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A Little Princess.

Frances Hodgson Burnett's book "A Little Princess" begins as seven year old Sara Crewe is dropped off at a boarding school by her rich father. She has grown up in India and has lived a very pampered life. Even though she is rich, she is very friendly to everyone and the students all love her.

Unfortunately, the woman in charge of the school does not like Sara and when her father dies on a business trip, the head mistress is angry that she will not get the money she is owed for Sara's care. She makes her live in the attic with the maid and to do chores to earn her keep at the school. Sara is mistreated, but still remains kind to others and helps anyone she can.

One day, Sara finds some money and buys some food from a bakery. When the baker sees her give away most of the food to a beggar girl, he believes Sara is a princess and invites the little beggar girl to live with his family. Sara continues to teach the smaller children and withstands the abuse from the adults around her.

When a strange man moves into the house next door, Sara becomes friends with his servant. He is impressed with how kind she is and is angered about her treatment at the school. He secretly sends her food to help her in some small way. Eventually, Sara discovers something very important about the man who is helping her.

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Aesop's Fables.

As children, our first experience of the magic of talking animals, the conflict between good and evil, the battle of wits between the cunning and the innocent most probably came from Aesop's Fables. These delightful, pithy and brief narratives are simple, easy to understand and convey their message in a memorable and charming fashion.

Aesop's Fables by Aesop consists of about 600 tales, some well-loved and familiar, others less known but just as entertaining and educative and help us map the perimeters of our moral universe.

Fables have existed almost since the dawn of time. They hark back to a time when humans and animals lived in harmony and mutual respect. We humans could learn a great deal from the uncomplicated justice and the commonsense values of the animal kingdom. Animals are endowed with immutable personal traits like foxes being cunning, donkeys being patient, lions being proud and wolves being cruel.

There is very little biographical information about Aesop. He is reputed to have been born a slave in Samos in ancient Greece in about 600 BC. He earned his liberty through his learning and wit and went on to become a respected diplomat and traveler. Ancient Greek philosophers like Aristotle, historians like Plutarch and Herodotus mention Aesop's fables in their works. Today, these immortal fables have come down to us, as fresh and pristine as they were when they were first told.

Aesop's fables were known at the time of Socrates in the 5th century BC, when they were recounted in oral form. However, they were systematically compiled sometime in 300 BC by a Greek philosopher Demetrius Phalereus. The fables gradually vanished from popular literature till the 14th century AD when they re-surfaced in Byzantine Constantinople. Since then, they traversed with traders and diplomats to Europe and then to the rest of the world.

Generations of children have enjoyed old favorites like The Ant and the Grasshopper, The Bear and Two Travelers, The Hare and the Tortoise, The Hen who laid Golden Eggs, The Thirsty Crow, The Lion and the Mouse and many others found in this volume along with less familiar ones. Their charm lies in their simplicity and the plain, straightforward way in which they deliver universal values of honesty, compassion and justice and

teach us to shun pride, greed, envy and other negative qualities. They provide an enduring foundation for inculcating values and ethics in children and are at the same time, amusing and entertaining.

Pride and Prejudice.

Austen's timeless romantic classic, follows the lives of the five Bennett sisters, who live in a time where an advantageous marriage and social status are considered a fundamental for any woman to stand a fair chance at life. Set at the turn of the 19th century, *Pride and Prejudice* catches a perfect glimpse not only of a time when women were socially and economically dependent solely on their marital status, but also as an age of enlightenment and witness of the French Revolution.

This romantic novel with its hint of comic references begins with the famous quote "It is a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a wife." This famous quotation sets the story into motion as the eligible Mr. Bingley is introduced as he rides into town. The quote also draws in and to some extent reveals the content of the plot to come. Soon the news of the arrival of the well off Charles Bingley finds its way to the ears of the Bennett household. Having five unmarried daughters, the Bennets are eager to match them up with suitable spouse candidates and see them prosperously married. After attending a ball, Mr. Bingley is instantly attracted to the oldest Bennett daughter Jane and it is fair to say that the feeling is mutual. Such cannot be said about his close friend Mr. Darcy who rudely refuses to dance with the second Bennett daughter Elizabeth. Consequently, Elizabeth's first prejudice is born as she labels Mr. Darcy arrogant and obnoxious; however, she later learns never to judge a book by its cover and must swallow up her pride to achieve happiness. *Pride and Prejudice* witnesses the exciting courtships of the Bennett sisters and their suitors, as well as the not so joyful relationships of other characters. As the novel develops the relationships between the characters must outweigh the forces seeking to tear them apart.

The Wind in the Willows.

The Wind in the Willows allows every person who has always wished animals could talk to dream a little more. In this amazing book, Toad, Ratty, Mr. Toad and Badger form a tight friendship and have many adventures.

At the beginning of the book, Mole is busy spring cleaning is home when he suddenly decides he is simply sick of the job and that he wants to see what the big world outside his home is really like. He discovers the world is a busy, crazy place and it takes a while for him to adapt. While he is wandering along the river, he meets his first friend, Ratty.

Ratty is fun-loving and has a relaxed attitude about life. He tells Mole he will show him the world and proudly shows Mole how much fun life along the river can be. Ratty does not like new things, though, so he and Mole learn some things together.

Mr. Toad is the next friend they meet. He lives in Toad Hall and is smart and kind, but he is also spoiled and believes he is the most important person in the world. He likes doing new things and gets obsessed over motor cars and houseboats. His wild ways get him into trouble several times.

The final friend in the group is Badger. He lives alone and he likes it that way. Badger does not want anyone to bother him and has little use for company. Mr. Toad's father was Badger's best friend and he is disappointed in how Mr. Toad is living his life.