

3 Reasons Why Kids Should Read Classic Stories

The BBC just released the [results of a poll](#) which asked to name one book every child should read. Among others, the list included *Harry Potter*, *To Kill a Mockingbird*, *The Lord of the Rings*, and *The Bible*.

But while some of the books on the list were a bit surprising, the response to the list was even more so. The head of Britain's largest reading non-profit, BookTrust, [came out and condemned](#) the fact that adults were recommending so many classics to young children:

"Too often children are given 'timeless classics' to read, when there are so many other, newer books that are just as brilliant but can also talk to them about the world they know, in language that resonates with them.

Classics are important, of course, but if we're going to create a new generation of readers, we need to be bolder and more imaginative in the books we promote."

Once upon a time, I probably would have agreed with this statement. As a grade school child, I was perfectly content to go to the library and fill my bag with various titles from newer authors who provided a steady supply of fun, simple stories that I liked.

My mother, however, recognized that these books were akin to a diet of potato chips and did her best to supplement my preferences with other, more classic titles and themes, many of which she obtained from her secret weapon, [Books Children Love](#).

In retrospect, it was those classic titles which my mother

recommended that were far more meaningful, original, and memorable than those I picked out on my own. Sure, my selections could be classified as imaginative, and I may have even learned something from them here and there. But in the long run, I wish I had spent more time digesting more of those classics as a child for three reasons:

1. [Classics Teach Virtue](#) – In quickly thinking through some of the titles my mother suggested to me, I recall that they taught subtle lessons on the importance of hard work, obedience, and respect for others. On the other hand, many of my selections stand out for the attitude of disrespect their characters often exhibited toward others.
2. [Classics Give Cultural Reference Points](#) – I light up with a smile or chuckle every time I hear a quote, theme, or subtle reference to a book I've read in the past. Those references have rarely sprung from newer books, but from the tried and true time-tested titles. If children don't absorb and understand these references, will whole sections of our culture disappear into oblivion?
3. [Classics Expand Understanding](#) – Many newer titles use easy, everyday language in an attempt to relate to today's kids. But while such language is familiar and comfortable, it fails to challenge a child's intellectual ability and raise him to a new level of understanding and expertise.

Instead of bashing classic stories, would today's parents and teachers be wise to encourage their children to read more of them?