

Rev. O. 10,000, 7-24-67

FACT SHEET

L-705

BOOKS FOR CHILDREN UNDER SIX

When should we start thinking about books for our children? It is almost impossible to start too soon. When children grow up with books, the books become their friends.

How old will a child be before he will be interested in books? A six-months-old child listens to the sound of voices and looks at objects but is likely to be too young to make use of books. But by the time he is approaching his first birthday, he takes delight in recognizing the familiar things shown in books and will often point to them.

Children Under 2

Select books for a child of this age with these qualities in mind:

Color and pictures. A picture of a single familiar object on each page is all that is needed for baby's first book. The name of the object might also be included on the page.

Pictures should be simple and colorful and easily recognized by the child. Colors should be bright and the lines clear.

Size and shape. Avoid extremes in size. Small hands will have trouble handling either very small books or those that are outsize or awkward. Square or slightly oblong shapes are more manageable than long and narrow ones.

The pages should lie flat when turned, and the book should have only a few pages.

Durability. Pages of firm cardboard or sturdy fabric will take the unskilled handling of the little child.

Children 2 and 3

At this age a child's interest in books and the stories they tell is developing rapidly. At 2½ years or even earlier, children will spend a quarter of an hour or even more looking at picture books and listening to stories being read. They are particularly interested in stories about people, activities, and events that make up a child's world.

Following are things to look for in choosing books for children of this age:

Pictures. The pictures should tell the story and words should tell what is going on in the picture. A picture on the outside of the book that shows

what the book is about helps the child identify his own story books.

The pictures need to be simple mass drawings, uncluttered but suggesting action.

Colors. Colors should be clear, intense and pleasing, free from the shadings and detail that often attract adults.

Illustrations with two or three colors have been found to be pleasing to preschool children.

Size and shape. These are less important to the preschool child than to a baby. Nursery school children who can choose books freely from book shelves do not seem to pay a great deal of attention to size and shape of the book.

Construction. The books should be durable. At this age a child will have his favorites, and they will have to last through many readings.

Story. Books for the young preschool child should be geared to his interests and the activities he knows and enjoys.

At this age children can begin to gain a liking for literature. Stories should have good plots and reasonable characters. The characters should act in ways that seem appropriate to the situation and the story.

We need to remember that children's experiences today are quite different from what ours were, and that their interests are likely to be different. The stories that appealed to us during our childhood may not have the same appeal for today's child.

Children 4 and 5

At this age the child is becoming increasingly imaginative and curious about the world around him. He is interested in knowing about children of other lands. His attention span is lengthening and his vocabulary is increasing.

Story and plot. Books can be longer and tell a more complicated story. A 4-year-old child is becoming interested in adventure, animal and nature stories; stories about activities like his own or those of people he knows; stories about transportation; and books about the way things work.

Appearance. Pictures may have more detail and greater use of color than in books for a younger



child. The book needs to be harmonious and pleasing, and also bright and gay.

The type should be sharp and clear. Before the child can read, he listens to the story and looks at the book. The books bought for him at this time are the ones that are likely to become his favorites and that he will read and reread, as soon as he is able to do so.

Size and shape. At this age the child can turn pages and handle books with greater skill, so size and shape are not so important.

Individual interest and experiences. Children 4 and 5 years old are developing individual tastes and interests, which will be reflected in the books and stories they enjoy. A book will have more meaning for a child of this age if it is a story about the place where he lives or if it tells about things he has done or is looking forward to doing.

A trip, event, or excursion may make a particular book have more interest for him. For example, a city child is likely to be more interested in a book about cows and milk after he has made a trip to a farm.

Selecting Books for Preschoolers

- Colors should be clear, intense and pleasing.
- Pictures should have simple lines for the very young child and progress to greater detail for older children.
- Size and shape should be suitable for the age of the child.
- The book should have good paper and strong binding.
- It should tell a story with reasonable characters, about things familiar to the young child. By the time a child is about 5 years old, he will enjoy books of adventure, imaginative happenings, and people in other lands.

Acknowledgment

Information in this publication was reprinted from "Books for Children Under Six" by Lucile Pepon and John A. Shultz, Extension specialists in family life, University of Illinois, College of Agriculture.