BOOKS ARE IMPORTANT to children in the United States today. Here they find a rich heritage of the literature of mankind in volumes especially designed and created for their use. They find up-to-date information interestingly presented and well illustrated in the wide range of subject areas they wish to explore. And they also find fiction, poetry, biography, history, and travel books of social significance by means of which they may experience vicariously intellectual and emotional reactions that aid them to understand themselves and the world in which they live.

Ever since the days of John Newbery, the English bookseller who issued the first printed book for children two hundred years ago, there has been an awareness of the need by children for more than textbooks. Teachers, librarians, psychologists, authors, children's editors, and publishers working together have succeeded in producing for children of today the books that they want and need. It is now possible to give the children in readily accessible form books that will stimulate them to an appreciation of life. These books should be made available to young readers in and out of school, for books are necessary in developing the modern curriculum and they are necessary in life on the playground, in the community and the home.

When, for example, a class of children is studying our neighbors to the south, the teacher will decide upon the textbooks that are to be used as a basis for the study. The textbook, however, cannot include all of the different types of information in sufficient detail to make the study as meaningful as it can be made with the addition of other books. There are reference books such as Pan-American Day, an anthology of the best prose and verse on Pan Americanism and the good neighbor policy, by Hilah Paulmier and Robert H. Schauffler, compilers, and Peru from the Air, with text and notes by Raye R. Platt, by George R. Johnson, containing a great variety of aerial photographic illustrations. There are stories such as The Cedar Deer by Addison Burbank which tells of the descendants of the Maya Indians who live in modern Guatemala and The Little Angel by Alice Dalgliesh which reveals a glimpse of Rio, Brazil, in 1819 through an introduction to the lively Silva family.

For folklore there are Tales from Silver Lands by Charles J. Finger and Uncle Bouqui of Haiti by Harold Courlander; for songs, The Spanish-American Song and Game Book by the writers', music, and art programs of the Work Projects Administration and Latin-American Song Book by Emilio de Tone and others; for picture books, Maria Rosa, illustrated by Candido Portinari, and Manuelito of Costa Rica, illustrated by Zhenya Gay; an art book, Made in Mexico by Susan C. Smith; for biography, Soldier Doctor, the story of William Gorgas, and He Wouldn't Be King, the story of Simon...
Bolivar by Nina B. Baker; for history, Cortez and the Conquest of Mexico by the Spaniards in 1521 by Bernal Diaz del Castillo and Half a Hemisphere by Delia Goetz; magazines which sometimes contain articles useful in the study of Latin American countries include Geographic News Bulletin of the National Geographic Society and Junior Red Cross Journal of the American National Red Cross. Poetry, science, geography, adventure, and romance all have a contribution to make in better understanding. The same types of material would make the study of any other country or subject more meaningful and alive to youth.

Books are needed by children in the home too. Teachers have the opportunity to encourage parents to make it possible for children to have a supply. Books should be accessible when, for instance, there is a discussion about the pronunciation of penicillin or Caribbean Sea; a question about the location of Brest-Litovsk; an argument about the Napoleonic campaigns; or when the children wish to identify a bird or a flower that they have seen out-of-doors. Questions such as these are answered with reference books—atlases, encyclopedias, dictionaries, and handbooks. But the home also needs many other types of books—books to read aloud, poetry, picture books, first easy reading books, books by favorite authors—Howard Pyle, Louisa M. Alcott, Laura Ingalls Wilder, John R. Tunis—books on favorite subjects such as airplanes, dogs, sports, heroes, and things to make and do. A child’s own bookshelf should be stocked with volumes that give him pleasure and help him to be a contributing member in class, playground, or family group.

It is sometimes difficult to know how to select from the vast amount of printed materials. Publishers issue attractive catalogs of their own books; book review sections in newspapers and periodicals carry news about new publications; national agencies prepare bibliographies, for example, the American Library Association, 520 North Michigan Avenue, Chicago, The H. W. Wilson Company, 950 University Avenue, New York, and the U. S. Office of Education, Washington, D. C. State departments of education issue lists of value to purchasers of books, and local school and public library groups often compile bibliographies of great significance. The librarians of the community are always ready to be of assistance in selection.

Actual examination of books is highly desirable wherever possible. Bookstores, book fairs, and book exhibits by special groups and libraries are all very important to schools and the home. It may be that traveling exhibits within a state are a good solution. The smaller the exhibit the more carefully should it be selected, if it is to indicate the types of reading matter on the market. Communities can work out an excellent cooperative project on the book fair with schools, public libraries, bookstores, and civic groups assisting.

If there is a desire to develop guiding principles in the selection of books, some generally accepted statements may be found in the preface to 500 Books for Children, U. S. Office of Education Bulletin 1939, No. 11. Annis Duff’s Bequest of Wings, describing a family’s pleasures with books, is filled with suggestions of how and what to choose. Paul Hazard’s delightful volume Children and Men discusses the subject from the point of view of nationalities. There are current magazines such as the Horn Book which describe children’s books in a captivating manner, stressing their importance in the “good life.”

The question of funds for books should be given attention. There are schools and homes that buy books only at infrequent intervals. In fact, the fall of the year is often the only time when books are purchased for the school and Christmas the only time when books are bought for the home. If it is possible to purchase frequently with thought of children’s immediate needs, books
become increasingly important to children, for then they are closely associated with the child's everyday living.

"One dollar per pupil" is often quoted as a standard for the amount of money that schools spend for books, but some schools spend more than twice this amount each fiscal year. Funds are used to good advantage when children, teachers, parents, and librarians become interested in the potentialities of a carefully selected library.

YOUNG SCOTT BOOKS

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Young Scott Books, written for specific age ranges, must pass the tests of tryouts with large groups of children before they are published.

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