

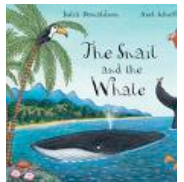
# literary **mama**

reading for the maternally inclined

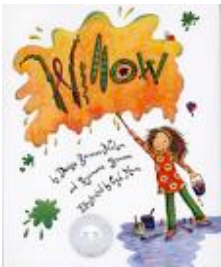
## Essential Reading: Reading Aloud

Winter snows find many of us spending time snuggled up with kids home from school. This month, the staff of Literary Mama shares their favorite titles to read aloud. Cozy up with one of these today!

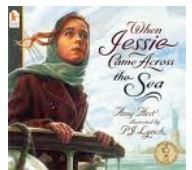
[Blog](#) Editor, [Amy Mercer](#), shares, "I love to read [The Snail and the Whale](#) by Julia Donaldson and Axel Sheffler. All of their books are fun to read aloud but this one is my favorite. The illustrations of the snail traveling with the whale are wonderful and the adventures they have are exciting! With lines like, 'This is the sea, so wild and free, that carried the whale and the snail on his tail to towering icebergs and far-off lands, with fiery mountains and golden sands,' this is the kind of book that is meant to be read out loud with lots of enthusiasm!"



Heather Cori, [Columnist](#), writes, "Imagine all the kids in art class drawing the exact same thing and receiving praise--except one. In [Willow](#), by Denise Brennan-Nelson and Rosemarie Brennan, a young girl draws blue apples in art class, which her teacher thinks is 'horrid.' But, even after repeated rejection, she is steadfast in her kindness and her risk-taking art. On her way to winter break she gives her art teacher a gift that changes her (and the whole art program) forever! My five-year-old, Ahna, asked for this book every night for the three weeks it was checked out from the library. Sometimes she'll comment how her art is like Willow's."



[Kate Haas](#), Creative Non-Fiction Co-Editor, says, "I'm a sucker for 'coming to America' stories, and [When Jessie Came Across the Sea](#) is one of my favorite picture books to read aloud. Author Amy Hest tells the story of Jessie, a poor girl from a village in Eastern Europe who must leave her beloved grandmother and travel to New York City where she works as a seamstress, saving her money for three years until she can buy a ticket for her grandmother to join her. The illustrations by P.J. Lynch are gorgeous and moving: the immigrants huddled aboard ship, the crowded city streets, snow-covered Central Park, the library where Jessie studies, the wide sea. As I read this book to my kids, I can't help thinking about the people in our



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family who 'came across the sea' at around the same time Jessie did. I don't know much about them, but Jessie's story gives me -- and more importantly, my kids -- a window into what that experience must have been like. The only problem is that I can't make it to the end of the book without crying."

Profiles Copy Editor, [Jenny Hobson](#), writes, "[God Went To Beauty School](#) is a book of poems by Cynthia Rylant, whom you may know better as the author of the Henry and Mudge books and other kid favorites. The first line of the title poem is 'He went there to learn how / to give a good perm / just crazy about nails.' I love to read this book aloud at least once a year and have recorded it for my family. Rylant imagines God as a person doing mundane, everyday things just like the rest of us. And then there are the almost hidden moments of the infinite in each poem that make it truly worth reading aloud. Kids love it because they understand it."



Columns Editor, Nicole Stellon O'Donnell, shares, "I love [Owl Moon](#) by Jane Yolen. The language is stunning. The music of the night comes through in Yolen's words. John Schoenherr's illustrations bring the woods indoors. Whenever I finish reading it to my girls, I want to hear it once more, with the same stunned desire I feel when I'm standing in the woods listening to a real owl. When its hollow call ends, I hold my breath, hoping I will hear it again."

Literary Reflections Co-Editor, [Christina Marie Speed](#), shares, "Who can resist a story with words like 'Magic blankies and brown, big teddies, dream time comes to cozy beddies'? I adore reading [Mavis and Her Marvelous Mooncakes](#) by Dar Hosta aloud to my sons, who are now five and seven. This book was given to us as a birthday gift four years ago, and hearing Hosta's lyrical words -- and feeling them in my mouth -- still brings a calm joy to my sons and me. The story mirrors the phases of the moon, and at the end, Hosta features a child-friendly explanation of this process. It is a delicious read-aloud!"

