

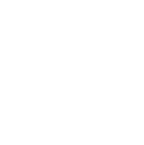
9 Picture Books to Inspire Adventurous Girls

by Miranda Rosbach



Photo credit: Don Mason/Getty Images

Few things are as inspiring as seeing children learn a new skill — be it walking, swimming, riding a bike, navigating social situations, or a number of other important accomplishments. We nurture children, and they in turn surprise us with skills they seem to have mastered overnight. Fortunately, for today's modern parents and educators, the wealth of resources available to support strong girls is something that scarcely existed even a decade ago. Giving young girls (and boys) positive role models that encourage their natural interests and talents is one of the best ways we can help children succeed (and cope with inevitable failures along the way). This list of both fiction and nonfiction picture books showcases a variety of diverse young women, who each make contributions that break stereotypes and forge new frontiers. May these nine books inspire you to continually strengthen and encourage the adventurous young people in your life.



Violet the Pilot

by Steve Breen

Violet is a mechanically minded girl who, at a young age, demonstrates skills when it comes to disassembling small appliances and taking apart a grandfather clock. Living next to a salvage yard means Violet has plenty of spare parts that allow her to create. Her inventions, though varied, are always able to take to the skies. Teased by her schoolmates, Violet keeps doing what she loves and eventually decides to fly in a local Air Show. But on the day of the event, things don't go quite as she had planned. Will she be able to show everyone just what she's capable of ... or will something even better happen to this innovative young girl?



Amazing Grace

by Mary Hoffman, illustrated by Caroline Binch

Grace loves stories — stories from books or passed down from her Nana, stories of adventure and fairy tales, too. Grace feels at home in the rhythm of a well-wrought tale and incorporates the heroes and heroines of her stories into her imaginative play. At school one day, her teacher tells the class that they will put on the play *Peter Pan* and asks who would like to be the lead character. When Grace enthusiastically responds, but her classmates deride her — giving her reasons why she can't play Peter, she receives an important pep talk at home. With compassion and support, her family lovingly explains to Grace that she can be anything she wants if she puts her mind to it. This diverse book has buoyed young people for over 25 years.



I Am Jane Goodall

by Brad Meltzer, illustrated by Chris Eliopoulos

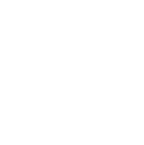
This graphic novel picture book follows the life of pioneering researcher Jane Goodall. In her youngest days she fell in love with her stuffed animal monkey named Jubilee. At the age of five she "discovered" where chicken eggs came from. At seven she read *The Story of Doctor Dolittle*, thereby solidifying her life ambition to talk with animals. By age 12 Jane had formed her own nature group called the Alligator Club, and by her early 20s Jane was on her first expedition to Africa — studying chimpanzees and working to protect the planet. This book (and any book about Jane Goodall's life) has special significance in our family as it was the inspiration for my oldest daughter's middle name.



Joan Procter, Dragon Doctor

by Patricia Valdez, illustrated by Felicita Sala

Born in 1897 London, Joan bucked traditional stereotypes from an early age — preferring to play with lizards and study anything with scales. On her 16th birthday, Joan received a baby crocodile as a gift ... and startled her classmates one day by bringing him to school. In time, Joan became friends with the curator of reptiles at the Natural History Museum and was eventually hired as his assistant. When the London Zoo decided to refurbish its old Reptile House, Joan was hired to design a habitat to mimic the natural environment of its occupants ... and added two, seven-foot komodo dragons in the process. Immersive images and engaging text make this biography a wonderful STEAM primer for young children.



Journey

by Aaron Becker

A young girl looks for companionship in her family members, but all of them are otherwise occupied. In a burst of creativity, she draws a red door onto the wall of her bedroom. Stepping through the door, she is greeted by a dazzling forest strewn with glowing lanterns. This wordless, award-winning trilogy touches on themes of curiosity, friendship, problem-solving, and freedom. One can't help but feel a bit of *Harold and the Purple Crayon* seep into the pages of this modern classic.



Just Like Beverly: A Biography of Beverly Cleary

by Vicki Conrad, illustrated by David Hohn

There once was a girl named Beverly Bunn. Growing up as an only child in Yamhill, Oregon, she loved stories ... but only had two books to keep her company. When she started first grade and was placed in the lowest reading group, Beverly felt dismayed by the prospects of school. But she persevered, and by the time she was in fourth grade she was a fluent reader and writer — even entering an essay contest, which she won.

After college, Beverly became a librarian. One day an exasperated boy asked her, "Where are the books about kids like us?" When Beverly didn't have an answer, she knew she could change that. With her first paycheck as a librarian she bought a typewriter, and the rest is history. With over 40 books published, and numerous awards won, Beverly Cleary tapped into the emotions and rich imaginative world of children with a host of endearing characters. This illustrated biography provides young readers with the life story of one of their most beloved authors.



Long-Armed Ludy and the First Women's Olympics

by Jean L. S. Patrick, illustrated by Adam Gustavson

It's unclear how Ludy's arm got so long, but when she started at Winthrop College in 1917 she found her place on the athletic field. It wasn't until her last year on the track team that Ludy tried the shot put and surprised everyone with her distance. She not only gained a spot on the U.S. team for the first Women's Olympic Games, but set a new American record. Though she didn't have the funds to travel to Paris for the games, her fellow students and faculty members came to her aid. During the summer of 1922, Ludy Godbold won the eight-pound shot put — showing that her determination and practice had paid off. This rousing, informative read is told with humor and inspiration.



Miss Rumphius

by Barbara Cooney

The Lupine Lady, also known as Alice, lives on a hill near the sea, but she did not always live there. When she was little, she would listen to the stories of her grandfather and dream of visiting faraway places when she grew old. With wisdom, her grandfather told her that seeing the world was all well and good, but also "you must do something to make the world more beautiful." Armed with this knowledge, Alice became a librarian. She traveled the world meeting many interesting people. When she finally decided to settle by the sea, Alice knew she still needed to do one important thing. One spring, after a difficult winter filled with personal illness, Alice filled her pockets full of lupine seeds and scattered them across her island home — both honoring her grandfather's wish and cementing her legacy as the Lupine Lady. This classic American Book Award-winning story is depicted beautifully through words and illustrations.



Sewing Stories: Harriet Powers' Journey from Slave to Artist

by Barbara Herkert, illustrated by Vanessa Brantley-Newton

Harriet Powers grew up watching women turn cotton into cloth as a slave on a Georgia plantation. At age 18, she married a man named Armstead, and by the time the Union army announced the freedom of slaves, Harriet had five young children. Relying on her sewing skills to feed her family, Harriet eventually turned to creating pictorial quilts. This beautifully illustrated picture book tells Harriet's story, and how her quilts came to be important examples of African American folk art that are on display at both the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C. and the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston.

Miranda Rosbach

Miranda Rosbach is a librarian turned children's book reviewer and freelance writer. In her spare time she likes scouting new restaurants and colorful murals. She loves reading middle grade novels and memoirs. She lives in St. Louis with her husband and two daughters. You can find her book reviews on her blog or as @bookbloom on Instagram.