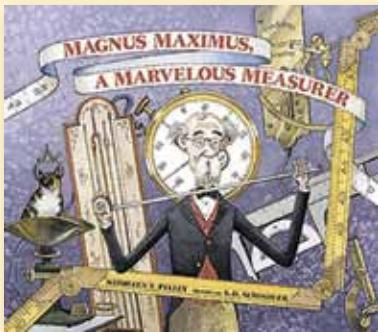
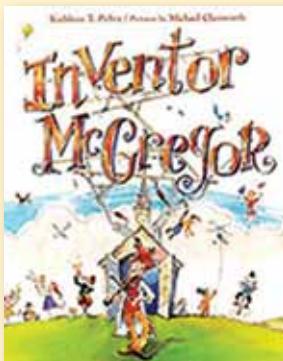
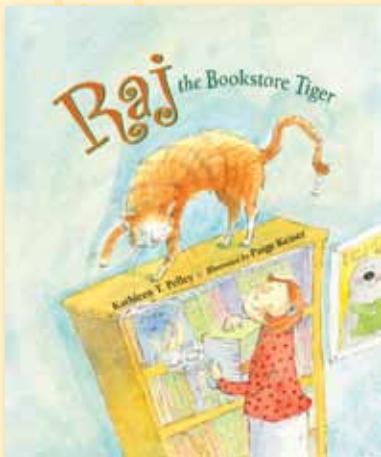
From this discussion, students will identify the theme and share findings with the class.

### Activity #3

A character's thoughts and actions evoke the story's theme, but there is also an emotional subtext brought to the story by each reader that connects the story to the heart and helps children recognize that their experiences and feelings are shared by others. This insight, plus the identification of the theme, aid in understanding personal emotions and give readers courage to face future challenges. Author Kathleen Pelley

## Books by Kathleen Pelley

Picture Book	Summary	Universal Themes
<i>The Giant King</i>	Rabbie, a gifted carver, encounters a village under siege by a giant. When Rabbie convinces the villagers to treat the giant like a king, the king becomes jealous. The giant proves his nobility by offering to sacrifice himself for the village.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Treat others with respect.</li><li>Recognize the potential in others.</li></ul>
<i>Raj the Bookstore Tiger</i>	Raj, a brave tomcat, slinks away into the shadows when Snowflake tells him he's not the tiger he thinks he is. With the help of Raj's owner, Felicity, and William Blake's poem, Raj rediscovers his inner tiger.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Be true to yourself.</li></ul>
<i>The Sandal Artist</i>	Roberto, an artist, seeks wealth by painting only beautiful things. But when he walks in the sandals of a great but humble man, Roberto recognizes the beauty in all creation.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Everything and everyone has value.</li><li>Seek beauty and you will find it all around.</li></ul>
<i>Inventor McGregor</i>	Hector McGregor loves to invent, but when he must work in the city, his imagination stops. He discovers that creative diversions at home get ideas flowing again.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Be true to yourself.</li><li>Conforming is a deterrent to creativity.</li></ul>
<i>Magnus Maximus</i>	Magnus is so busy measuring that he forgets life's little pleasures, until he breaks his glasses and a young boy takes him by the hand to wade in the cold ocean waves.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Work is important but should be balanced with appreciation of friends, nature, and art.</li></ul>



combines these two treasures in a rich blend of creative elements.

Theme integration is much more sophisticated and subtle in today's literature than in folklore. To introduce students to themes found in picture books, view several videos by Pelley in which she reads a picture book and briefly speaks about the embedded universal themes. She has a beautiful way with words, yet keeps it simple enough for children to understand.

Find readings at [www.kathleenpelley.com](http://www.kathleenpelley.com).

Extend this lesson by asking students to identify a favorite childhood book. Using the Treasure Troves form (available at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)), **ONLINE** have students write about what connected them to the book. Let students share in small groups. Ask them to compare the themes they identified and reflect on why books may affect people differently.

#### Activity #4

Select a book from the suggested list (available at [www.librarysparks.com](http://www.librarysparks.com)), or choose your own to read to the class. Discuss the story using the questions from Activity #2. Let small groups of students decide the theme(s) found in the book and compare with other groups.

Provide additional guided practice by distributing different picture books to each small group to read together, identify the theme(s), and record findings in a class T-chart.

Consistent practice with this complex concept multiplies student awareness of theme. So let students dig into a piece of literature to find the themes that will take them to rich new worlds.

Happy treasure hunting.



**Judith Snyder** is a seasoned teacher/librarian in Colorado, as well as a professional storyteller and freelance writer. Judith is the author of the *Jump-Start Your Library* series, three books featuring hands-on library lessons from UpstartBooks (2008), and a picture book, *What Do You See?* (2009), from Odyssey Books.

#### Other Suggested Picture Books

Picture Book	Summary	Universal Themes
<i>Sophie's Squash</i> by Pat Zietlow Miller	Sophie names her squash Bernice, and they play all summer. When Bernice begins to rot, Sophie makes her a bed in the earth. In the spring, Bernice grows into two new squashes for Sophie to love.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Everything is worthy of love.</li> <li>Things we love can revisit us in surprising ways.</li> </ul>
<i>Time Out for Monsters</i> by Jean Reidy	What's a time-out corner without monsters? The boy in the story decorates his corner with imaginative creatures and wonderful treats.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A healthy imagination can be good company.</li> </ul>
<i>Goldy Luck and the Three Pandas</i> by Natasha Yim	This Chinese American version of Goldilocks includes Goldy learning from and acting on her mistakes. She discovers her luck changes when she takes responsibility for her actions.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Empathy for others</li> <li>Realizing how actions can affect others</li> <li>Learning from mistakes</li> </ul>