



Recommended Alphabet Books

There are *hundreds* of alphabet books out there. Many of them are books that use the alphabet as an organizing method, but really have nothing to do with letters or words or learning about how words work or the joy of sounds. Some of these books are very useful, however, because they serve as a good introduction to a topic for young children. And by focusing on a specific topic or country these books are able to find alternatives to the ubiquitous X-ray, Xylophone, or Queen. Here is a list of our favorite alphabet books.

[A is for the Americas](#), by Cynthia Chin-Lee and Terri de la Peña; illustrations by Enrique O. Sanchez. New York: Orchard Books, 1999. An alphabet guide to North, Central and South America, illustrating the wide variety of people, plants and animals found on the two continents.

[A is for Asia](#), by Cynthia Chin-Lee; illustrated by Yumi Heo. New York: Orchard Books, 1997. An alphabet guide to all of Asia, focusing on the traditional and the non-urban lifestyle and including the culture, holidays, traditions, people and animals. Each letter represents one thing (Y is a Mongolian yurt, for example) but it is described in detail.

[A is for Salad](#), by Mike Lester. NY: Putnam & Grosset, 2000. For those already familiar with the letters, this ABC requires a little bit of thought: A features an alligator eating a salad, B (for Viking) features a beaver wearing a horned Viking hat, and so on.

[A is for Zebra](#) by Mark Shulman. New York: Sterling, 2006. It is the last letter, not the first, which matters in this alphabet. Several examples of words are given for each letter, each with an amusing picture. As the cover says: A happy ending on every page!

[ABC: A Family Alphabet Book](#), by Bobbie Combs, illustrated by Desiree Keane and Brian Rappa. New York: Two Lives Publishing, 2001. Each letter illustrates different types of families having fun.

[ABC de Puerto Rico](#), by Isabel Freire de Matos. Sharon, CT: Troutman Press, 1968. Out of print, but worth looking for in a library.

[ABC x 3: English, Español, Français](#) by Marthe Jocelyn. Toronto: Tundra Books, 2005. Each letter is presented in all 3 languages, and quite a few have been chosen because they are the same in each.

[Alpha, Bravo, Charlie: the military alphabet](#) by Chris L Demarest. New York: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2005. Introduces the International Communications Alphabet used by the military and aviation industry. Each page presents the letter, the word and the signal flag representing the letter, as well as an illustration showing many aspects of military life.

[Alphabeep!: a zipping, zooming ABC](#) by Debora Pearson. New York: Scholastic, 2004. Vehicles of every description and every function are shown, from Ambulance to Zamboni.

[Alphabet City](#), by Stephen Johnson. New York: Viking, 1995. The letters of the alphabet are presented in paintings of objects in the urban landscape.

Alphabet Under Construction, by Denise Fleming. New York: Henry Holt, 2002. A mouse works to construct an alphabet, measuring the "M" and rolling the "R" for example.

Alpha oops!: the day Z went first by Alethea Kontis. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick Press, 2006. Sick of being last Z demands to go first, and it first the letters follow in reverse order, but soon pandemonium develops.

Amelia to Zora: 26 women who changed the world, by Cynthia Chin-Lee, illustrated by Megan Halsey and Sean Addy. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2004.

Ancient Egypt from A to Z, by Barbara Pradal Price and Paulita Sedgwick. London: Macmillan, 1972.

Arches to Zigzags: an Architecture ABC, by Michael J. Crosbie, photographs by Steve and Kit Rosenthal. NY: Harry N. Abrams, 2000. Detailed photographs of architectural elements, many in the Boston area, illustrated alphabetical terms. In an end note, each building is named and shown in its entirety.

The Ark in the Attic: an alphabet adventure, by Starr Ockenga. Boston: David R. Godine, 1987. The letters of the alphabet are introduced through photographs containing objects, including many from the collection of The Children's Museum.

The Beetle Alphabet Book by Jerry Pallotta. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge, 2004. Presents a wealth of information about beetles with some humor and detailed illustrations.

The Calypso Alphabet, by John Agard, illustrated by Jennifer Bent. NY: Henry Holt, 1989. Out of print, but worth looking for in a public library. Features lovely illustrations of Caribbean life and customs.

The Charley's alphabet series: Alphabet Adventure (2001), Alphabet Mystery (2003) and Alphabet Rescue (2006) by Audrey Wood and Bruce Robert Wood. New York: Blue Sky Press. Lowercase and uppercase letters engage in several different adventures in this visually interesting series.

Dinosaur Dictionary: an A to Z of dinosaurs and prehistoric reptiles, by Rupert Matthews. NY: Tangerine Press/Scholastic, 2001

The Disappearing Alphabet, by Richard Wilbur; illustrated by David Diaz. Poet Richard Wilbur has written a funny and clever alphabet about what would happen if there were no letters: "If B were absent, say, from BAT and BALL,/ There'd be no big or little leagues AT ALL."

F is for Fiesta by Susan Middleton Elya. New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2006. Spanish words are incorporated into the predominantly English text, which tells of the preparations for and celebration of a young boy's birthday.

Firefighter A to Z, by Chris L. Demarest. NY: Margaret K. McElderry Books, 2000.

Found Alphabet by Ramon Shindler. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005. Photographs of objects fashioned from found objects (twigs, wire, keys, clock faces, tin boxes buttons, etc.) to represent each letter are paired with poems about the thing represented.

From Albatross To Zoo: an Alphabet Book in Five Languages, by Patricia Borlenghi. NY: Scholastic, 1992. The names of animals are presented in French, Italian, German and Spanish as well as English.

G is for one Gzonk: an alpha-number-bet book by Tony DiTerlizzi. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2006. A very silly take on the usual alphabet book, featuring Dr. Seuss-ish creatures (the Angry Ack, the Bloobytack) and plenty of made-up words and silly rhymes. Several letters into the alphabet, the colorful Teedle-Weenie Woo shows up and starts counting everything it can.

The Graphic Alphabet, by David Pelletier. NY: Orchard Books, 1996. A Caldecott Honor book, the illustrations are both lovely and challenging, each letter graphically displaying the one word given for that letter.

The Hidden Alphabet by Laura Vaccaro Seeger. New York: Roaring Brook Press, 2003. Visually stunning, this book employs optical illusions and changing perspectives as well as a lift the flap on each page to challenge readers to identify the letters.

Jambo Means Hello: Swahili Alphabet Book, by Muriel Feelings, illustrated by Tom Feelings. NY: Dial Books, 1992. A Caldecott Honor book, presents a word with English translation for each of the 24 letters in the Swahili alphabet, a brief explanation of each word introduces an East African custom.

Japan ABCs: a Book About the People And Places Of Japan, by Sarah Heiman; illustrated by Todd Ouren. Minneapolis, MN: Picture Window Books, 2003.

Kenya ABCs: a Book About the People And Places of Kenya, by Sarah Heiman; illustrated by Todd Ouren. Minneapolis, MN: Picture Window Books, 2003.

M Is For Mayflower: A Massachusetts Alphabet, by Margot Theis Raven. Chelsea, MI: Sleeping Bear Press, 2002.

Many Nations: an alphabet of Native America, by Joseph Bruchac. Mahwah, N.J.: Bridgewater Books, 1997. An alphabet guide with brief accompanying text presenting the varied native peoples across North America.

O is for Oystercatcher: a book of seaside ABCs, by Barbara Patrizzi. Harvey Cedars, NJ: Down the Shore Publishers, 2003.

On Beyond Zebra, by Dr. Suess. NY: Random House, 1955. All the letters after Z...

26 letters and 99 cents, by Tana Hoban. New York: Greenwillow Books, 1987. Color photographs of letters, numbers, coins, and common objects introduce the alphabet, coins, and counting.

The Turn-Around Upside-Down Alphabet Book by Lisa Campbell Ernst. New York: Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2004. Each page contains one large letter that changes into three different objects as you turn the book in different directions.

Z Goes Home, by Jon Agee. New York, NY: Hyperion Books For Children, 2003. The "Z" from the sign at the city zoo climbs down at the end of the day and wordlessly makes its way home, while the letters of the alphabet act out the words representing them: "B" lying down forms a bridge, "H" forms hurdles the Z must jump.

The Z Was Zapped: a Play in Twenty-Six Acts, by Chris Van Allsburg. Boston: Houghton- Mifflin, 1987.

*For the Museum's other bibliographies, check
<http://www.bostonchildrensmuseum.org/educators/bibliographies.html>*