

A young girl with long brown hair, wearing a light blue dress, stands in a library aisle. She is looking up and pointing her right index finger at a white call number label with a red letter 'N' on a bookshelf. The shelves are filled with books, and the lighting is warm and focused on the girl.

LANDMARK STUDY SERIES

School Libraries in Crisis:

Rebuilding book culture
for Canadian children

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October 2026

Executive summary

Canada's school libraries are in crisis, and many are now threatened with extinction. Once central to school life, they have been transformed into "learning commons" that prioritize technology, collaboration, and digital access over books, sustained reading, and cultural literacy. At the same time, the disappearance of teacher-librarians and the shrinking of physical collections have meant that book curation has lost its venerable meaning of cultivating beauty and human flourishing. Instead, the new curation narrows to political ends that impoverish. The result is a generation increasingly detached from whole books and the shared literary knowledge essential to the vitality of Canadian democratic values and traditions.

Compounding this decline are aggressive equity-based weeding policies and "culture war" conflicts over book selection. While intended to promote inclusion, these processes have often led to the removal of classic works and pre-1970 books, effectively narrowing students' exposure to foundational texts. Meanwhile, public debates over "book bans"—from both progressive and conservative perspectives—mask a deeper issue: the steady disappearance of book culture itself. The controversy is real, but it is being waged on diminished terrain as book libraries disappear and the proportion of readers shrinks among the younger generation.

Research in cognitive science and education underscores the importance of reading whole books for developing comprehension, background knowledge, and critical thinking. Influenced by E.D. Hirsch's concept of cultural literacy, this paper argues for a return to knowledge-rich curricula supported by robust library collections. A revitalized model would combine Core Knowledge classics with significant Canadian works, cultivating both intellectual rigour and culture.

Five key recommendations are presented to change the trajectory. First, restore libraries as sanctuaries for reading, reflection, and discussion. Second, adopt a Core Knowledge approach adapted to Canadian traditions and identity. Third, reassess equity and diversity screening practices that unintentionally exclude literature of profound significance to successive generations. Fourth, replace restrictive approval processes with an openness to knowledge-building curriculum and book collections grounded in professional library standards. Finally, support teacher-librarians and invest in professional development to foster an appreciation for, and broaden expertise in, classic books at the heart of our cultural tradition.

Rebuilding school libraries means restoring good and great books to the centre of Canadian primary and secondary education and reaffirming their role as repositories of knowledge that spark curiosity, deeper understanding, and fresh insights among today's students. It all starts in the early grades, which is the prime focus of this study.

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Introduction

Canada's school libraries are unmoored and have lost their bearings. Once central to school life, many have been reduced to "learning commons" focused more on technology, collaboration, and digital access than on books, reading, and cultural literacy. Teacher-librarians are disappearing, collections are shrinking, and classic works of literature are increasingly screened out through equity-based "weeding" policies and sensitivity reviews.¹ The result is a growing generation of students with less exposure to whole books, sustained reading, and the shared literary foundations essential to full democratic citizenship and deeper understanding of our cultural traditions.

Recent controversies over school libraries demonstrate that both sides in the "culture war" pursue "book bans" to cleanse collections. Activist parents, professional library associations, and pressure groups on the left and the right demand that school libraries shield children from words and ideas that contain what they deem to be the "wrong" models for living.² Both assume that by limiting what students read, they can change society to reflect their worldview. This policy paper demonstrates that such highly publicized skirmishes are being waged on a much-diminished terrain. From coast to coast, province to province, we are gradually becoming a nation of non-readers.³ The deeper and more hidden crisis is the one posing an existential threat to book culture itself and affecting an entire generation of children.

Revitalizing school libraries must begin with restoring books—and especially Great Books—to the centre of K–9 education. Today's Canadian school libraries have evolved from book-centred institutions into multi-purpose digital spaces and reflect the largely unintended consequences of aggressive equity screening and bias review policies. Screening out books with a Eurocentric bias that deal with "controversial topics" and "forbidden words" led to removing books published before 1970, including a fair number of classics.⁴ Fierce debates over "age-appropriate titles" or "explicit sexual references" or the inclusion of graphic novels and books exploring gender issues mask a deeper malaise.

The survival of libraries as repositories of whole books and timeless classic works is what is at stake. In that respect, the September 2023 Peel District Board of Education directive to remove all books published before 2008 is a far graver concern.⁵ Rather than removing them, we should be cherishing those books and finding ways to integrate them back into the contemporary curriculum. It can and should be done so children and teens are re-introduced to the full treasury of books, providing the context for students to fully appreciate why they are cornerstones of our shared cultural heritage.

The problem: School libraries in crisis

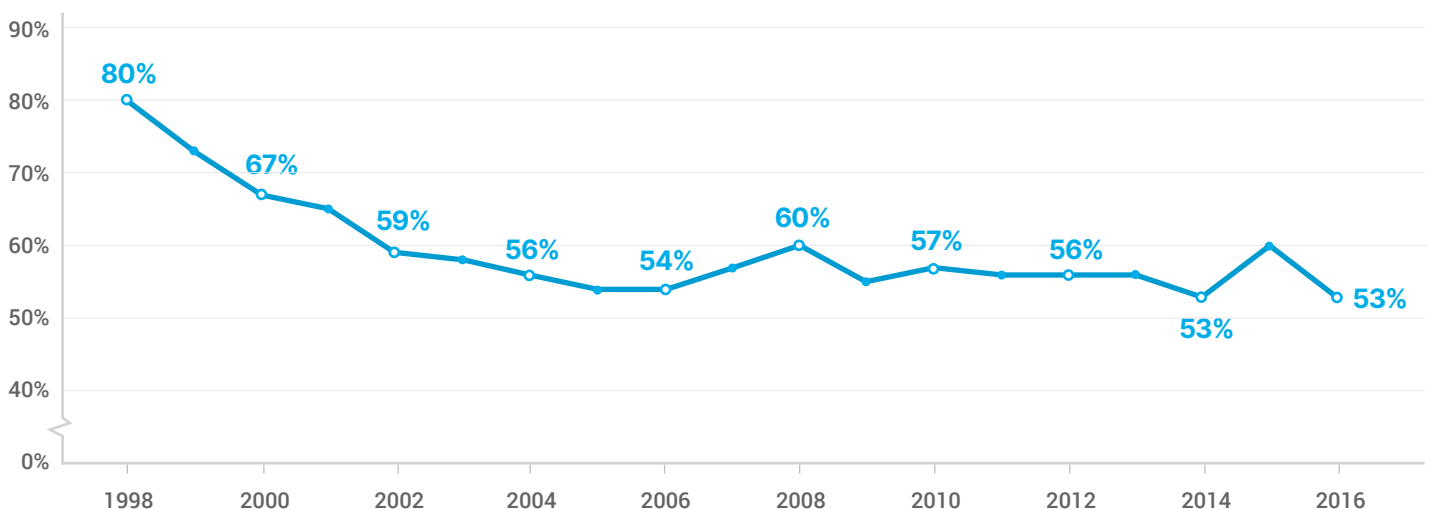
The hollowing-out of school libraries

Today's school libraries have declined in the galaxy of competing priorities and are being pushed from the centre to the periphery in far too many of Canada's K–12 schools. They are being cast aside as relics of a fading book culture, along with vitally important spaces that provided a quiet oasis for reading, reflection, thinking, and discussion. Once considered a haven for books and readers, they have evolved along with modern technology into so-called "learning commons" in many schools, particularly in more affluent urban and suburban communities.

School libraries devoted to displaying books and housing collections on overflowing bookshelves are now at risk. All too often the book collection has shrivelled as school library facilities provide access to resources housed in both physical and virtual space and gathering places where students and teachers congregate over lunch or collaborate on projects. In many Canadian schools today, the library is an endangered species. In Ontario, People for Education (Figure 1) reported that, back in 2016, only about 53 percent of elementary schools had a teacher-librarian on staff (down from about 80 percent in the late 1990s) and, in some regions like Northern Ontario, only around 11 percent of elementary schools were even staffed with librarians.⁶

Figure 1

Share of elementary schools with librarians | Ontario, 1998–2016



Source: People for Education, *The Geography of Opportunity: What's Needed for Broader Student Success: Annual Report on Ontario's Publicly Funded Schools 2016* (Toronto: People for Education, 2016), <https://peopleforeducation.ca/report/annual-report-2016/>.

Teacher-librarians are facing an existential crisis, gradually being displaced by “library technicians” skilled at accessing and utilizing digital content and resources. Without stable, dedicated staffing—whether teacher-librarians, trained library technicians, or learning commons facilitators—students lose access to current books and technology, miss out on guidance on navigating information, and lack a safe, peaceful space beyond the classroom. The real paradox is this: While school libraries are gradually being supplanted in the teaching-learning process, they live on as contested spaces, zones of active and ongoing conflict on the education front in the contemporary “culture war.”

Screening out the classics: Bias and sensitivity reviews

Harry Potter, *The Hunger Games*, and *Roll of Thunder, Hear My Cry*: These are all examples of books Grade 10 student Reina Takata could no longer find in the fall of 2023 on the shelves of her public high school library in Mississauga, Ont., which she visited regularly on her lunch hour.⁷ Back in May 2023, the shelves at Erindale Secondary School were full of books, but, when she returned after the summer, the library’s bookshelves were nearly bare.

Roughly half of the school’s library books went missing and Takata learned from school staff that it was undertaken in response to a directive to “remove all books published prior to 2008.” She was only one of a number of Peel District School Board (PDSB) students, parents, and community members who registered their concerns. It was all justified on the grounds that they were following a new “equity-based” book weeding process authorized in the spring of 2023 by the Ontario Ministry of Education.

The process of weeding books from a library was not new, but policies ruling out books deemed outdated has always sparked controversy. Weeding is standard practice to dispose of damaged, moldy, or factually inaccurate books, and to ensure collections remain a trusted source of current, updated information. The new PDSB policy went much further in an “equitable curation cycle” for weeding, which it says was created to support Directive 18 from the Minister of Education based on a 2020 Ministry review and report on widespread issues of systemic discrimination within the PDSB.⁸

School libraries in Peel were actually carrying out part of a much wider “diversity audit of schools.” Under Directive 18, “books, media and all other resources” currently in use for teaching and learning in English, history, and social sciences were subjected to an equity review to ensure that they were “inclusive and culturally responsive, relevant and reflective of students, and the Board’s broader school communities.”

Book challenges from both sides in the “culture war”

Today’s controversies over “book bans” are far more complex than the narratives popularized in the Canadian media. One memorable CBC *Fifth Estate* episode, “A Shadow War on Libraries,” which aired in February 2025, seized upon a library closure battle in the small prairie town of Valleyview, Alberta, northwest of Edmonton, to make its point.⁹ That closure, according to the CBC investigative team, was cloaked in secrecy. What was presented as

a budgetary decision to relocate to a newer school complex, the *Fifth Estate* reported, was cover for backlash against library advocates like 17-year-old transgender teenager Theo Robertson, founder of the town's GSA (gay and straight alliance), holding meetings in the space.

The CBC's *Fifth Estate* claimed that the little episode was representative of "a shadow war in Canada on libraries and books." It was all born of an American movement "trying to roll back 2SLGBTQ+ rights in Canada – one book at a time." It only became a "controversial issue" when the focus of book challenges shifted from targeting and culling books labelled as "racist" or "perceived as racist" to removing books focusing on gender issues and anti-racist themes. Between January 2015 and December 2021, only 8 percent of Canadian book challenges were over gender issues. Then, beginning in 2022–2023, some 44 of the 118 reported challenges (or 38 percent) were directed at book titles and events, most of which were "drag queen storytime" activities.¹⁰

Tracking book challenges: When did it surface in Canada?

Tracking the trends only began when the nature of the book challenges changed along with its targets. Up until recently, public libraries and school libraries in Canada carried out unreported library system book removals and weeding without any requirement for public disclosure. The rise of Canadian conservative public interest groups such as Action4Canada and Concerned Citizens Canada not only put pressure on such institutions to be more accountable for their decisions but also prompted defenders of "free expression" to surface. Foremost among the new breed of "library police" is James Turk, Director of the Centre for Free Expression, at Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU).¹¹ That is why we now have a publicly accessible Canadian Libraries Challenges Database, managed by Turk at TMU.

Reported book challenges to public libraries peaked in 2024 with 141 challenges: 133 objections to library items, four to library-directed programs, and four to library displays, exhibits, and computer access policy. In 2025, as shown in Table 1, public libraries reported 116 challenges, including 98 directed at library items, 13 related to community-use access, and only two pertaining to exhibits and displays.¹² The slight reduction may be the result of determined public advocacy aimed at expunging references to "explicit sexual" content and limiting or eliminating "drag queen storytime" events.

School libraries attracted far more attention in 2025 from Turk and his Free Expression allies. While, in 2024, school boards reported only 13 challenges, all related to collection items, the number skyrocketed in 2025 to 384 cases, of which 382 were related to books and resources (see Table 1). Some 94 percent of the challenges, or 360 out of 384, were actually the direct result of a 2025 Alberta Ministerial Order issued by Education Minister Demetrios Nicolaidis. It was partly rescinded when the Edmonton Public School Board was found to be carrying it to extremes, removing graphic novel versions of George Orwell's *1984* and Margaret Atwood's *Handmaid's Tale*, along with modern classics by Margaret Laurence and Ayn Rand, books of social criticism clearly acceptable for high school-age readers.¹³

Table 1

Distribution of library challenges | Canada, 2025

Province	Public libraries	School libraries	Academic libraries	Total (% of total)
Alberta	23	361	2	386 (77%)
British Columbia	25	8	0	33 (7%)
Manitoba	0	14	0	14 (3%)
New Brunswick	0	0	0	0
Newfoundland	0	0	0	0
Northwest Territories	0	0	0	0
Nova Scotia	1	1	0	2 (<1%)
Nunavut	0	0	0	0
Ontario	66	0	0	66 (13%)
PEI	0	0	0	0
Quebec	0	0	0	0
Saskatchewan	1	0	0	1 (<1%)
Yukon	0	0	0	0
Total for Canada	116	384	2	502 (100%)

Source: Centre for Free Expression, "Canadian Library Challenges Database," (Toronto Metropolitan University, 2025), <https://cfe.torontomu.ca/databases/canadian-library-challenges-database>.

Weeding out collections becomes "book banning" when initiated by the public or, in this case, by provincial authorities, attempting to weed collections without going through the official "diversity and equity" screening process. Removing "sexually explicit books" from school libraries, it should be noted, was not a problem when library professionals routinely applied standards with respect to "age-appropriate" materials for young children. When combined with public libraries, Alberta accounted for 77 percent of all recorded book challenges in 2025, hardly surprising given the prevailing public attitudes in that province.¹⁴

Discarding cultural treasures

Screening for bias and prejudice did not emerge out of nowhere. Across Canada, it can be traced back to a highly influential 1971 Ontario report, *Teaching Prejudice: A Content Analysis of Social Studies Textbooks Authorized for Use in Ontario*, initiated by Queen's education professor David Pratt and co-authored with Garnet McDiarmid. Commissioned by the Ontario Human Rights Commission, this report analyzed how some 143 social studies textbooks perpetuated bias, racism, and stereotypes, particularly against indigenous peoples.¹⁵

Pratt, McDiarmid, and many who followed were quick to identify sources or references presenting "Eurocentric views" that failed to provide "a balanced or accurate representation of Indigenous history and culture," and, in turn, contributed to "teaching prejudice" to young students. Few reports had exerted so much influence because it acted as a catalyst for action, influencing later discussions about representation in school curricula.¹⁶

The methodology for identifying prejudice gained widespread adoption, and it came with a scientific-looking quantitative tool aimed at identifying "value judgments in textbooks" and designed to assess how minorities were treated within written texts. Sixty years later, Pratt's *Teaching Prejudice* is still cited by those seeking to expunge racism, inequality, and "colonial perspectives" from libraries and classrooms.

Out with the old: Retiring books published before 1970

The American movement to redefine bias and introduce a new regime of sensitivity sprang from similar origins. In her 2003 book *The Language Police: How Pressure Groups Restrict What Students Learn*, Diane Ravitch highlighted the 1998 Riverside Publishing Company's "Bias and Sensitivity Guidelines" as a prime example of the stringent, and often absurd, rules governing educational publishing.¹⁷ These guidelines, utilized in the review of tests and textbooks, were designed to eliminate potentially offensive material but, as Ravitch argues, often result in sanitized, low-quality content. Under the screening rules, according to the publisher, "everything written before 1970 was biased." The real tragedy was that most classical literature was "unacceptable" and "best to avoid" because it had references which might contravene the guidelines with respect to gender, ethnicity, age, and disability.

The aim of such guidelines was to avoid creating content that could be interpreted as offensive, stereotypical, or harmful to any student based on gender, race, or socio-economic status. What it led to was something real but difficult to detect: "beneficent censorship," producing "insipid" and "bland" texts that "sanitized" language, ultimately limiting student learning and reducing the quality of literature. While well intended, the Riverside guidelines, in Ravitch's view, went "terribly wrong" in their implementation, contributing to a "cotton-candy world" in educational materials.

The "learning commons": No place for bookworms

Building library book collections is no longer the priority for school libraries. The new "learning commons" vision articulated in the 2023 Canadian School Libraries policy framework,

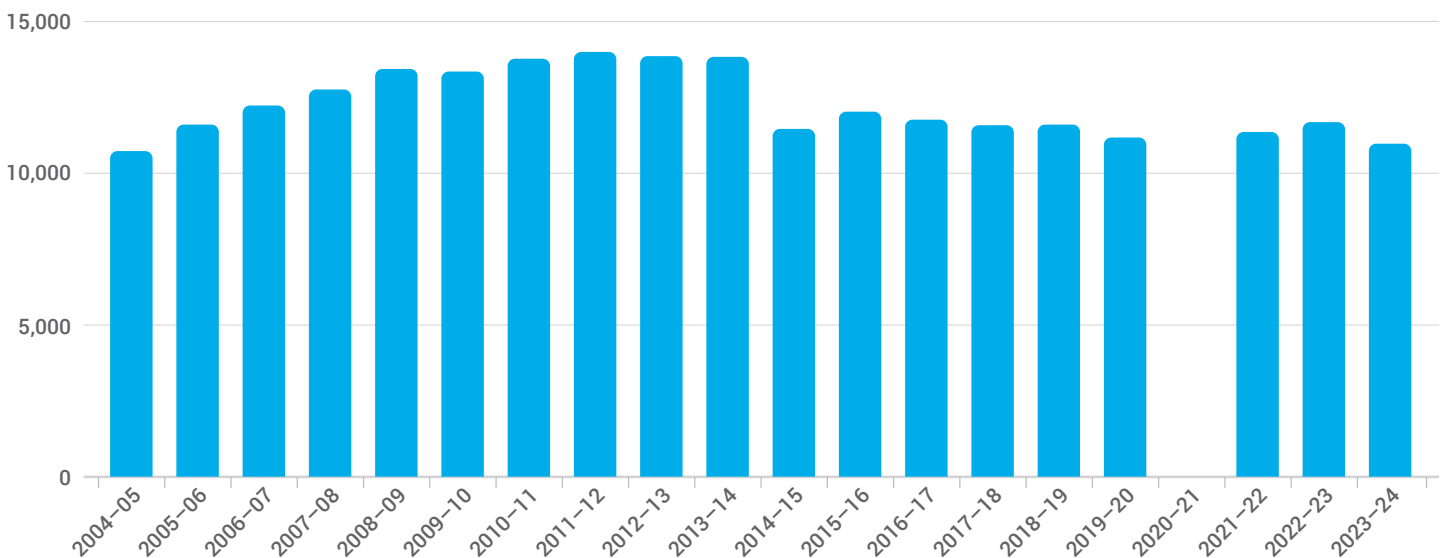
Foundations for School Library Learning Commons in Canada, put it this way: “earlier standards for school libraries were based on output measures for things such as collection size” but “[now] we have avoided setting arbitrary benchmarks.” Having an excellent collection, the CSL brief states, “does not mean that learning is taking place.”¹⁸

Tracking trends in book collection size and circulation is difficult, but a few experienced librarians have maintained records to capture recent trends. One Toronto school librarian, Diana Maliszewski, reported the trends over a twenty-year period.¹⁹ From 2004–05 to 2023–24, her data (Figures 2 and 3) demonstrate how book collections peaked, then declined, and how circulation dipped well before being adversely affected by prolonged pandemic school closures.

Figure 2

Number of books in library collection, Agnes MacPhail Public School

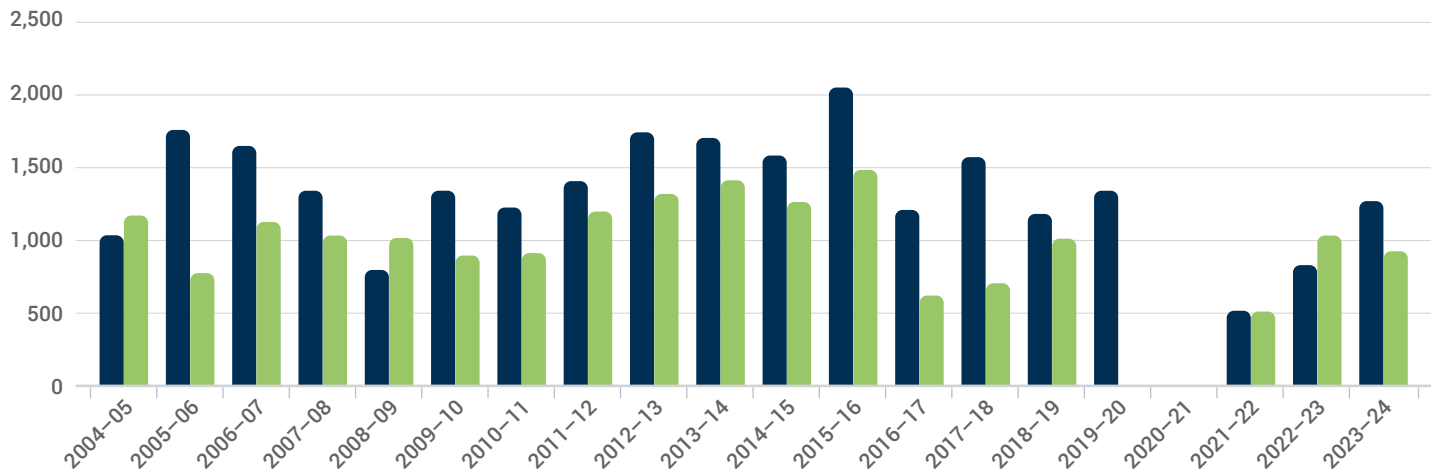
2004–05 to 2023–24



Source: Diana Maliszewski, “Decades of Data: Accountability and Impact with Annual Reports,” *Canadian School Libraries Journal* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2025): Selected graphs.

Figure 3

Number of library books in circulation, October vs. April, Agnes MacPhail Public School | 2004–05 to 2023–24



Source: Diana Maliszewski, “Decades of Data: Accountability and Impact with Annual Reports,” *Canadian School Libraries Journal* 9, no. 2 (Spring 2025): Selected graphs.

Culling school library collections follows prescriptive guidelines. The Canadian School Libraries Association and its supporters are heavily engaged in policing libraries and upholding contemporary versions of the American “bias and sensitivity” guidelines. Compared to the Core Knowledge guide for library collections, the CSL guide cuts in a completely different direction. The latest version is focused on equity-informed selection and provides a CSL Diversity Selection Toolkit. The guideline deserves repeating in its entirety: “The ethical foundations of librarianship are based on advancing principles of democracy and human rights, by making information and learning accessible to all. Diverse collection development is a fundamental value of librarianship. Equity and inclusion are fundamental values in public education.”²⁰ All of the research cited in support of the Toolkit originated in the United States and much of it reflects “anti-racism” bias detection and is aligned with “culturally-responsive instruction” in elementary grades.²¹

Today the Canadian School Library Association, with the support of the Canadian Association of Psychologists, is also at the forefront of promoting “bias free” initiatives, which keep many of the classics out of public school libraries. Public advocates for libraries, such as Concordia University professor Michael Lecchino, idealize school libraries as “creative maker-spaces” and newcomer reception centres well supplied with graphic novels appealing to teens.²²

Library experts like Lecchino are turning libraries into spaces that can function without books. Today’s “learning commons” is “a far cry from the hushed, musty bookrooms of the past,” he recently wrote in *Education Canada*. It is a place that is “changing lives” by not only educating “better readers,” but producing “safer digital citizens, more inclusive school communities—and even calmer, more curious kids.”

How to rebuild book culture

School libraries and the power of whole books

Saving school libraries is all about the books. It begins by confronting what has happened to erode the foundations of a liberal education, beginning in the early grades. One of the clearest signs of the unacknowledged crisis is the virtual disappearance of children's classics in the Canadian Kindergarten to Grade 9 curriculum and the dominant trend of replacing reading whole books with snippets in and outside of the classroom. All is not lost because leading North American cognitive scientists and research-informed teachers continue to champion building the foundations with a knowledge-rich curriculum for children from ages 4 to 16 years.

The *Knowledge Matters* podcast lights the way for the reclamation of books and the revivification of school curriculum and library resource centres. In a powerful 2025 episode, American educator Doug Lemov sounded an alarm: "The book is in a death struggle with electronic and social media. And right now, it's losing."²³ In the episode, Lemov made a spirited case for reading whole books in the classroom—especially since today's students read almost no books outside of school. The podcast also featured some special guests: Stephen Sawchuk of *Education Week*, renowned cognitive psychologist Daniel Willingham, and two educators from Amarillo, Texas—using whole books to great effect in their school—Lori Hughes and her principal Genie Baca.

As the founder of Uncommon Schools, based in Albany, New York, Lemov makes no apologies for challenging students in class. "Learning to be able to struggle—to read a challenging text, and to persist with it—is one of the greatest gifts an education can give students," Lemov claimed. Shifting to reading shorter-form excerpts and articles instead of books, according to Sawchuk, has trade-offs and might make sense, but only to "build stamina" as a bridge to longer reading assignments. For his part, Willingham pointed out that books relay stories, which have added benefits because "our minds more readily understand and remember information contained in stories compared to other kinds of texts."

Lemov and Willingham are both strong advocates for a knowledge-rich curriculum populated by books. According to Willingham, books call on readers to actively engage and persist. "You kind of need to sit with it and see what you can make of it," he said. Today's world still needs books, according to Lemov. "Books also model long-form reflective thinking," he claimed, which stands in stark contrast to modern social-media posts, where a few words or brief video provide a snapshot of right-now considerations.

The case for reading whole books is compelling. "Books are the medium in which people have been doing their best long form thinking for hundreds of years," Lemov reminded us, noting that "[t]hey are the storehouses of almost every idea that is important to us. Whether it is the seeds of democracy or the foundations of science, chances are it has been communicated and passed down in the form of a book." Knowledge still matters, it appears, and mastering whole books is still the best way to ensure fully educated citizens.

Books to build on: Renewing school libraries, shoring up cultural literacy

School library advocates committed to rebuilding book culture would be well advised to revisit one of the seminal works in American education reform, E. D. Hirsch's 1987 book, *Cultural Literacy: What Every American Needs to Know*. In it the University of Virginia literacy scholar dared to advance the notion of "cultural literacy" to explain the great legacy of cultural expression passed down from one generation to another.²⁴ While the book generated an intense furor on both sides of the spectrum, it has exerted a profound influence on policy and practice to this very day. Much of the inspiration for the Core Knowledge Foundation (CKF) and its widely used curriculum sequence came from this book.

Hirsch and his colleagues, mostly affiliated with the CK Foundation, challenged the prevailing wisdom with respect to literacy and how to teach it in the schools. Literacy is more than just the actual mechanics of reading, he claimed. Literacy involves "understanding what you read and to understand what you read you need to have the appropriate background knowledge."²⁵ Formalistic theories of literacy, he contended, focus far too much on formal reading skills without paying much attention to the background knowledge or schema (plural: schemata) that students need to know before they can comprehend a given text ranging from excerpts to short essays and books.

The most daring aspect of Hirsch's *Cultural Literacy* was his invention of the term "cultural literacy" and his bold attempt to provide a prescription for what ailed American education. It was possible, Hirsch demonstrated, to capture and expound upon "the core cultural knowledge" that American students need to attain in order to function productively in society. It was this "core knowledge" that provided a unique "cultural schema" essential to achieving academic excellence and becoming a fully educated American.²⁶

The Core Knowledge Foundation (CKF), founded by Hirsch and based in Charlottesville, Virginia, carries the torch for promoting educational excellence and providing today's generation of children with something that has gone missing in mainstream public schools—Great Books for kids. For more than four decades, CKF has held the line and breathed new life into true children's book classics.

Nothing like it exists in Canada and that is what inspires this policy paper. If we are to revitalize schooling, it will involve putting whole books back on the curriculum and demonstrating the enduring value of studying and mastering the classics central to the life and vitality of our civilization and the social cohesion of two North American societies, Canada and the United States. Our challenge is not to reinvent the Core Knowledge curriculum or the CK guidelines for stocking school libraries, but rather to build upon that model while adapting it to our unique Canadian culture and traditions.

Great Books for children: Towards a Canadian list of recommended books

Today, the Core Knowledge Foundation provides rich and intellectually stimulating lists of “Great Books” for children.²⁷ The sequence is organized by grade level, featuring classics and supplemental texts in their Core Classics Series and *What Your [Grade] Grader Needs to Know* books, covering everything from *The Story of Ferdinand* (K–1) to William Shakespeare (Middle School) and the *Iliad* (6th Grade), focusing on deep knowledge through read-alouds and independent reading, often with downloadable materials. Enriched curriculum and advanced readings drawing upon the Core Knowledge books and resources are a staple at newly formed Classical Academies, exemplified by the Great Hearts schools, where the Western canon is taught to the current generation.²⁸

While no Canadian counterpart exists, a growing number of Canadian independent schools have drawn inspiration from the Great Books Foundation and tapped into the adapted works in the Core Knowledge Classics series. In Alberta, the only province with authorized charter schools, there is growing demand for “classical academies.” The Alberta Classical Academy, founded by Caylan Ford in August 2022, for example, has expanded to two campuses in Calgary and one in Edmonton, with waitlists sufficient to fill additional schools. Very much in line with the Core Knowledge philosophy, that initiative has tapped into the unmet need for “a tuition-free, knowledge-rich, and character-focused liberal arts education.”²⁹

This initial policy discussion paper aims to break new ground by attempting to fill the gap in school library collections by proposing an essential books list supplementing the Core Knowledge classics with Canadian books of cultural significance and enduring value to successive generations. It demonstrates the exciting possibilities for developing a hybrid collection. A Core Knowledge-aligned school library (Pre-K to Grade 8) should feature a content-rich collection that mirrors the Core Knowledge Sequence, including history, geography, science, art, music, and language arts materials. Essential elements include authentic children’s literature, the CK Core Classics Series, diverse perspectives, and updated non-fiction, ensuring a foundation in cultural literacy and support for purposeful teaching and meaningful engagement. The real challenge is to identify suitable Canadian companion texts that build on the Core Knowledge foundations.

Building blocks: The Core Knowledge library essentials

The Core Knowledge Foundation provides a range of literature and knowledge-rich resources that can serve as building blocks for a school library aligned with a challenging, knowledge-rich curriculum. Any such school library would include the Core Classics Series of abridged literary classics, and supplementary literature connected to Core Knowledge Language Arts and the Core Knowledge Sequence. You might also consider borrowing selectively from the newer 2023 Core Knowledge Free Library, which provides biographies, tales, and other books linked to Core Knowledge curriculum topics and grade-level content.³⁰

Building on these resources, my recommendation would be to curate a Core Knowledge-aligned school library organized around five complementary CK curriculum components:

- ▶ The Core Classics Series: A master collection of retold literary classics appropriate for students, such as *Gulliver's Travels*, *Treasure Island*, *Robin Hood*, and *Anne of Green Gables*.
- ▶ Language Arts Reader Enrichment: Books supporting specific Early Years, Grade K–2 units, including fables, fairy tales, myths, and stories from various cultures (e.g., *Tales from Latin America and the Caribbean*).
- ▶ Knowledge-rich non-fiction sources: Resources aligned with science and history topics in the CK Sequence, such as ancient civilizations, Confederation, and biology.
- ▶ Creativity-inspiring visual arts & music materials: Biographies of artists/composers and books showcasing world masterpieces.

Guidelines for library collection development

The Core Knowledge Foundation has specific advice for schools and their chief librarians establishing or reorganizing their book collections. Here are the guidelines reflecting best practice in library science:

- ▶ Assess collection for alignment, relevance, and currency: Evaluate current holdings, find newer editions of older classics. Regularly weed out outdated materials (such as outdated science/geography) and replace with current, accurate information.
- ▶ Assess accessibility for range of readers: Organize collection in a growth progression, ensuring age appropriateness of books and materials, and include a variety of formats, including appealing titles and some “hi-lo” books (high interest, lower reading level).
- ▶ Align collection with curriculum: Use the Core Knowledge Sequence and comparable Canadian curriculum framework guides to select materials that directly support classroom instruction and academic knowledge.

The “Books to Build On” philosophy

One of the best guides that is still relevant after three decades is E.D. Hirsch Jr.’s *Books to Build On: A Grade-By-Grade Resource Guide for Parents and Teachers*, published by the Core Knowledge Foundation in 1995.³¹ This is an indispensable resource for curriculum consultants, principals, and educators entrusted with building and maintaining school library collections. The Core Knowledge set of Core Classics, designed to support a knowledge-rich curriculum, does provide some building blocks for an aligned school library collection. It presents stories loved for generations in abridged versions for young readers, illustrated and annotated, and faithful to the style, plot, and themes of the originals. Some volumes include a brief biography of the author and an introduction by E.D. Hirsch. In the upper elementary grades, Core Classics are suitable for strong readers or reading aloud; in middle school and up, the texts are appropriate for independent reading.

Here are some examples proposed by Hirsch and his research team by grade level (CKF Core Classics & recommended themes):

- ▶ Kindergarten/early grades: Sparking curiosity and awakening the senses, with *All About Me Pre-K Activity Book*, *The Story of Ferdinand*, *Stone Soup*, and *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*.
- ▶ Grade 1–2: *What Your Grade 1 & 2 Needs to Know* books, including fables and early readers such as *Aesop's Fables*, *The Rabbit and the Tortoise*, *A Visitor for Bear*, and *Lyle, Lyle Crocodile*.
- ▶ Grade 3: Exploring science and history with *The Water Lady* and *Counting on Katherine*.
- ▶ Grade 4: Adventure stories and historic legends, including *Gulliver's Travels*, *King Arthur and the Round Table*, *Robinson Crusoe*, *Treasure Island*, and *The Legend of Sleepy Hollow*.
- ▶ Grade 5: Exposure to enduring western cultural classics, such as *Don Quixote*, *Little Women*, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, and *Sherlock Holmes*.
- ▶ Grade 6: Explorations in the ancient world, focusing on Greece and Rome, including *The Iliad and the Odyssey*, and *The Tragedy of Julius Caesar*.
- ▶ Grade 7: Navigating complex themes, the duality of human nature, and exploring diverse perspectives, studying *Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, *The Tempest*, and *The Time Machine*.
- ▶ Grade 8: Studying literature in its historical context, complex character dynamics, and advanced analytical writing through works like *Frankenstein*, *The Importance of Being Earnest*, and *Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass*.

What is immediately apparent is the fact that the recommended books are challenging for the suggested grade level. That is no accident because the CK curriculum is pitched at a reading level considerably more advanced than is common in most Canadian K–8 schools.

Recommendations

Five public policy reforms

Our research into the current crisis besetting Canadian school libraries suggests the urgent need for action to halt the decline and reverse the trend line. National, provincial, and school district authorities should consider and then act upon the following recommendations:

- ▶ **Recommendation 1:** Restore our school libraries as sanctuaries for books and spaces primarily reserved for quiet reading, reflection, thought, and informed discussion;
- ▶ **Recommendation 2:** Embrace a Core Knowledge philosophy leavened with distinctive Canadian perspectives to rebuild school libraries in alignment with a knowledge-rich curriculum and responsive to the uniqueness of Canadian culture, identity, and values;
- ▶ **Recommendation 3:** Review and rethink current diversity and equity review guidelines which devalue honoured Canadian traditions, subject classic books to “quiet censorship,” and discriminate against most books and materials produced before 1970.
- ▶ **Recommendation 4:** Discontinue the current library book approvals process and base acquisitions on book collection management practices that are better aligned with Core Knowledge priorities and knowledge-rich curriculum at all levels from Kindergarten to Grade 12.
- ▶ **Recommendation 5:** Support classroom educators and teacher-librarians in the transition by providing refresher courses and in-service workshops to grow the number of educators schooled in, and truly inspired by, the classic works of modern North American civilization. Consider pathways to teacher-librarian training that require and enhance experience with Great Books seminars.

Two reading lists: Essential books for every library

What would a Core Knowledge book collection tailored for Canadian students actually look like? The appendix details two proposed lists of essential books for Canadian children from Kindergarten to Grade 9:

A. The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Kids: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

B. Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

The first list was produced by the author integrating classics from the US Core Knowledge Curriculum with an equal number of Canadian companion books. The second list is extracted from the publicly available reading lists for Calgary Classical Academy (2025–2026). It is not an official list but rather a sampling composed of the required books and poems at each grade level. Compiling lists of 100 recommended books is not an exact science so what follows is sure to generate some lively debate and discussion.

Conclusion: Recovering our bearings and renewing our school libraries

Our school libraries are worth saving if they can be revived as cultural sanctuaries and recommit to putting books at the centre of the contemporary version of a “learning commons.” Drawing inspiration from the Core Knowledge Foundation founded by E.D. Hirsch Jr., we can create our Canadian framework for rebuilding knowledge-rich school libraries.

The proposed Canadian framework for rebuilding school libraries outlined in this policy paper is presented as a starting point, aimed at generating a more fulsome debate and public discussion. It recommends grade-by-grade collections that combine enduring literary classics with significant Canadian works, supported by trained teacher-librarians and curriculum-aligned collection development. While philosophical stances may differ, it is also essential to support teacher-librarians in the transition because the new breed of “library technicians” are not our natural allies.³²

Open the school library windows and let the light back in for the sake of the current generation of students. Embrace a more enlightened vision to revitalize our diminished and threatened school libraries.³³ Let us envision and recreate libraries as cultural sanctuaries, places where students encounter challenging ideas, build reading stamina, and develop the shared knowledge necessary for informed citizenship in a democratic society. Turning it around will require a rededication to books as foundational to liberal education, more transparency on collections policy, and the active support of informed and well-read educators.

Appendix

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Kindergarten				
Focus: Rhythm, oral language, identity, storytelling				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>The Very Hungry Caterpillar</i>	Eric Carle	1969	Growth, counting, sequencing, nature
Core Knowledge	<i>Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?</i>	Bill Martin Jr. and Eric Carle	1967	Rhythm, prediction, colour recognition
Core Knowledge	<i>Make Way for Ducklings</i>	Robert McCloskey	1941	Family, community, belonging
Core Knowledge	<i>The Little Red Hen</i>	Traditional folktale	Traditional/19th century print editions	Responsibility, cooperation, hard work
Core Knowledge	<i>Aesop's Fables</i>	Aesop	c. 600 BC (oral tradition)	Moral lessons, storytelling
Canadian	<i>Love You Forever</i>	Robert Munsch	1986	Family love, attachment, identity
Canadian	<i>The Paper Bag Princess</i>	Robert Munsch	1980	Independence, courage, gender roles
Canadian	<i>Alligator Pie</i>	Dennis Lee	1974	Language play, rhyme, imagination
Canadian	<i>Sheree Fitch Treasury</i>	Sheree Fitch and Sydney Smith	1987–2025	Imagination, poetic verse, humour
Canadian	<i>A Promise is a Promise</i>	Robert Munsch and Michael Kusugak	1988	Inuit culture, promises, courage

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 1				
Focus: Language play, community, identity				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>The Tale of Peter Rabbit</i>	Beatrix Potter	1902	Curiosity, consequences, family
Core Knowledge	<i>Chicken Little</i>	Traditional folktale	Traditional	Fear, rumours, critical thinking
Core Knowledge	<i>Stone Soup</i>	Traditional folktale	Traditional	Community, sharing, cooperation
Core Knowledge	<i>Blueberries for Sal</i>	Robert McCloskey	1948	Family, nature, independence
Core Knowledge	<i>The Emperor's New Clothes</i>	Hans Christian Andersen	1837	Vanity, honesty, truth
Canadian	<i>The Hockey Sweater</i>	Roch Carrier	1979	Canadian identity, belonging, culture
Canadian	<i>Franklin in the Dark</i>	Paulette Bourgeois	1986	Fear, friendship, confidence
Canadian	<i>Stella, Queen of the Snow</i>	Marie-Louise Gay	2000	Imagination, sibling relationships, winter
Canadian	<i>Scaredy Squirrel</i>	Mélanie Watt	2006	Anxiety, resilience, humour
Canadian	<i>Mayann's Train Ride</i>	Mayann Francis	2023	Family history, perseverance, Black Canadian experience

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 2				
Focus: Mythology, indigenous perspectives, science discovery				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>D'Aulaires' Book of Greek Myths</i>	Ingri and Edgar Parin d'Aulaire	1962	Greek mythology, heroism, culture
Core Knowledge	<i>Magic Tree House: Hour of the Olympics</i>	Mary Pope Osborne	1998	Ancient Greece, adventure, history
Core Knowledge	<i>Johnny Appleseed</i>	Steven Kellogg	1988	Folklore, frontier life, nature
Core Knowledge	<i>Charlotte's Web</i>	E. B. White	1952	Friendship, loyalty, loss
Core Knowledge	<i>A Drop of Water</i>	Walter Wick	1997	Science inquiry, water, observation
Canadian	<i>Shi-shi-etko</i>	Nicola I. Campbell	2005	Residential schools, indigenous identity, memory
Canadian	<i>The Kids Book of Aboriginal Peoples in Canada</i>	Diane Silvey	2005	Indigenous cultures, history, diversity
Canadian	<i>Paddle-to-the-Sea</i>	Holling C. Holling	1941	Geography, waterways, exploration
Canadian	<i>Owls in the Family</i>	Farley Mowat	1961	Nature, family, humour
Canadian	<i>If You Find a Rock</i>	Peggy Christian	2000	Nature appreciation, observation

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 3				
Focus: Geography, exploration, Canadian landscapes				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>The Wind in the Willows</i>	Kenneth Grahame	1908	Friendship, adventure, home
Core Knowledge	<i>Little House in the Big Woods</i>	Laura Ingalls Wilder	1932	Pioneer life, family, survival
Core Knowledge	<i>Pippi Longstocking</i>	Astrid Lindgren	1945	Independence, imagination, humour
Core Knowledge	<i>The Hundred Dresses</i>	Eleanor Estes	1944	Kindness, bullying, empathy
Core Knowledge	<i>Secrets of the Garden</i>	Kathleen Weidner Zoehfeld	2012	Ecology, pollination, science
Canadian	<i>Lost in the Barrens</i>	Farley Mowat	1956	Survival, northern Canada, friendship
Canadian	<i>Underground to Canada</i>	Barbara Smucker	1978	Slavery, freedom, courage
Canadian	<i>The Secret World of Og</i>	Pierre Berton	1961	Fantasy, adventure, imagination
Canadian	<i>Explore Canada Atlas for Kids</i>	Anita Ganeri	2009	Canadian geography, regions, exploration
Canadian	<i>Owls in the Family</i>	Farley Mowat	1961	Nature, humour, prairie life

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 4				
Focus: Western cultural classics and Canadian identity				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>Gulliver's Travels</i>	Jonathan Swift	1726	Satire, exploration, society
Core Knowledge	<i>Robin Hood</i>	Traditional English legends	Medieval origins / later editions	Justice, courage, leadership
Core Knowledge	<i>King Arthur and the Round Table</i>	Sir Thomas Malory (traditional legends)	1485	Chivalry, honour, leadership
Core Knowledge	<i>Treasure Island</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson	1883	Adventure, loyalty, greed
Core Knowledge	<i>Robinson Crusoe</i>	Daniel Defoe	1719	Survival, perseverance, colonial exploration
Core Knowledge	<i>The Legend of Sleepy Hollow</i>	Washington Irving	1820	Folklore, superstition, humour
Canadian	<i>Anne of Green Gables</i>	Lucy Maud Montgomery	1908	Identity, belonging, imagination
Canadian	<i>The Incredible Journey</i>	Sheila Burnford	1961	Loyalty, perseverance, animals
Canadian	<i>Meet Viola Desmond</i>	Elizabeth MacLeod	2018	Civil rights, justice, black Canadian history
Canadian	<i>The Kids Book of Canadian History</i>	Carlotta Hacker	2000	Canadian history, citizenship

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 5				
Focus: Adventure, identity, immigration, language, and survival				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>Don Quixote</i>	Miguel de Cervantes	1605/1615	Idealism, imagination, satire
Core Knowledge	<i>Little Women</i>	Louisa May Alcott	1868	Family, growth, identity
Core Knowledge	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	William Shakespeare	c. 1595	Love, imagination, transformation
Core Knowledge	<i>Sherlock Holmes</i>	Arthur Conan Doyle	1887	Logic, mystery, deduction
Core Knowledge	<i>Johnny Tremain</i>	Esther Forbes	1943	Revolution, responsibility, identity
Core Knowledge	<i>The Phantom Tollbooth</i>	Norton Juster	1961	Language, learning, imagination
Core Knowledge	<i>Carry On, Mr. Bowditch</i>	Jean Lee Latham	1955	Perseverance, navigation, self-education
Canadian	<i>Hana's Suitcase</i>	Karen Levine	2002	Holocaust, memory, resilience
Canadian	<i>From Anna</i>	Jean Little	1972	Immigration, disability, perseverance
Canadian	<i>Dear Canada Series</i>	Various authors	2001–present	Canadian history, identity, perspective

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 6				
Focus: Advanced themes, courage, identity, reconciliation, civic knowledge				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>The Iliad and the Odyssey</i>	Homer	c. 8th century BC	Heroism, war, journey, fate
Core Knowledge	<i>The Tragedy of Julius Caesar</i>	William Shakespeare	1599	Power, betrayal, democracy
Core Knowledge	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Charles Dickens	1843	Compassion, redemption, social justice
Core Knowledge	<i>The Hobbit</i>	J. R. R. Tolkien	1937	Courage, adventure, transformation
Core Knowledge	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>	Mark Twain	1876	Freedom, morality, boyhood
Core Knowledge	<i>The Giver</i>	Lois Lowry	1993	Memory, conformity, freedom
Core Knowledge	<i>A Wrinkle in Time</i>	Madeleine L'Engle	1962	Science fiction, family, courage
Canadian	<i>The Marrow Thieves</i>	Cherie Dimaline	2017	Reconciliation, survival, indigenous futures
Canadian	<i>Fatty Legs</i>	Christy Jordan-Fenton and Margaret Pokiak-Fenton	2010	Residential schools, resilience, identity
Canadian	<i>The Kids Book of Canadian Government</i>	Jennifer Chambers	2011	Civics, democracy, citizenship

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 7				
Focus: Introduction to classic American and Canadian literature				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>The Adventures of Tom Sawyer</i>	Mark Twain	1876	Friendship, adventure, moral growth
Core Knowledge	<i>The Hobbit</i>	J. R. R. Tolkien	1937	Hero's journey, courage, fantasy
Core Knowledge	<i>Treasure Island</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson	1883	Adventure, loyalty, piracy
Core Knowledge	<i>The Call of the Wild</i>	Jack London	1903	Wilderness survival, resilience
Core Knowledge	<i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i>	William Shakespeare	c. 1595–1596	Comedy, love, imagination
Canadian Companion	<i>Owls in the Family</i>	Farley Mowat	1961	Humour, prairie childhood
Canadian Companion	<i>The Barren Grounds</i>	David A. Robertson	2020	Indigenous storytelling, fantasy
Canadian Companion	<i>Bloom</i>	Kenneth Oppel	2020	Eco-thriller, suspense
Canadian Companion	<i>Inkling</i>	Kenneth Oppel	2018	Creativity, family, imagination
Canadian Companion	<i>This Can't Be Happening at Macdonald Hall!</i>	Gordon Korman	1978	School, comedy, friendship

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 8				
Focus: Introduction to Canadian, British, and American classics				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>Animal Farm</i>	George Orwell	1945	Power, propaganda, politics
Core Knowledge	<i>The Diary of a Young Girl</i>	Anne Frank	1947	Holocaust, resilience, humanity
Core Knowledge	<i>The Outsiders</i>	S. E. Hinton	1967	Identity, class conflict
Core Knowledge	<i>Romeo and Juliet</i>	William Shakespeare	c. 1595	Love, conflict, tragedy
Core Knowledge	<i>To Kill a Mockingbird</i>	Harper Lee	1960	Justice, prejudice, empathy
Canadian Companion	<i>Anne of Green Gables</i>	Lucy Maud Montgomery	1908	Identity, belonging, imagination
Canadian Companion	<i>The Breadwinner</i>	Deborah Ellis	2000	Courage, education, war
Canadian Companion	<i>The King of Jam Sandwiches</i>	Eric Walters	2020	Poverty, friendship, perseverance
Canadian Companion	"The Cremation of Sam McGee"	Robert W. Service	1907	Yukon folklore, humour
Canadian Companion	<i>Run</i>	Eric Walters	2003	Terry Fox, determination, history

Reading List A – The Essential 100 Books for Canadian Students: A Core Knowledge and Canadian Companion Library

Grade 9				
Focus: Contemporary social issues, including power, race, and identities				
Category	Title	Author	Publication Date	Theme
Core Knowledge	<i>Of Mice and Men</i>	John Steinbeck	1937	Friendship, dreams, loneliness
Core Knowledge	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	Ray Bradbury	1953	Censorship, freedom, technology
Core Knowledge	<i>Julius Caesar</i>	William Shakespeare	1599	Leadership, betrayal, rhetoric
Core Knowledge	<i>The Odyssey</i>	Homer	8th century BC	Perseverance, heroism, mythology
Core Knowledge	<i>Night</i>	Elie Wiesel	1956	Holocaust, memory, survival
Canadian Companion	<i>Brother</i>	David Chariandy	2017	Race, family, identity
Canadian Companion	<i>The Agony of Bun O'Keefe</i>	Heather Smith	2017	Belonging, resilience, coming of age
Canadian Companion	<i>The Blue Castle</i>	Lucy Maud Montgomery	1926	Independence, self-discovery
Canadian Companion	<i>Two Solitudes</i>	Hugh MacLennan	1945	Canadian identity, language, culture
Canadian Companion	<i>Macbeth</i>	William Shakespeare	1606	Ambition, power, guilt

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

The following list is compiled from required books in Calgary Classical Academy’s reading lists (2025–26).

Kindergarten			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Moffats</i>	Eleanor Estes	
Novels and stories	<i>Aesop’s Fables</i>	Aesop	Including <i>The Lion and the Mouse</i> and <i>The Grasshopper and his Shadow</i>
Novels and stories	Creation Myths		Including Pan Gu and Nu Wa, Genesis 1–2 (Peter Spier), and others
Novels and stories	Myths and Legends		<i>Gilgamesh</i> (Zeman), <i>Egyptian Myths</i> (Caselli), and <i>City of Rainbows</i> (Foster)
Novels and stories	Mother Goose nursery rhymes	Traditional	
Novels and stories	Folk and Fairy Tales	Traditional	Including <i>Jack and the Beanstalk</i> , <i>Hansel and Gretel</i> , and <i>Cinderella</i>
Biography	<i>Great Musicians</i>	Wheeler	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 1			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>Charlotte's Web</i>	E.B. White	
Novels and stories	<i>Aesop's Fables</i>	Aesop	<i>The Boy Who Cried Wolf, The Dog in the Manger, and The Goose and the Golden Eggs</i>
Novels and stories	Myths and Legends		<i>Greek Myths</i> (D'Aulaire), <i>The Winged Cat</i> (Lattimore), and <i>Bible Stories</i> (Adam and Eve, Noah's Ark, David and Goliath, and King Solomon)
Novels and stories	Folk Tales	Traditional	<i>Butterfly Dream</i> (Zhuangzi), <i>Little Red Riding Hood</i> (Grimm), <i>Lon Po Po</i> (Chinese), <i>The Legend of Lady Slipper</i> (Ojibwe), and <i>Anansi the Spider</i> (West Africa)
Biography	<i>Herodotus and the Road to History</i>	Bendick	
Poems	"Windy Nights"	R.L. Stevenson	
Poems	"The Owl and the Pussycat"	Edward Lear	
Poems	"Toiling Farmer"	Li Shen	
Poems	"Bluebird"	Evaleen Stein	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 2			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe</i>	C.S. Lewis	
Novels and stories	<i>Journey to the West</i>	Wu Cheng'en	Adapted by Debbie Chen
Novels and stories	<i>The Golden Key</i>	George MacDonald	
Novels and stories	<i>Pookie Puts the World Right</i>	Ivy Wallace	
Novels and stories	Religious Stories		From Christian, Buddhist, and Daoist traditions
Biography	Biographies		<i>Marcus Aurelius</i> , <i>The Boy Who Would Be King</i> ; <i>Leif the Lucky</i> (D'Aulaire); <i>Alexander the Great</i> ; <i>Confucius</i> ; <i>Buddha</i> (Demi)
Poems	"In Flanders Fields"	John McCrae	
Poems	"Bed in Summer"	Robert Louis Stevenson	
Poems	"Try, Try Again"	William Hickson	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 3			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Snow Queen</i>	Hans Christian Andersen	
Novels and stories	<i>Prince Caspian</i>	C.S. Lewis	
Novels and stories	<i>A Door in the Wall</i>	Marguerite de Angeli	
Novels and stories	<i>Dangerous Journey: The Story of Pilgrim's Progress</i>	John Bunyan	Adapted by Oliver Hunkin
Novels and stories	<i>The Little Mermaid</i>	Hans Christian Andersen	
Novels and stories	<i>Stories from Shakespeare</i>	Charles & Mary Lamb	<i>Or Beautiful Stories from Shakespeare</i> — Edith Nesbit
Novels and stories	<i>Aladdin and the Wonderful Lamp</i>	One Thousand and One Nights	
Novels and stories	<i>Ali Baba and the Forty Thieves</i>	One Thousand and One Nights	
Poems	"The Tyger"	William Blake	
Poems	"Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening"	Robert Frost	
Poems	"The Arrow and the Song"	Henry Wadsworth Longfellow	
Poems	"Spring Morning"	Meng Haoran	
Poems	"Foreign Lands"	Robert Louis Stevenson	
Poems	"Sonnet 19"	William Shakespeare	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 4			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Voyage of the Dawn Treader</i>	C.S. Lewis	
Novels and stories	<i>The Wind in the Willows</i>	Kenneth Grahame	
Novels and stories	<i>The Little Prince</i>	Antoine de Saint-Exupéry	
Poems	"The Charge of the Light Brigade"	Alfred, Lord Tennyson	
Poems	"Death Be Not Proud"	John Donne	
Poems	"The Cattle Country"	Emily Pauline Johnson (Tekahionwake)	
Poems	"Nobility"	Alice Cary	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 5			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>Iliad</i>	Homer	Abridged/adapted edition
Novels and stories	<i>The Epic of Gilgamesh</i>		Adapted edition
Novels and stories	<i>Plutarch's Lives for Children</i>	W.H. Weston	Selections
Novels and stories	<i>Prometheus Bound</i>	Aeschylus	Adapted by Cullum; or <i>A Midsummer Night's Dream</i> — William Shakespeare
Poems	"If"	Rudyard Kipling	
Poems	"Horatius at the Bridge"	Thomas Babington Macaulay	
Poems	"Psalm 23"		
Poems	"Prologue to the Odyssey"	Homer	Lines I.1–22

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 6			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Hobbit</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	
Novels and stories	<i>Beowulf the Warrior</i>	Ian Serraillier	
Novels and stories	<i>King Arthur and His Knights of the Round Table</i>	Howard Pyle / R.L. Green	Or <i>The Boy's King Arthur</i> — John Steinbeck
Novels and stories	<i>The Adventures of Robin Hood</i>	R.L. Green / Howard Pyle	Core Knowledge edition
Novels and stories	<i>The Lady or the Tiger?</i>	Frank R. Stockton	
Novels and stories	<i>The Canterbury Tales</i>		Retellings
Poems	"Saint Crispin's Day"	William Shakespeare	
Poems	"Eldorado"	Edgar Allan Poe	
Poems	"Seven Ages of Man"	William Shakespeare	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 7			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>The Fellowship of the Ring</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	
Novels and stories	<i>Treasure Island</i>	Robert Louis Stevenson	
Novels and stories	<i>A Christmas Carol</i>	Charles Dickens	
Novels and stories	<i>Little Women</i>	Louisa May Alcott	
Novels and stories	<i>The Two Towers</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	
Novels and stories	<i>The Emperor's New Clothes</i>	Hans Christian Andersen	
Novels and stories	<i>A Child's History of England</i>	Charles Dickens	Selected readings
Poems	"For Whom the Bell Tolls"	John Donne	
Poems	"Ozymandias"	Percy Bysshe Shelley	
Poems	"He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven"	W.B. Yeats	
Poems	"Sonnet 173"	William Shakespeare	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 8			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>Oliver Twist</i>	Charles Dickens	Or <i>Jane Eyre</i> — Charlotte Brontë
Novels and stories	<i>The Scarlet Pimpernel</i>	Baroness Orczy	
Novels and stories	<i>The Return of the King</i>	J.R.R. Tolkien	
Novels and stories	<i>Captains Courageous</i>	Rudyard Kipling	
Novels and stories	<i>Oedipus the King</i>	Sophocles	
Novels and stories	<i>Fahrenheit 451</i>	Ray Bradbury	
Poems	"On His Blindness"	John Milton	
Poems	"Jerusalem"	William Blake	
Poems	"The Cremation of Sam McGee"	Robert Service	
Poems	"Sonnet 116"	William Shakespeare	

Reading List B – Classical Education Library Collection: Great Books and Readings

Grade 9			
Type	Title	Author	Notes
Novels and stories	<i>Animal Farm</i>	George Orwell	
Novels and stories	<i>Odyssey</i>	Homer	
Novels and stories	<i>Who Has Seen the Wind</i>	W.O. Mitchell	
Novels and stories	<i>One Day in the Life of Ivan Denisovich</i>	Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn	
Novels and stories	<i>Meditations</i>	Marcus Aurelius	
Novels and stories	<i>Oresteia</i>	Aeschylus	Or <i>Macbeth</i> — William Shakespeare
Poems	"The Second Coming"	W.B. Yeats	
Poems	"The Darkling Thrush"	Thomas Hardy	
Poems	"Zazen on Ching-t'ing Mountain"	Li Bai	
Poems	Soliloquy/monologue from <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> or <i>Macbeth</i>	William Shakespeare	

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