

UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections Presents:

FROM APPLE PIES *to* ASTRONAUTS

A Chronology of Alphabet books with
Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes

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February 27–April 30

UBC Library's Rare Books and Special Collections
Irving K. Barber Learning Centre

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• *Hand lettering detail by Brianna Bagshaw-Stocks*



THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA
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Alphabet Books Through the Ages

“Of all the achievements of the human mind, the birth of the alphabet is the most momentous.” – Frederic Goudy, type designer.

In 1658, Johann Comenius’s picture book *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* was published. It was the first time the alphabet provided the cohesion for a set of themed pictures and illuminated sounds. Thus, the alphabet book was born.

Here is a selection of English language alphabet books from the late 18th century to the present day. These books illustrate the changes in alphabetic education for young children in England, the United States, and Canada. The authors and illustrators who created these books were influenced by the political and social contexts of their worlds. For example, there is a gap in our display for the 1940s. Publishing declined dramatically during the war and took a few years to regain its earlier production. This exhibit reflects this. Alphabet book creators were also constrained by the printing technologies and the publishing industries they worked within. As both printing and publishing changed and advanced, so too did the alphabet books being produced. These changes over time are evident in the printed pages seen in this display.

The alphabet book as a learning tool has taken innumerable forms. Its prime purpose is to unlock the symbols, sounds, and uses of letters for small children. The “A is for Apple, B is for Ball...” pattern of letter, word, and image to match has been produced in a variety of ways. The exhibit showcases alphabet books from the last two centuries representing this variety. In the past, very different words were used to represent the letters. For example, D is for Dame, G is for Gentleman, I is for Indian, Q is for Quince, X is for Xerxes, and Z is for Zany. It was not until the mid-20th century that the words we are familiar with became staples of alphabet books. Now Q is for Queen, X is for Xylophone, and Z is for Zebra are the words that children learn.

This exhibit contains many familiar favourites still shared with children today. As well, there are many that may be unknown, but are sure to delight. We hope you enjoy learning about alphabet books and those that created them.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Kathie Shoemaker for being a professor extraordinaire!! Without her guidance, vision, and help this exhibit would not have happened. A big thank you to Chelsea Shriver, Rare Books and Special Collections librarian, keeper of all the knowledge and Anne Lama, Conservator, who taught us how to display old books.

Thank you to Jeff Porter for an amazing poster design. You are a great friend. Also, Frances and David Stocks for copy editing and Brianna Bagshaw-Stocks for the hand-drawn and painted letters.

We would like to thank our family and friends for supporting us in the creation of this exhibit and lending books from your personal collections.

Case 1: Early Victorian Alphabet Books

“The earliest ABCs and hornbooks were very little like the engaging child-pleasers of the eighteenth century. They were utilitarian tools with origins in religious life, which gradually were secularized.”
(Jackson, 1989)

Alphabet books in the early Victorian Age followed Puritan views and teaching methods from previous centuries. Children were thought of as a *tabula rasa* that must be filled with moral values, and knowledge that books could provide. Alphabet books had an inner structure that represented society. Adults were conceived as Capital letters and children as small letters. Furthermore, it was believed adults would write on children from birth, as if they were a story.

For Puritans of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, both in England and America, children’s education was conceived not only as a process of preparing children for a Christian adulthood, but also as a way of establishing their relationship with God and authority. In *A Token for Children*, by James Janeway (1671), children are precious jewels that thrive under the guidance of their parents. Children’s books were a window to society, and as such were a way to introduce children to a political and social structure that they would inhabit as adults.

Material for young children was frequently organized in an alphabetical manner because learning the alphabet was considered the first step for spiritual development. One of the earliest English picture books for children was Johan Comenius’ *Orbis Sensualium Pictus* (1658). It presented the sound of animals in alphabetical order, with a picture of the bird or beast making the sound of the letter. Virtues and vices were also part of this book, as if it were a moral dictionary.

Books from the early 1800s in this display show the continued influence of religious and moral direction on the education of the young. However, with John Newbery’s introduction of the idea of “Instruction with Delight” there is a foreshadowing of the many changes revealed in this chronological tour through alphabet books.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Little Pretty Pocket Book is an American edition based on the original 1744 UK edition by John Newbery (whom the Newbery Medal was named after). This is considered one of the first “modern” children’s books that was created to teach in an entertaining way. The motto on the front-piece: “Instruction with Delight” indicates the changes occurring in books for children in this era.

The alphabet section displays a letter of the alphabet, a verse describing a game, a moral that can be learned, as well as a woodcut illustration. The UK edition was sold with a ball for boys and a pincushion for girls. This is the first incidence of book/toy merchandising to encourage learning, but also sales. This represents a dramatic shift away from the Puritanical values prevalent in children’s literature from the previous century.

Battledoors evolved from Hornbooks that were used to educate young children from the 15th to 18th centuries. A Hornbook was a paddle-shaped piece of wood with printed paper pasted to one side. It had a cross at the top, the letters of the alphabet, a section with vowels and syllables, and the Lord's Prayer at the bottom. To protect the paper, a transparent slice of cow's horn was affixed over top, hence the name: Hornbook.

Battledoors were simple, thick card "booklets". The alphabet was emphasized, but religious text was no longer included. In the past, the letters I and J, and U and V were interchangeable. Since a Battledoor was based on the older Hornbook, the letters J and U are left out. The alphabet was accompanied by images to make learning more "pleasing". Battledoors were named after a game played in which the Hornbook was used as a paddle with a shuttlecock.

This Battledoor contains the letters of the alphabet with accompanying images of familiar street vendors selling their wares. These images provide insight into what was being sold in the streets in the early 1800s.

"Until the mid-nineteenth century most books were printed in black-and-white, primarily in the medium of wood engraving, with the only color provided by the laborious and expensive process of hand-coloring." (Burlingham, 1997)

Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon (1826-1874) was the grand-daughter of Charles Howard, the 11th Duke of Norfolk. This gifted amateur artist emigrated to Canada sometime in the early 1850's and lived in Sarnia, Ontario where she worked as a teacher.

Howard-Gibbon created this book during her time in Ontario. It is hand-lettered and hand-drawn with pen and ink and is based on a rhyme chanted by children for at least two hundred years before being written down. "A was an Archer, and shot at a Frog / B was a Butcher who had a big Dog" came in many variations and Howard-Gibbon chose the version published in the 1744 *Tommy Thumb's Pretty Song Book* (from the UK publisher/booksellers, Mary Cooper and Thomas Boreman). *Tommy Thumb's* was one of the first books of nursery rhymes for children.

The original 1859 edition was given by Howard-Gibbon to her friend Martha Poussette, and later donated to the Osborne Collection of Early Children's Books at the Toronto Public Library by the Poussette family. This book is considered the earliest known Canadian picture book for children.

In 1971 the Canadian Library Association created an award in her name for the best illustrations in a Canadian children's picture book published in Canada from the previous year (Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Illustrator's Award).

Books in this Case:

Newbery, John. *Little Pretty Pocket Book, intended for the Amusement of Little Master Tommy and Pretty Miss Polly with Two Letters from Jack the Giant Killer....* Worchester: Isaiah Thomas, 1787. PZ6 1744a L588

The Uncle's Present: a new battledoor. Philadelphia: Jacob Johnson, 1810.
PZ6 1810 U534

Mrs Lovechild's golden present: for all good little boys and girls. York: J. Kendrew, 1820.
PZ6 1820z F455

Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children's Literature.

Osbourne, Charles & Wallis, Henry. *Osbourne's Pictorial Alphabet.* London: C. Osbourne and Messrs. Ackerman & Co, 1835. PZ6 1835.O872

The illustrated scripture alphabet: with prayers and hymns for children. Boston: J. Buffam, 1850. PZ6 1850z I448

Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children's Literature.



Howard-Gibbon, Amelia Frances. *An Illustrated Comic Alphabet.* Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1966. (Originally published in 1859). PZ6 1859a.H693
Part of the Beatrice Roslyn Robertson Collection.

A B C

Case 2: Mid-Victorian Alphabet Books

The Victorian era was one of great change. As the Age of Enlightenment moved into the era of the Industrial Revolution, lower middle class and many newly middle class families could afford to send their children to school instead of putting them to work. The increase in children of the lower classes attending charity schools or having private lessons in a teacher's home created a demand for more books. This demand, along with technological advances in printing, resulted in an increase in the publication of materials for young children.

The changes in printing and publishing brought on by the Industrial Revolution meant that books for children could now contain more complicated illustrations in colour and be mass produced. While social, moral, religious, and political flavours were still present, they

were slowly replaced by tones of imagination and romanticism. Fairy-tales, adventure stories, and poetry were now published for children. This ability to mass produce affordable books allowed publishers to create “toy books” for learning and entertainment of the young. These books became illustrated objects to play with.

Many of these “toy books” were published by George Routledge & Co. and Frederick Warne & Co. They were often in series that were marketed to families under “kindly relative” names, such as the Aunt Louisa book shown here. These two publishing companies worked extensively with Edmund Evans, an engraver and printer who used oil colours and woodblocks. Evans commissioned artists like Randolph Caldecott, Walter Crane, and Kate Greenaway to create illustrations for many different types of children’s books. There was a great variety available to young readers, from simple alphabet workbooks to lavishly illustrated nursery rhyme ABCs.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

From Edith’s Alphabet, p. 1:
“Key to the Alphabet of Natural Objects

The child should be required to name the objects in this Alphabet, without seeing the Key; which can be referred to, if necessary. By this means a knowledge of objects, and the amusement of using his own observation, will be obtained.”

Part of the Frederick Warne’s National Nursery Library series.

Many alphabet books portrayed familiar images of daily life. The pictures in this book show middle-class pastoral scenes paired with simple rhyming verses and large bold featured letters.

This book, part of the McLoughlin Brothers Aunt Louisa’s Big Picture Book Series which sold for 25 cents, was part of the wave of “toy books” sweeping the US from England. The brothers introduced the photographic process of printing using zinc plates with oil colours applied directly to the plates. This produced rich colour images printed on one side of the page only. This company printed original books, but also reprinted many children’s books from England in a cheaper format.

Walter Crane (1845-1915) was born in Liverpool to a family of illustrators and publishers. He began work as a wood engraver, but then went on to a prolific career in the arts: designing, creating, and educating. Part of the Arts and Crafts movement of the late 1800s, Crane served as principal of the Royal College of Art in 1898. He produced ceramic designs for pottery companies, including Wedgwood and created wallpaper designs for Jeffrey and Co. He worked in a variety of fields including: textiles, stained glass, furniture, and metalwork. Japanese woodblock prints influenced his style and is particularly noticeable in his children’s book illustrations and designs.

In 1865 he began working with the engraver and printer Edmund Evans illustrating for a series of “toy books”. It is the work for which he is remembered to this day. Crane was

a pioneer in the realm of full-colour picture books for children and was one of the early illustrators to use the double-page spread for one piece of art. His children's books were so popular that William Morris commissioned Crane to design nursery wallpaper. Crane believed that illustration in literature for children was important and helped to foster learning.

Kate Greenaway (1846-1901) was born in London, but spent large portions of her childhood in the small country village of Rolleston. Greenaway was schooled in art at the Female School of Art in South Kensington and at the Slade School. She illustrated a variety of material, but is most famous for her children's books. Introduced to Edmund Evans by her father, she joined Walter Crane and Randolph Caldecott in writing and illustrating many of the "toy books" that Routledge and Warne published to great acclaim.

Greenaway uses a well-known and common rhyme from the 1700s for *A Apple Pie*:

"A Apple-pasty, B bak'd it
C cut it, D divided it
E eat it, F fought for it
G got it..."

The matching of the letter, children's reactions in verbs, and the illustrations support letter learning and visual literacy in children. The familiarity of this rhyme, coupled with children in early 18th century dress, and scenery based on her childhood stays in the country, combined to make this an enduring classic. Greenaway's illustrations also led to a trend in children's fashion for the upper classes with Liberty of London using these images to design retail clothing.

The Chartered Institute of Library and Information Professionals (CILIP) established the Kate Greenaway Medal in 1955 in her name. It is awarded annually in the UK for distinguished illustration in a book for children.

Books in this Case:

Edith's Alphabet. London: Frederick Warne & Co, 1866. PZ6 1866 E358
Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children's Literature.

Alphabet of Country Scenes. New York: McLoughlin Bros, 1873. PZ6 1873 A463

Crane, Walter. *Walter Crane's Absurd A.B.C.* London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1874. PZ6 1874 C734

Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children's Literature.

Crane, Walter. *Mother Goose. The Alphabet of Old Friends.* Tokyo: Holp Shuppan, 1981. (Originally published 1875). PZ4.9.A466 AP 1875a

Greenaway, Kate. *Kate Greenaway's Alphabet.* London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1885. PZ6 1885 G7

Greenaway, Kate. *A Apple Pie.* London: George Routledge & Sons Ltd, 1886. PZ6 1886.G7

D E F

Case 3: Turn of the Century Alphabet Books

The last half of the nineteenth century and the beginning of the twentieth century has been called "The Golden Age of Children's Literature" due to the publication of many books for children that became and remain classics. During this period of time there was a significant change in the perception of children and childhood, mostly due to the influence of romantic poets. They associated the idea of childhood with innocence and happiness, not hardships and responsibilities. Children's books focused more and more on entertainment rather than didacticism and morals because the intention was to stimulate and develop children's imagination. As paper and printing became more affordable, the publication of books greatly increased. New technological advances in lithography allowed for the less costly printing of colour illustrations. Some seminal children's novels of the time were *Alice in Wonderland*, by Lewis Carroll, *Treasure Island*, by Robert Louis Stevenson, and *Tom Sawyer*, by Mark Twain. Many of these books included lavish tipped in colour illustrations.

Rhymes offered in alphabet books first moved from religious to secular themes in the late nineteenth century and were also written in a new more elaborate and sophisticated manner. Tales such as 'Alphabet of Old Friends' in *The Song of Sixpence Picture Book* (1909), and the 'Baby's Own Alphabet' in *The Sleeping Beauty Picture Book* (1911), brought the alphabet genre into a literary format by using its structure to retell fairy tales. This opened the way to an increase in narrative alphabet books, and to the diversification of their content. This diversification is evident in the examples featured in this case.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

This book is another twist on the “A was an Archer, and shot at a Frog” rhyme. Crawhall (1821-1896) was a wood engraver, writer, and patron of the arts in Newcastle. In *Aunt Elspa* he states after the first two lines of the original verse:

“Tuts! These are the Rhymes/That our Grandmothers knew;/They’re far too old-fashioned:/Let’s have something new.”

He accompanies his changes with simple woodcuts that reference the illustrations from the previous century, as well he uses a much older style of typeface. This creates a cheeky, yet entertaining alphabet book for both children and the adults who may also be reading this book with them. Even though most people knew this rhyme, by the late 1800s it is considered “old”! The book was priced at one shilling, or you could pay two-and-sixpence to have it “coloured throughout”.

This book is a good example of a themed alphabet book. All the text and illustrations revolve around the management of the home and kitchen by little girls posing as “housewives”. The verses give instructions on different aspects of household management as well as exhorting the young female reader (this particular Little Folk book was clearly aimed at young girls!) to work hard and do all these jobs properly. For example:

“T stands for our Tea-time, don’t make Tea too strong,
Nor put too much water in, both would be wrong.”

Little Housewife ABC continues the tradition of moral education in an alphabet book from the early 1800s, but it is tempered with the rhyming verse and colour illustrations that appeared in the later part of the century.

Ernest Nister (1842-1909) owned a printing company in Germany which opened offices in London in 1888. He produced a wide-range of illustrated materials, including books for children. This alphabet book, with both black and white, and colour pictures focuses on the animals to be found on Noah’s Ark. Each letter and animal has a jaunty verse to accompany it, but not all of the verses have a corresponding picture.

Nister is best known for the moveable books his company started producing in the 1890s. The company introduced books with automatic pop-ups using pull-tabs and discs that were put together by hand.

Saalfeld Publishing was started in 1900 in Ohio and became one of the largest publishing companies to produce books for children in the US. They published works by many famous authors such as Louisa May Alcott, Dr. Seuss, Anna Sewell, Herman Melville, and Johanna Spyri.

This alphabet book is part of their cloth book series printed on muslin. In this book, each letter rendered in bright colours and bold outlines stands out on the page. Each letter is accompanied by a simple rhyme about the object the letter stands for and a scene in which that object occurs. It is clearly a book created for a younger child to learn their letters and may be the start of parents teaching “enfants” or toddlers by reading alphabet books to them at home. The colours appear as bold now as when it was first made. From the back of the book:

“All My Other Books Are Worn
And The Leaves Are Badly Torn,
But My Muslin Books I Found
Were As Good As Newly Bound”

Books in this Case:

Crawhall II, Joseph. *Old Aunt Elspa’s ABC*. London: Scolar Press, 1978. Originally published 1884. PZ4.9.C7393 OD 1978
Part of the Beatrice Roslyn Robertson Collection.

My Own First Book: a picture alphabet for little folks. New Jersey: Charles E. Graham & Co, 1890. PZ6 1890z .M955

Little Housewife ABC: Father Tuck’s Little Folks Series. London: Raphael Tuck & Sons, 1900. PZ6 1900z T935

Nister, Ernest. *Noah’s Ark: an Alphabet of Animals*. Illustrated by Montefiore, Stanley E.B. London: Ernest Nister, 1900. PZ6 1900 .N623

My ABC Book. Ohio: Saalfeld Publishing, 1904. PZ6 1904 M92
Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children’s Literature.

G H I

Case 4: Edwardian Era to WWI Alphabet Books

The idyllic and pastoral portrait of nature is a feature that characterizes Edwardian children's literature, prior to World War 1. The spirit of the time presents a landscape that is still valid for modern books, since the idea of childhood has not changed much since then. During those years between the death of Queen Victoria in 1901, and the murder at Sarajevo, children's books construct a peaceful and bucolic idealization of the world. Writers of the time portrayed the world as if it were governed by order and ritual, but also included playfulness and laughter. The concept of child welfare became an important concern of the age and was reflected in the books of this era.

Edwardian literature also included a turn toward speculative fiction. Books published in this time in Britain and America focused on the spirit world and the supernatural. Many of the most significant children's books of all times were written in this period: *Peter Rabbit*, *Peter Pan*, *The Wind in the Willows*, *The Secret Garden*, *Anne of Green Gables*, and *The Railway Children* to name a few.

Following in the steps of Crane, Caldecott, and Greenaway, Howard Pyle intertwined Victorian realism with romanticism and brought a new artistic vitality to illustration, with works that were full of tension and drama. He founded the American Brandwyne School, attended by illustrators such as N.C. Wyeth, Jessie Willcox Smith, Elizabeth Shippen Green and Violet Oakley. Many of these artists worked on ABC books with illustrations portraying children playing and scenes of happy families in warm and cozy homes.

The books in this case represent this idealized time for children. From lovely country scenarios captured in verse by Farjeon, to the daily lives of a Teddy family in the nursery. When WWI started, the world for children and adults changed dramatically. Tommy's ABC is an excellent example of an ABC book put to other uses reflecting the context of the world and time of its creation.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

The term "Mother Goose" comes from the phrase *Contes de ma mère l'oye* which is a French folk expression meaning "old wives tales". This can roughly translate to *Tales of mother goose*. John Newbery attached this name to his nursery rhyme collection titled *Mother Goose's Melody or Sonnets for the Cradle* in 1781. Mother Goose is now synonymous with nursery rhymes.

This 1905 edition includes many rhymes no longer in use and extended versions of the ones we do know, such as the Ladybird verse shown here. Many of the rhymes from this era express dark humour or are very different from the versions of our time. For example, Humpty Dumpty is not portrayed as an egg-man, but rather a man with a large back hump!

This little paperback alphabet book was produced by the Red Cross Society during the First World War to make money for the war effort and the injured soldiers coming home. The propaganda role almost supersedes the educational role and illustrates the influence of time and context on creation.

“G is the Gramophone – early and late
H stands for Huns and Hymn and for Hate...

Y stands for Youth full of courage and fire
Z is Fame’s Zenith to which we aspire.”

Eleanor Farjeon (1881-1965) was born in London, but also lived in the countryside of Hampstead and Sussex. Coming from a family of writers and composers, she created wonderful poetry and stories for children throughout her life.

Country Child’s Alphabet is a good example of how alphabet books were changing to become more artistic, and less moralistic and didactic. These early illustrations by Rothenstein have an art deco feel and do not always portray the letter object as seen here, for the letter L. Farjeon’s storytelling verses are whimsical and a good example of the idyllic and pastoral flavour of books for children in this era. This alphabet is more for entertainment than learning.

Farjeon was awarded the 1955 Carnegie Medal for *The Little Bookworm*, the 1956 inaugural Hans Christian Andersen Medal for lasting contributions to children’s literature, and the 1959 inaugural Regina Medal for lasting contributions to children’s literature awarded by the Catholic Library Association.

Books in this Case:

Frisbie, W.A. *ABC Mother Goose*. Illustrated by Chas L. Bartholomew. Chicago: Rand, McNally & Co, 1905. PZ6 1905 .F747

Johnson, Laura Rinkle. *The Teddy Bear ABC*. Illustrated by Margaret Landers Sanford. Boston and New York: H.M. Caldwell & Co, 1907. PZ6 1907 J645
Part of the Arkley Collection of Early and Historical Children’s Literature.

The Christmas ABC. New York: Saalfield, 1910. PZ6 1910 C474

Harvey, J.G. Russell. *Tommy's ABC*. Illustrated by Charles Thomas. Bristol: A.W. Ford & Co. Ltd, 1916. PZ6 1916 .T655

Part of the Beatrice Roslyn Robertson Collection.

Farjeon, Eleanor. *Country Child's Alphabet*. Illustrated by William Michael Rothenstein. London: The Poetry Bookshop, 1924. PR10.U1 F3 1924

J K L

Case 5: 1930s Alphabet Books

The so-called Golden Age of Children's Literature ended with the First World War. Directly after the war, the publication of children's books was reduced considerably. However, in the UK during the late 1920s and the 1930s, interest in fiction for children returned. Publishing houses such as Penguin Puffin and Oxford University Press began recruiting children's librarians as consultants and to appoint editors for their children's books. *Junior Bookshelf*, a reviewing magazine, was first published in 1936. The UK Carnegie Medal awarded for an outstanding new book for children or young adults was established in 1936. In the United States, the American Library Association created and awarded the first Caldecott Medal in 1938 for the most distinguished American picture book for children. Although in the United States the Great Depression brought troubling times to the publishing industry, it recovered relatively fast.

Books such as *Little House in the Big Woods*, by Laura Ingalls Wilder, *The Hobbit*, by J.R.R. Tolkien, *Mary Poppins*, by P.L. Travers, and *The Story of Babar*, by Jean de Brunhoff, were published in the 1930s. In this decade, British author Enid Blyton met commercial success with books such as *The Talking Teapot and Other Tales*, first of the *Old Thatch Series*.

Due to the variety of themes and approaches, contemporary children are still reading many alphabet books from the 1930s. Our sensibilities and tastes are similar to those of the 1930s. Alphabet books as teaching aids became more and more common in school settings as the twentieth century progressed. There is a broad range of art and style in these books with the continuing use of rhyming text or poetry being matched with either black and white or coloured illustrations.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Ross Lort (1889 – 1968) was a leading architect in Vancouver from the 1920s until his death in 1968. As well, he was active in Vancouver's arts community serving on the Arts Council and working for the Vancouver Art Gallery. In 1931 while designing and overseeing the construction of Casa Mia, a grand Spanish Colonial Revival mansion for George C. Reifel, Lort created woodcuts for this abcedarian book: *All Creatures Great and Small*. It was a limited-edition print run used as gifts for his clients, friends and family.

A Canadian Child's ABC embodies all the elements of what is thought of as quintessentially Canadian. Gordon's verses encapsulate moments in history and our geography, but from the very white Anglophone perspective of the time-period:

"About four hundred years ago/They first looked on a white man's face,
And welcomed him, and did not know/That one day he would take their place.
They still are here, but their fierce pride/And wild free life have passed away:
Another race has thrust aside/The children of a bygone day."

In Canada in the 1930s there were few printers and publishers. Most children's books were imported from Britain and America. Few books printed in Canada had the colours seen in the previous case. Thoreau Macdonald, son of Group of Seven member J.E.H. Macdonald, used his father's Arts and Craft's style in the black and white woodcut illustrations of this book. While the woodcut style provides simplicity, the illustrations contain many small Canadian details that are the perfect complement to Gordon's text.

This little alphabet book is also an early colouring book! It has instructions on the first page for how to make colours for children without a paint set. It suggests onion skin, beetroot, and laundry bluing to make primary colours.

It was clearly published for "ulterior motives". Distributed by the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, *ABC* is really an advertisement for the company in the shape of an alphabet book for young children. The verses accompanying the letters explain how to stay healthy, avoid accidents, and be good boys and girls. The life insurance company used this little booklet to spread a message to children and families, with some of that message harkening back to the sentiments of previous century.

Jean de Brunhoff illustrated the stories of Babar that his wife Cécile had told their children. After he passed away in 1937, his brother published two more of Jean's *Babar* stories. Then after WWII, his son Jean continued to keep the *Babar* stories alive.

A B C of Babar is a unique alphabet book. This is a wordless book, with only print and cursive representations of the letters accompanying the illustrations. At the back of the book are lists of words for each letter of the alphabet. These are the words for the objects found in the pictures and are in both French and English, for both those audiences.

This early “seek-and-find” alphabet book promotes children’s alphabetic knowledge through visual literacy. This style of alphabet book is for pre-schoolers who are in the process of learning the symbol, sound, and object connections of the alphabet as well as building their vocabulary. The *A B C of Babar* is a good example of a more modern alphabet book that is for learning and entertainment.

Books in this Case:



Lort, Ross. *All Creatures Great and Small*. Vancouver: Charles Bradbury, 1931. PR9224.O877 A4



Gordon, R.K. *A Canadian Child’s ABC*. Illustrated by Thoreau Macdonald. Toronto and Vancouver: Dent, 1931. PZ8.3.G668 CN 1931

Barker, Cecily Mary. *A Flower Fairy Alphabet*. London: Blackie & Son, 1934. PZ8.3.B389 F54 1934

ABC Metropolitan Life Insurance Company. New York: Metropolitan Life Insurance Company, 1935. PZ8.3.A14

de Brunhoff, Jean. *A B C of Babar*. New York: Random House, 1936. PZ4.9.B83 Ab 1936

M N O

Case 6: After the War Alphabet Books

In the 1940s, publishing declined due to WWII. Books were still produced, but it was a diminished industry. As the '50s progressed, the industry picked up and books of higher quality with lower prices were being mass produced for a broader audience. This mirrors the changes in children's book publishing a century earlier (See the Mid-Victorian case).

An excellent example of this is *The Little Golden Book* series. Started in 1942, these books had sturdy covers and sold for 25 cents. They sold in bookstores, but also in chain and department stores. In fact, an alphabet book was one of the original twelve first published. Many of these books, incorporating the popular culture of the time were illustrated by famous artists.

By the 1930s, photo-lithography had advanced along with greatly improved methods for colour-separated original art work. Those technological advances, along with the proliferation of print media, animation, and trade publishing promoted the development of illustration as a profession. These new professionals initiated the use of different media, colour, and cartoon imagery resulting in alphabet books that were innovative, distinct, and new.

The baby boom produced schools full of young readers. Kindergarten became part of public education and many schools developed their own libraries. Learning to read was a priority. While the text on the page still drew on the alliteration and nonsense rhymes of the 1800s, "learning your letters" was supplanted with "let's have fun reading". This is exemplified in books such as *Cat in the Hat* by Dr. Seuss (1957). The subversive quality of this book changed the nature of children's literature and influenced classroom reading programs.

The purpose of alphabet books of this time, and of children's books in general was to give children texts and illustrations that would have a special appeal to them. The books created during the 1950s and 1960s are still in print today and are as popular as ever. Visual styles in fashion, home, print, advertising, and children's books broke away from the previous decades. This style introduced lively clean lines, witty word play, and new palettes. The examples in this case show how the changes in printing and especially the mid-century trend of graphic artists turning to book illustration was a boon to children's books that continues to this day.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Eichenberg (1901-1990) was a German-American wood engraver and graphic artist. He illustrated many children's books and famous novels throughout his lifetime. He is well-known for his dark and intense style in both engravings and pen & ink, but *Ape in a Cape*, with colour illustrations, differs from this. Each page has a coloured letter accompanied by an anthropomorphised animal, frequently in a nonsensical situation. The single lines of text provide a phonetic rhyme and are clearly meant to inspire laughter in children and the adults reading with them.

Eichenberg received the Caldecott Honor in 1953 for this book.

Marcia Brown is an author and illustrator who also worked as an educator and a children's librarian.

Peter Piper's Alphabet was first published in the UK in 1813. It was part of a wave of tongue twisters and word games showing up in reading materials for children during this time. The strict Puritanism of the previous century gave rise to learning and entertainment being combined in children's books (See examples in previous cases). Alliteration and limericks were used to teach the alphabet and the phonemes that went with the letter symbols. *Peter Piper's Alphabet*, an excellent alliterative tongue twister was reimagined by Brown for a new and receptive child audience. This book is a good example of a children's book style becoming popular again.

Brown has received the Caldecott Medal and Caldecott Medal Honors more than once. She was nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award twice. In 1992 she was awarded the ALA's Laura Ingalls Wilder Medal for substantial and lasting contributions to children's literature.

In the 1930s Bruno Munari (1907 – 1998), a world renowned Italian graphic designer, began making books for his own children. This work initiated a fifty-year career creating books for children. Characteristic of his design is the use of texture, tactile surfaces, die cuts, and colour to promote kinesthetic learning. To this day his books remain in print. In this exhibit Munari's ABC book is a prime example of his typographic design style and witty illustration. Munari's philosophy of design continues to influence graphic designers and illustrators around the world.

He was awarded the Hans Christian Andersen award (the little Nobel) for his contributions to children's literature in 1974, a graphic award for childhood at the Bologna Children's Book Fair in 1984, and the Lego Prize for individuals or organizations that have made an outstanding contribution to the lives of children in 1986.

“There is so much more to a book than just the reading.” Maurice Sendak

Maurice Sendak (1928-2012) started illustrating children’s books with the help of Ursula Nordstrom of Harper and Brothers. His art emulates an earlier era when the general art movement was going to more abstract realms. His use of panels usually found only in comic books, and children’s feelings and fantasies, meant that Sendak stood out. Pairing simple yet evocative illustrations with spare text means that his books are enjoyed by all ages.

One of the most famous alliterative alphabet books of the twentieth century is *Alligators All Around*, part of the Nutshell Library. It combines rhyming, cadence, and alliteration with simple illustrations of an alligator family. Sendak’s book provides visual literacy and letter learning through an alligator family doing common family things. A young audience can connect with the pictures and text, which reinforces the learning of letters and sounds.

Sendak won the Hans Christian Andersen Award for lasting contributions to children’s literature in 1970 and the Astrid Lindgren Memorial Award for career contributions to children’s literature in 2003.

When this ABC book was published, Dr. Seuss (1904-1991) already had numerous books on the market that had cemented his popularity with both children and adults. He forever changed the flavour of children’s books with his use of colour, made-up words, fantastical beasts, and perfect rhythm.

Seuss headed up Random House’s Beginner Books division from its start in 1957 until he died. He was challenged by his publisher to write an entertaining book for learning how to read. The result was *Cat in the Hat* (1957), which only uses 220 words. Another challenge resulted in *Green Eggs and Ham* (1960), which only uses 50 words.

This ABC book follows the trend of listing objects that begin with that letter, but the objects are not always what we expect. This quirkiness allows for excellent alliteration, and when paired with Seuss’s typical illustrations and bright colours, moves it beyond the regular ABC book. The repetition of sounds and the masterful cadence make it a delight to read out loud and to listen to.

Books in this Case:

Eichenberg, Fritz. *Ape in a Cape*. New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1952. PZ4.9.E343 AP (On loan from the UBC Education Library.)

Brown, Marcia. *Peter Piper's Alphabet: Peter Piper's practical principles of plain and perfect pronunciation. Manifold manifestations made by Marcia Brown*. New York: Charles Scribner, 1959. PZ4.9.B8148 PE (On loan from the UBC Education Library).

Munari, Bruno. *Bruno Munari's ABC*. San Francisco: Chronicle Books LLC, 2006. (Originally published in 1960). From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Sendak, Maurice. *Alligators All Around*. New York: HarperCollins Children's Books, 1962. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Seuss, Dr. *Dr. Seuss's ABC*. New York: Random House Children's Books, 1991. (Originally published in 1963). From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

P Q R

Case 7: 1970s and 1980s Alphabet Books

During the 1970s and early 1980s, children and young adult literature became more pluralistic. The purpose was to reflect an increasingly diverse society and to give voice to those who did not have one. Multicultural literature for children flourished with authors who integrated their experiences in their work although, even now, many ethnic groups are under-represented. Cultural authenticity became an important matter for discussion. An effort to enrich the landscape of children's books with different perspectives became essential for both authors and publishers. There was also an increase in the publication of non-fiction and art books. Writers took on complexity as an important endeavour experimenting with new narrative styles.

Alphabet books of the time show this effort for pluralism and complexity. One example of this is *Two by two / ¿Dos por dos?*, an alphabet bestiary by Toby Talbot, that was published in 1974 in both English and Spanish. Another example is *Jambo Means Hello*, a Swahili alphabet book by Muriel and Tom Feelings, also published in 1974. The alphabet format can be used to inform children about other cultures and places in the world. Themed alphabet books coupled with an interactive "seek-and-find" component led to alphabet books enjoyed by older children.

A Peaceable Kingdom: The Shaker Abecedarius published in 1978 (seen in this case) was inspired by Shaker books created to introduce their way of life to their children. It uses rhyming and nonsense paired with illustrations of animals. This alphabet book still resonates with today's children due to its rhythmic text and the illustrations of wildlife life paired with Shaker imagery.

A Northern Alphabet by Ted Harrison (seen in this case) featured the people, animals, and landscape of northern Canada for the children in Harrison's classroom. While this is a themed alphabet book explicitly for the people of the north, it also introduces a southern audience to the north without racial stereotyping. It is particularly engaging since at the back of the book young readers will find a list of items to locate in each of the pictures. In general, authors and illustrators of books for children and young adults, and specifically alphabet books, were rethinking their content to adjust to a more open and multicultural society as well as a potential older audience.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Anno was born in 1926 in Japan and created his first book for children in 1968. This was *Topsy-Turves: Pictures to Stretch the Imagination*, a wordless book incorporating optical illusions and inspired by M.C. Escher. His most famous picture book is *Anno's Journey*, a wordless travel through medievaesque landscapes using a perspective technique developed in Edo, Japan in the seventeenth century. Anno's books have widespread and enduring popularity. This is due to his ability to marry ancient styles with current techniques, as well as adding in optical illusions and quirky personal touches.

Both the alphabet books created by Anno are wordless and spare. *Anno's Alphabet* shown here, uses a wooden Escher-style letter on the left side and an image of an object that starts with the letter on the right side. However, this book falls into the "interactive" type of alphabet book. There are other things that start with the letter to find in the picture and the borders. *Anno's Magical ABC* (not shown) is an anamorphic alphabet, a style of illustration whose "purpose is solely to mystify and amuse". A cylinder with a reflective surface is required to see the images on the page correctly, otherwise all the letters and objects remain distorted on the page.

Anno has won numerous awards including the Boston Globe-Horn Book Award in 1975 for *Anno's Alphabet*, the Graphic Award, Bologna Children's Book Fair in 1980, and the Hans Christian Andersen Award for lasting contributions to children's literature in 1985.

Roy Eric Peterson worked as an editorial cartoonist for *The Vancouver Province* and *The Vancouver Sun*. His signature award-winning style gives a distinctive “’70’s” flavour to this alphabet book from the early days of Canadian children’s publishing. Many of the pages depict very Canadian and very regional objects for the letters.

This alphabet was originally published in the *Shaker Manifesto* 1882, a monthly periodical produced by the United Societies of Shakers of America. The Shakers lived under strict codes regarding worship, dress, and eating in their communities. They also had very simple education for their children that focused on practical skills. Learning to read and write was part of this education, but the Shakers also loved music, dancing, and acting.

The Provensen’s *Peaceable Kingdom* illustrates each letter with an animal for that letter and many others, real and imagined. They also include Shaker text and pictures of Shakers at work and at play. The rhyme and cadence made this a joy to read for Shaker children and it is still a joy to read now. There is a “seek and find” component to the pictures that make this entertaining as well as a book of learning.

The Provensens both trained at the Art Institute of Chicago and met during WWII working at the Walter Lantz Studio. They illustrated many *Little Golden Books* and Martin designed Tony the Tiger – the Kellogg’s mascot. They won the Caldecott Medal in 1984 for *The Glorious Flight*.

Ted Harrison (1926 – 2015) emigrated from England with his wife and children to the town of Carcross, Yukon in 1967. He came as a teacher, but turned into an artist. His colourful, distinctive style is known around the world. It was influenced by his stay in New Zealand and the landscapes of the Yukon. He wrote books for children because he wanted the Cree children of his area to have books that spoke to them. This alphabet book is quintessentially “Canadian” to both those that live here and those abroad.

He was awarded the IBBY (International Board on Books for Young People) Honor List for Illustration in 1984, *New York Times* Best Illustrated Books list in 1987, and the Order of Canada in 1987.

Australian writer and illustrator, Graeme Base is another children's book creator who studied graphic design and worked as a commercial artist before switching careers. *Animalia* took three years to create and was an immediate success in the realm of picture books, and has sold over three million copies.

Base's illustrations fill the page and are saturated with colour. In his hands, the traditional alphabet book was changed into an intricate art piece. Each illustration is full of objects that start with that letter. Some objects are obvious and others hidden. Base carries on the alliteration and "seek-and-find" elements of the modern alphabet book with *Animalia*. It is an alphabet book for all ages with the letter and phoneme learning taking a back seat to the visual appreciation of the pictures.

Base was awarded the Young Australian's Best Book Award - Best Picture Story Book in 1987, the Picture Book of the Year: Honour Book for 1987 from the Children's Book Council of Australia, and the Picture Book Winner in 1988 from the Kids Own Australian Literature Awards.

Books in this Case:

Anno, Mitsumasa. *Anno's Alphabet*. London: Bodley Head. 1974. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.



Peterson, Roy. *The Canadian ABC Book*. Edmonton: Hurtig Publishing. 1977. PZ4.9.P445 Cn 1977

Peaceable Kingdom: The Shaker Abecedarius. Illustrated by Alice & Martin Provensen. Markham, Penguin Books Canada Ltd. 1981. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.



Harrison, Ted. *A Northern Alphabet*. Montreal: Tundra Books. 1982. PZ4.9.H258 Nr 1982

Base, Graeme. *Animalia*. Toronto: Stoddart Publishing Co. Ltd. 1993. (Originally published in 1986). From the collection of Sarah Bagshaw.

S T U

Case 8: The Next “Turn of the Century” Alphabet Books

The alphabet books in this case are excellent examples of “books as art”. The visual components on each set of pages appears to be more important than the letter learning. These books are still organized in the well-known, predictable pattern. However, the images portrayed on the page create different visual elements for a variety of ages to enjoy pouring over, puzzling out the meaning of the images, or finding the letters hidden therein.

Once again, the “Turn of the Century” alphabet books are more for entertainment than learning and these books mirror the changes that were happening in the mid-Victorian era (see Case 2). The 1990s had dramatic advances in technology, especially computers, which afforded the application of new designs and styles to children’s picture books. The movement of graphic artists and painters into children’s book illustration can be compared to Greenaway, Caldecott, and Crane being hired to illustrate children’s books in the mid-to-late 1800s. The illustrators in this case are also trained artists who continue to work on commission pieces as well as children’s books. In the case of Van Allsburg and Ehlert, the popularity of their work allowed them to move from full-time artist to full-time children’s book illustration and creation.

Most of these alphabet books contain minimal texts around a central theme. The artistic portrayal of objects for each letter reinforces this theme as well as the sound and letter connection. The themes and sub-themes within many of these books also appeal to older audiences already familiar with alphabet schema. Visual enjoyment rather than teaching letter sounds through rhyming, repetitive text is the focus of many of the alphabet books of the 1990s.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Chris Van Allsburg received his MFA in sculpture from the Rhode Island School of Design. When David Macaulay (author and illustrator) saw his drawings and illustrations, he put his editor at Houghton Mifflin in touch with Van Allsburg. This led to the publication of eighteen amazing picture books, written and illustrated by Van Allsburg. He is an example of a children’s book creator coming from an artistic background, rather than a literature one.

His pointillist style has been compared to Georges Seurat. He also uses the technique of “chiaroscuro”: contrasting light and dark to create a shadowed effect giving three-dimensional form. This style of illustration pairs well with the stories he creates; a mix of reality, fantasy, and mystery. His books capture the possibility of the imaginary becoming real for children. While *The Z was Zapped* lacks a traditional “story”, it presents the images of twenty-six characters, each performing on a curtained stage with no text. *The Z was Zapped* is very like Anno’s alphabet book from the previous case because the mystery is built into the puzzle of each image. What does the letter on the stage really stand for? The reader finds out by turning the page where one line of text reveals all:

“The V was mysteriously Vanishing.”

Van Allsburg's picture book *The Garden of Abdul Gasazi* was a Caldecott Medal honour book in 1980. He won the Caldecott Medal in 1981 for *Jumanji* and in 1985 for *The Polar Express*. He was also nominated for the Hans Christian Andersen Award in 1986.

Lois Ehlert is another example of a graphic artist and illustrator who has had great success creating picture books for children. Ehlert has created numerous books and won many awards. Her distinctive collage style, using paper, objects and bright colours is similar to the styles of Eric Carle and Leo Lionni. She started out illustrating books for others, but in the 1980s, started writing her own material as well. Her books continue to be favourites with young families, teachers and librarians.

In this exhibit, there are two alphabet books with Ehlert's signature style. *Eating the Alphabet* seen here, is full of bright paper collage fruits and vegetables, recognizable to most Western children. This is another example of an alphabet book created around a theme. The illustrations show objects, in this case the fruits and vegetables, that start with that letter and the name is written out beside the image. A theme combined with a clear image helps children to determine what the words shown are. *Eating the Alphabet* also includes all text in bold upper and lower case and has a glossary at the back with information about all the fruits and vegetables portrayed within.

Ehlert was awarded the Caldecott Medal Honor in 1989 for *Color Zoo*. In 1990 *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom* won the Boston-Globe Horn Book Honor Award, the ALA Notable Children's Book, and the Top 100 Picture Books – School Library Journal 2012.

Stephen T. Johnson is an artist and teacher who has created children's books, does commercial artwork, and creates public art. He is interested in the alphabet and language and this interest began with his work on the book displayed here. He continues to work on alphabet pieces – “literal abstractions” which were compiled in the book titled *A is for Art: An Abstract Alphabet*.

In *Alphabet City*, Johnson's photorealistic images of cityscapes are used to illustrate each letter of the alphabet. These images were created using pastels, watercolours, gouache, and charcoal. At first glance they appear to be photographs of urban locations, but with further looking, these paintings also portray an alphabet letter. This wordless seek-and-find alphabet book is for both children and adults with the emphasis shifted from letter learning to artistic enjoyment.

Johnson was awarded the Caldecott Medal Honor in 1996 and *New York Times* Best Illustrated Book of the Year, both for *Alphabet City*.

Kevin Major is an award-winning Canadian writer for both children and adults. Twenty-five years after Peterson's *The Canadian ABC Book* (see Case 7), Major and Daniel created another alphabet book focusing solely on Canadian places, history, cultural icons, and cultural imagery. *Eh? To Zed* uses the typical format of one letter per page, words that start with that letter and the images to match. However, there is subtle play on cultural nuances and Canadian knowledge that works for both children and adults. This themed alphabet book gives a mix of contemporary and historical to celebrate Canada and what it means to be Canadian.

Eh? To Zed was nominated for the Mr. Christie Award, Ann Conner-Brimer Award, and the Ruth Schwartz Award.

Books in this Case:

Van Allsburg, Chris. *The Z was Zapped*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1987. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Ehlert, Lois. *Eating the Alphabet: Fruits & Vegetables from A to Z*. New York: Voyager Books. 1989. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Johnson, Stephen T. *Alphabet City*. New York: Puffin Books. 1995. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.



Major, Kevin. *Eh? to Zed: A Canadian Abecedarium*. Illustrated by Alan Daniel. Edmonton: Red Deer Press. 2001.

V W X

Case 9: The New Millennium Alphabet Books

The familiar form and predictable pattern of an alphabet book continues to be published today. A is for Apple and B is for Ball are produced in sturdy board book form for early letter and sound recognition. As children grow older and their vocabulary grows, the alphabet book becomes a picture book to investigate and enjoy puzzling over. When alphabet books are shared with children in later elementary school they are usually pushed aside as “baby books”. However, themed alphabet books can be used to teach children other things beyond the letters on the page.

The alphabet books in this case are examples of the new world of alphabet books for children. These books incorporate visually stunning artwork with new letter and word combinations. Some alphabet books are created just for the enjoyment that a child or adult would get from looking at the pictures or lifting the flaps. Other alphabet books are created around a theme. These different themes provide opportunities for older children to learn about the world, nature, or other cultures. Because the format is well-known, attention can be focused on the content within the text provided and in the visual imagery that accompanies it.

This chronological journey has gone from simple alphabets letter-pressed into rag paper to intricate alphabets printed in rich colours in all shapes and sizes. At each stage along the way these books have been about the twenty-six letters of the English alphabet. The sounds those letters represent, and the many words associated with those letters have been the starting point for authors and illustrators to create an incredible variety of alphabet books for children. Over time, the words and illustrative styles on the page have changed. These changes reflect prevailing attitudes, cultural context, and children's role in society. From Quince to Queen, Xerxes to Xylophone, and Apple Pie to Astronauts, the world of alphabet books has gone through many permutations. While the alphabet remains the same, its portrayal and publication is available in myriad forms and we are the luckier for it.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Wallace Edwards trained at the Ontario College of Art. He creates pieces for public commissions, magazines, private collections, and children's books. *Alphabeasts* introduces one animal for each letter all of which live in a fancy Victorian mansion. This picture book is about the art on each page. Edwards used the alphabet format as a vehicle to showcase his images that are at once bizarre, but captivating. This is not a simple alphabet book for learning the alphabet, but rather an entertaining picture book for both children and adults.

Alphabeasts won the Governor General's Literary Award for children's book illustration in 2002. Edwards was shortlisted for the Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award and a finalist for the Ruth and Sylvia Schwartz Children's Book Award.

Sharon Werner and Sarah Forss are another example of graphic designers trying their hand at a children's book. Werner is the founder of Werner Design Werks Inc., a branding and design company. *Alphabeasties* uses the familiar form of an alphabet book, the very common theme of animals, and (to graphic designers) the familiar forms of typography. This book has the clean lines of a modern product label combined with bright colours and fun animals created out of letters. It is an excellent example of an interactive alphabet book for learning and entertainment. Similar in purpose to the alphabet books produced at the turn of the previous century, but with very obvious modern production values.

Julie Flett trained in art at Concordia University and Emily Carr University of Art + Design. She is Cree-Métis and is the first-time recipient of the 2014 Aboriginal Literature Award. *Owls See Clearly at Night* is an alphabet book using words from the Michif language for the 26 letters. The English word is written underneath and both are paired with Flett's illustrations capturing the natural world.

"Our First Nation, Métis, and Inuit communities vitally need books with text and artwork that reflect our cultures and realities. Our works are also critical resources for increasing awareness and understanding in Canadian society, contributing relevancy to literacy programs, improving curricula, at all levels, across Canada, and adding significantly to the body of Canadian literature." – Julie Flett – Interview with 49thShelf.com

Owls See Clearly at Night won the Christie Harris Illustrated Children's Literature Prize, the 2010 Elizabeth Mazrik-Cleaver Award, and the BC Book Prize. It was also shortlisted for the 2011 Amelia Frances Howard-Gibbon Award and the Governor General's Literary Award for children's book illustration.

West Coast Wild is a good example of a themed alphabet book focusing on a place. Many alphabet books use the theme of "place" to illustrate their letters. In this book, the usual format of words and sounds to teach the letters is there, but this type of theme means that non-fiction elements can be included. In this instance "place" is the west coast of Vancouver Island and award-winning Hodge has paired each letter with a piece of text imparting information about creatures or aspects of the habitat found in this locale.

Hodge has written more than twenty-five books for children, with a focus on non-fiction for a variety of ages. Her informative text for each letter is paired with Karen Reczuch's intensely realistic watercolour and pencil crayon pictures. Trained in commercial art and illustration, Reczuch went on to children's book illustration and has also won awards.

It is fitting to end our chronological journey with an alphabet book that showcases the west coast of BC, was written by a Vancouver author, and just won a Canadian award.

West Coast Wild won the 2016 Information Book Award from the Children's Literature Roundtable of Canada. It was also shortlisted for the Ontario Library Association's Silver Birch Express Award and the Chocolate Lily Award.

Books in this Case:



Edwards, Wallace. *Alphabeasts*. Toronto: Kids Can Press. 2002. From the collection of Heather Fitzgerald and Jeremy Tankard.

Werner, Sharon & Forss, Sarah Nelson. *Alphabeasties and Other Amazing Types*. Maplewood: Blue Apple Books. 2009. From the collection of Susan Dent.



Flett, Julie. *Lii Yüboo Nayaapiwak lii Swer – L’Alfabet di Michif. Owls See Clearly at Night – A Michif Alphabet*. Translation by Grace (Ledoux) Zoldy & Heather Souter. Vancouver: Simply Read Books. 2010. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Viano, Hannah. *S is for Salmon: A Pacific Northwest Alphabet*. Seattle: Sasquatch Books. 2014. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.



Hodge, Deborah. *West Coast Wild: A Nature Alphabet*. Illustrated by Karen Reczuch. Toronto: Groundwood Books. 2015. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Y Z

Tall Case: Narrative Alphabet Books

Narrative alphabet books build a story in a more traditional way, with the pages relating to each other and using the sequential order of the alphabet as the main structural resource of the story. This is different from the traditional alphabet book where each letter presents a separate idea along with an illustration. There is no fragmentation in narrative alphabet books, as the continuity and flow of the story is supported by the reader’s knowledge of the alphabet. The reader knows what letter will come next in the tale. Often the grammatical structure is deliberately playful, increasing the interest of children who are learning and playing at the same time.

Curious George Learns the Alphabet, by H. A. Rey, originally published in 1963, is a fine example of a narrative alphabet book. The main character is doing the same thing as the reader. Curious George is learning to read while the reader is learning to read. This example of metafiction helps the reader identify with the main character and engage with the story.

Another interesting example is *Chicka, chicka... BOOM! BOOM!*, a classic by Bill Martin and John Archambault, first published in 1989. This book offers a musical and rhyming adventure with letters racing to the top a coconut tree.

Alphabet books are complex when they involve stories that follow the alphabetical sequence of twenty-six letters. This can be very effective for older children who know their letters and are already familiar with the pattern and format of alphabet books. By offering a story, this type of picture book moves beyond visual and auditory letter connections. In a narrative alphabet book the letters tell a story, while also introducing and exploring a topic, promoting further language development, and entertaining both children and adults.

Aphorisms, Amusements, and Anecdotes:

Wanda Gág (1893 – 1946) is most famous for her book *Millions of Cats*, published in 1928 and is still in print today. Gág (pronounced like “bog” not “bag”) came from a large family that supported artistic endeavors even during extreme poverty. She studied printmaking at the Art Students League in New York City on a scholarship. An exhibition of her prints brought her to the attention of a scout for the publishing house Coward-McCann. This was the start of a rich career writing and illustrating children’s books. *The ABC Bunny* is an alphabet book which provided young children with a story in both the pictures and text. Wanda’s brother Howard did the hand lettering in many of her books, including this one.

The ABC Bunny was awarded the ALA Newbery Honor in 1934. *Millions of Cats* was awarded the ALA Newbery Honor in 1929.

H.A. Rey (1898 – 1977) with his wife Margret created many children’s books, but the *Curious George* series is what they are most famous for. The Reys fled Paris in 1940 in advance of the arrival of the Nazis. All they had with them were their bicycles, coats, and book manuscripts, which included *Curious George*. Eventually they settled in New York where this famous book was published in 1941. The Man with the Yellow Hat and his monkey friend went on to have further adventures together and continue to be enjoyed by young children today.

Curious George Learns the Alphabet mixes picture book with alphabet book. The story of George learning his letters from the Man with the Yellow Hat is interspersed with the typical alphabet book format of letters, rhyming text, and objects starting with the letter.

Anglund is an author and illustrator of more than 120 books. She has a signature style with sweet-looking children in old-fashioned dress with wide-set eyes and rosy cheeks. The immense popularity of her books led to the production of many spin-off items such as dolls, clothing, greeting cards, and tea sets.

Oliver Jeffers works as a freelance illustrator and a painter. His children's picture books are famous around the world and have won many awards. Jeffers creates stories that involve serious subjects, but in a whimsical way. His artistic style is very distinctive. *Once Upon an Alphabet* subverts the alphabet book genre by creating a very short story for each letter, making it longer than a typical alphabet book. This is a narrative alphabet book created for older children and adults.

Jeffer's picture book *Lost and Found* won the 2006 Gold Medal of the Nestlé Smarties Book Prize, the 2006 Blue Peter Book Award, and was short-listed for the 2006 Kate Greenaway Medal. Many of his books have been on the *New York Times* bestseller list, with *The Day the Crayons Quit* (written by Drew Daywalt) going to No. 1.

Books in this Case:

Atkins, Pamela. *The Lu Lu Alphabet, arranged as a story*. New York: H. & S. Raynor. 1848. PZ6 1848 C544

Gág, Wanda. *The ABC Bunny*. Hand lettered by Howard Gág. New York: Coward, McCann & Geohegan. 1933. PZ4.9 .G121 A

Rey, H.A. *Curious George Learns the Alphabet*. New York: Houghton Mifflin Company. 1991. (Originally published in 1963). From the collection of Sarah Bagshaw.

Anglund, Joan Walsh. *A is for Always: An ABC Book*. New York: Harcourt, Brace & World. 1968. PZ4.9.A53 As 1968

Martin Jr., Bill & Archambault, John. *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*. Illustrated by Lois



Bar-el, Dan. *Alphabetter*. Illustrated by Graham Ross. Victoria: Orca Books. 2006. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.

Jeffers, Oliver. *Once Upon an Alphabet: Short Stories for All the Letters*. London: HarperCollins Children's Books. 2014. From the collection of Kathie Shoemaker.



Gillingham, Sara. *Alpha Bravo Charlie: The Complete Book of Nautical Codes*. New York: Phaidon Press Inc. 2016.

Tall Case: Alphabet Books for Adults

The alphabet book is a form that is familiar to all and pervasive in Western culture. Babies are exposed to early board books with the much used “A is for Apple.” Toddlers and parents share alphabet books on many themes such as trucks, farms, or outer-space. By the time a child goes to pre-school she has been exposed to these and many other silly, rhyming alliterative ones and can recite her ABCs.

The didactic nature of alphabet books is clear, even with slight twists on the usual form. They are often for learning phonemes, letter symbols, and vocabulary. However, with the explosion of picture books since the 1950s, many types of alphabet books have been produced. The formula invites creators to play with it, both linguistically and artistically. Furthermore, this familiar form can be aimed at older children and adults.

This case holds examples of alphabet books aimed at those older audiences. By subverting the form and creating an “anti-alphabet” book, parents can enjoy reading it even more than the child. For example; Silverstein’s alphabet book is labelled “...for adults only”. It subverts the moral instruction in alphabet books of previous centuries by encouraging bad behaviour in innocent children.

By adding dark content, or using it as a canvas for artistic expression, authors and illustrators are adding to the genre in unexpected ways, though rhyming, rhythm, and alliteration are still used. Gorey captured all of this in his wonderfully dark and gothic *Gashlycrumb Tinies*. Some of these books have illustrations that include many objects that start with the letter, but those objects might be strange and obscure. The connections between letter, text, and picture are frequently based on world knowledge or cultural context likely impossible for a small child to decipher. Chaperon’s *Eerie Dearies* mixes the darkness of the gothic genre and children’s excuses for missing school to create an alphabet book clearly aimed at grown-ups.

Many of the alphabet books being produced today are artistic masterpieces. In the books displayed here each page is a piece of art created around the focal point of a letter, but the book has nothing to do with teaching the alphabet to small children. Isabelle Arsenault and Norman Messenger’s books are lovely examples of alphabet as art. The familiarity of the alphabet book concept allows the older child or adult reader to be cast back into early childhood even though the concept may be disguised in a new “grown-up” form.

Books in this Case:

Silverstein, Shel. *Uncle Shelby’s ABZ: A Primer for Tender Young Minds*. New York: Simon & Schuster Inc. 1985. (Originally published in 1961). From the collection of Chris Vriesema-Magnuson.

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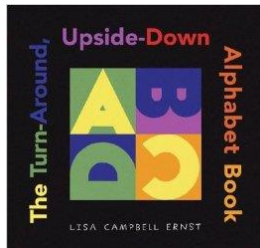
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26 Interesting Alphabet Facts

A: Although many alphabet books are acrostic poems, there can also be mesostic poems, with the middle letters forming the alphabet. Sometimes there are telestic poems with the alphabet occurring at the end of the line. **A**tttributed to C.C. Bombaugh (1900s) this alphabet poem is both acrostic and mesostic. The poem is about the Crimean War, written just after those events:

**“An Austrian army awfully arrayed
Boldly by battery besieged Belgrade
Cossack commanders cannoning come
Dealing destruction’s devastating doom.
Every endeavor engineers essay,
For fame, for fortune fighting – furious fray!”**

B: In *The Turn-Around, Upside-Down Alphabet Book*, by Lisa Campbell Ernst (2004), the author encourages readers to look carefully at the shape of the letters. For example, when turning the book ninety degrees, the letter **B** becomes goggles. If the reader keeps moving the book then the **B** becomes a butterfly, and then windows in a castle tower.























Source: www.amazon.com

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=w44UO1pskqY>

C: When writing *Eating the Alphabet*, Lois Ehlert used to go to a vegetable store close to her house on Saturdays and buy fruits and vegetables alphabetically. She would go home, draw them and eat them. The third Saturday she bought **c**orn, **c**elery, **c**arrots and **c**ucumbers and made a salad, and for dessert she had **c**herries. When the book was finally published, she took it to the store to show to the employees.

D: *Chicka Chicka Boom Boom*, by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, and illustrated by Louis Elhert, features letters with human attributes. Letter **D** hurts its knee while falling out of the tree. The rhythm in the text is similar to vocal improvisation in jazz that is called scat scanning.

E: In the Old Irish and Ogham alphabets, letters are named after trees due to their shapes. The letter **E** refers to **Edad/Eadhadh** which represents the aspen or poplar tree.

 n <i>nin</i> "ash"	 q <i>ceirt</i> "apple tree"	 r <i>ruis</i> "elder"	 i <i>idad</i> "yew"
 s <i>sail</i> "willow"	 c <i>coll</i> "hazel"	 z <i>straif</i> "blackthorn"	 e <i>edad</i> "aspen"
 f <i>fer</i> "fern"	 t <i>tinne</i> "holly, elder"	 ng <i>getal</i> "broom"	 u <i>ur</i> "heath"
 l <i>luis</i> "rowan"	 d <i>duir</i> "oak"	 g <i>gort</i> "ivy"	 o <i>onn</i> "furze"
 b <i>beithe</i> "birch"	 h <i>huath</i> "whitethorn"	 m <i>muinn</i> "vine"	 a <i>ailm</i> "pine tree"

Source: <http://www.ancientscripts.com/ogham.html>

F: *A to Z Mysteries*, by Ron Roy, is a series of 26 books, one for each letter of the alphabet. In the six book of the series, **Falcon Feathers**, the three child detectives look for an explanation when they find out that somebody is stealing **f**alcons from their nests.

G: The rhyme, *Apple Pie ABC* was first mentioned in 1671 and covers only the letters from **A** to **G**.

"A was an Apple Pie, B bit it, C cut it, D dealt it, E eat it, F fought for it, **G** got it."

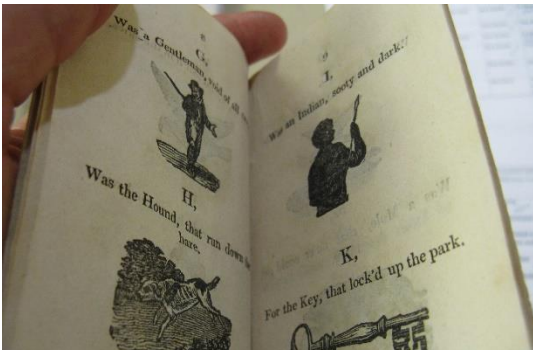
In 1770 in London, a macabre variation of the rhyme was published. It was called *The Tragical Death of A, Apple Pie Who Was Cut to Pieces and Eat by Twenty-Five Gentlemen with whom All Little People Ought to be Very Well acquainted*.

H: A pastime for Lewis Carroll was manipulating letters. In *Alice Through the Looking Glass*, Alice creates a short poem in conversation with the King about the letter **H**:

'I love my love with an H,' Alice couldn't help beginning, 'because he is Happy. I hate him with an H, because he is Hideous. I fed him with – with – with Ham-sandwiches and Hay. His name is Haigha, and he lives – ' 'He lives on the Hill', the King remarked simply, without the least idea he was joining in the game...'

Lewis Carroll, 1871.

I-J: Early English alphabets did not distinguish between the letters **I** and **J**, before the mid nineteenth century. Many publications did not contain the letter **J**.



Source: Sarah Bagshaw photograph

For example: *Mrs Lovechild's golden present: for all good little boys and girls*. York: J. Kendrew, 1820.

Unfortunately, in these early alphabet books, **I** often stood for the word **Indian**.

K: In a 1721 edition of the standard *Primer*, the rhyme 'our **KING** the good, No man of blood', for the letter **K**, was changed in the 1771 edition. It was changed to: 'Proud **Korah's** trop was swallowed up' because of a conflict with the English monarchy. Frequently rhymes changed over time for political or religious reasons.

L: In *The Neverending Story*, by Michael Ende, chapters start with letters of the alphabet. The Italian translation published in 1981 by Longanesi used illustrations by Antonio Basoli from his book, *Alfabeto pittorico, ossia raccolta di pensieri pittorici composti di oggetti cominciati dalle singole lettere alfabetiche* (1839). These illustrations relate to the dream-like atmosphere of the entire book. Basoli's illustration for the letter **L** is a tower overlooking the sea, besieged by enemies that have come in boats to take the city.



Source: <http://www.italianways.com/basolis-alphabet-and-the-neverending-story/>

M: In his story "The Italian Prisoner" (1860), Charles Dickens used the well-known alphabet rhyme *Apple Pie ABC* to speak about the difficulties of travelling with a big bottle of wine through Italy.

"The suspicious that attached to this innocent Bottle greatly aggravated my difficulties. It was like the apple-pie in the child's book. Parma pouted at it, **M**odena mocked it, Tuscany tackled it, Napples nibbled it, Rome refused it, Austria accused it, Soldiers suspected it, Jesuits jobbed it."

N: In 1684, Giuseppe Maria Mitelli published *Alphabet in a Dream* (*Alfabeto in sogno*). In the introduction to this book, Mitelli says that Morpheus visited him while sleeping. In this dream, he saw the shapes of the alphabet within human ghostly figures. Upon waking he went to work to recreate these visions.

The letter **N** has the shape of a dead woman being carried on a board by a man, while a one-legged man with a crutch follows. Skulls and a bat complete the illustration.



Source: <http://www.italianways.com/mitelli-the-artist-who-dreamed-of-the-alphabet/>

O: - An univocalic poem (one that uses on one vowel), by C. C. Bombaugh:

**No cool monsoons blow soft on Oxford don,
Orthodox, jog-trot, book-worm Solomons.**

In 1957, American author James Thurber published a fairy tale called *The Wonderful O*, in which villains forbade the use of the letter **O** on the island of **O**ooroo.

P: In *A Was Once an Apple Pie* (1992) by Edward Lear, children sang, for the letter **P**:

**“P was once a little pig,
piggy, wiggy, jiggy, piggy,
plump, and biggy, little pig!”**

Q: “The very last **q**uestion is the **q**uestion that they are looking for”, says Oliver Jeffers when speaking about letter **Q** in *Once Upon an Alphabet*:

“This story is supposed
to be about a **q**uestion.
But I can’t find it anywhere.
Do you know where it is?”

R: Gavriil Derzhavin, a Russian author of the 18th century, avoided the letter **R** in his poem “The Nightingale” because of its harsh sound that does not work with the singing of the bird.

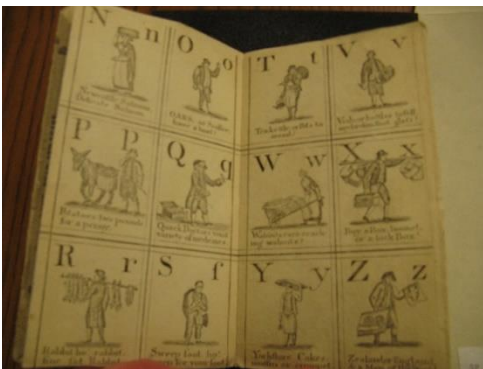
S: A pangrammatic lipogram is a word game in which you write a paragraph avoiding a certain letter. In “***The quick brown fox jumped over the lazy dog***” sentence every letter of the alphabet is present except the letter **S**.

T: Another example of a lipogram is *Mary Had a Little Lamb*, by author Ross Eckler Jr which omits the letter **T**.

**“Mary had a small lamb
His fleece was pale as snow
And every place where Mary walked
Her lamb did also go.**

**He came inside her classroom once
Which broke a rigid rule
How children all did laugh and play
On seeing a lamb in school!”**

U-V: Early English alphabets did not distinguish between the letters **U** and **V**, before the mid nineteenth century. Many publications did not contain the letter **U**.



Source: Sarah Bagshaw photograph

W: Graeme Base's favorite animal is the **w**arthog, but he forgot the **w**arthog **w**hen he **w**rote *Animalia* –letter **W** is devoted to **w**asps. Base said that he **w**rote *Animalia* in a momentary madness, because “**w**ho in their right mind **w**ould have imagined the **w**orld needed or **w**anted another English—language alphabet book?!”

X: There has been a lasting challenge with the most difficult letters, especially **X**. Authors have found ways of evading it, even omitting it entirely. In a series of moral poems for children included in a book called *A Moral Alphabet* (1899), Hilaire Belloc writes:

**“No reasonable little Child expects
A Grown-up Man to make a rhyme on X.”**

According to *Biography* (a documentary series on CBS), *Dr. Seuss's ABC* (1963) contained a page that was rejected when the book was published.

**“Big X
Little x
X x X
Someday, kiddies, you will learn about sex.”**

Y: British artists William Nicholson and James Pryde worked together under the pseudonym of the Beggarstaffs. They created *An Alphabet* in 1897. The bold design and the illustrations in this book are thought to have contributed to the renewal of interest in wood engraving as an art form in the 1930s. ‘**A** is for artist’ presents Nicholson’s self portrait, and ‘**B** is a beggar’ is a portrait of Pryde. The letter **Y** presents a country man, or **Y**okel, in a smock and chewing a straw.



Source:

<https://www.sandersoxford.com/shop/product/y-is-for-yokel/>

Z: The words used to illustrate the letter **Z** in early alphabet books are quite different from the letters used now. **Z**any was a common one, sometimes illustrated with a court jester or a child in a “dunce” cap in a classroom. **Z**ephyr was also used for the letter **Z**, although children nowadays would not know what it meant.



Z was a Zany,
who looked a great fool.

Source: <https://historiann.com/2011/12/15/z-is-for-zany/>

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