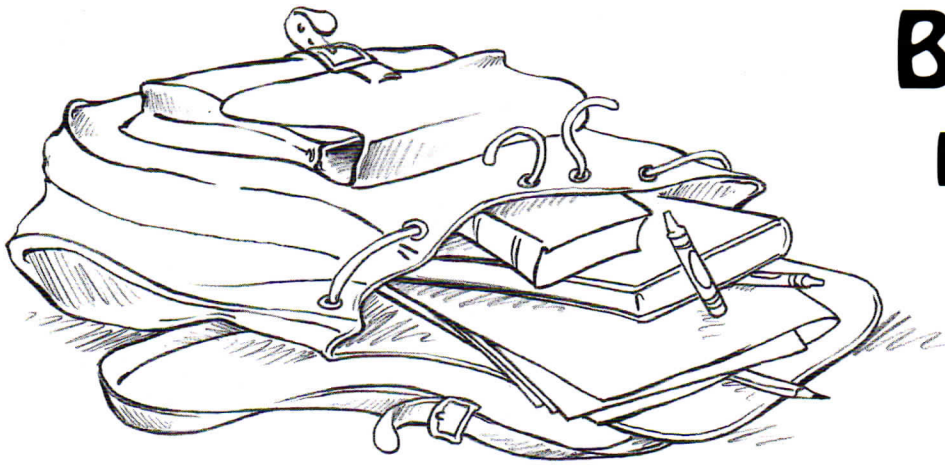


BOOKBAG

Beach Books for Kids

By Mary Anne Duggan

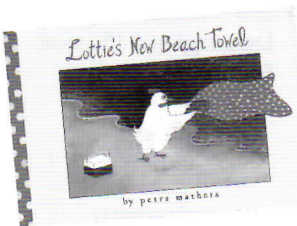


Droplets of ocean spray fly across Molly's face as she adjusts her beach towel and adds one more dab of sunscreen to her nose. Beneath heart-shaped sunglasses, she fumbles through her beach bag, which is overflowing with books. Molly, 5, belongs to a reading club at the local library and earns prizes for the number of books she reads over the summer. She is proof that beach books—the unofficial genre of purely pleasurable reading—are for readers of all ages. Following are some great selections to tuck into the beach bags of children ages 4 to 8.

Many young readers have enjoyed *On the Day You Were Born* by Debra Frasier. In *Out of the Ocean*, a mother and child find that the ocean holds many treasures for passersby. Included is "An Ocean Journal," with photos and descriptions of the wonders Frasier has stumbled across at the beach.

Another treasure is *Lottie's New Beach Towel* by Petra Mathers. It is dedicated to "beach lovers" and is great for readers who enjoy good chuckles and word plays like:

"I'm so hungry I don't care if there is sand on my sandwich. Get it, Lottie?"
"Yes, Herbie and jelly on your belly."



My Life with the Wave, by Catherine Cowan, is a fantasy fit for the surf fanatic. It is based on the story by Octavio Paz about a wave that decides to leave the ocean and come home with a boy and his family. It's hard to picture a wave making the trip but Mark Buehner's illustrations make it plausible. All is not blissful with

the wave, however, as it is "pulled by the moon, the sun and the stars." After the wave gets returned to the ocean, the boy sets his sights on his next conquest: capturing a cloud.

Usually, I'd have to clam up during any conversations about little mollusks. But not after reading *Little Clam*. In this charming and informative book by Lynn Reiser about a clam who forgets to dig down during low tide, readers learn how clams survive among predators and perils. With Reiser's lyrical text, young readers won't even recognize this book as a teaching tool.

Another beach book with an instructional twist is *Is This a House for Hermit Crab?* by Megan McDonald, illustrated by S.D. Schindler. This award-winning Reading Rainbow book follows Hermit Crab's trials as he outgrows his shell and must find a new one. Like *Little Clam*, *Hermit Crab* battles for survival in this factual tale.

For little Zonies who haven't visited crabs and clams at the beach, monsoon season provides related delights. Thomas Locker's *Water Dance* follows the water cycle from rain to rainbow and all points in between (stream, waterfall, lake, river and so on). Locker's painted illustrations come close to rivaling the splendor of Arizona skies during monsoon season.

As the monsoon season winds down, desert children know summer is ending and school is soon to start (even though they'll wear shorts and swim until mid-October). *Sand in My Shoes* by Wendy Kesselman, illustrated by Ronald Himler, follows a young girl as she poetically says goodbye to her summer home on the beach.

Part of the reality of returning to real life after summer fun is a ritual performed in classrooms across the country. Mark Teague captures this phenomenon in *How I Spent My Summer Vacation*, a boy's retelling of his visit to Aunt Fern's house.

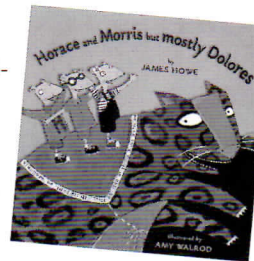
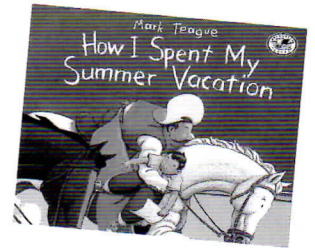
Most likely, the boy was exaggerating with his tales of being captured by cowboys and being carried off to "cow camp." But, you never know!

Like Molly, I too belong to a reading club—not a library club but a local "Oprah Book Club." My friend Diane runs the group and this year she and I have read more "beach books" (purely pleasurable books) than ever as a result of our membership.

I had to laugh the other day when Diane ran into my office with her latest book find. Not yet on Oprah's list, *Horace and Morris but Mostly Dolores* and *Morris but Mostly Dolores*, a "children's book," was the object of her affection. (Author Madeleine L'Engle says there is no distinction between writing for children and adults and I couldn't agree more.)

This charming book about three mice, written by James Howe and illustrated by Amy Walrod, follows the struggles of Horace and Morris when they part ways with Dolores because of her femaleness. After all, they say, "a boy mouse must do what a boy mouse must do." My friend and I delighted in each page.

Diane and I and the other members of our club will be reading "beach books" all summer, at the beach and under the sweltering Valley sun. After all, an avid reader must do what an avid reader must do!



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