

Ruth Gilbert, Youth Services Librarian

You may not be able to tell by looking at the trees, but spring is here! Brown grass is turning green, daffodils are peeking out, and people are itching to get outside. Springtime weather in central New York can be unpredictable, but they say something in Scandinavian countries that helps me get outside no matter what the weather is doing: "There is no such thing as bad weather, only bad clothes." I was lucky enough to take a trip to Norway a few years ago and I was struck that even schoolkids braved bad weather. I watched a bunch of them walking to school in the rain in head-to-toe raingear, including special covers for their backpacks, and none of them bothered with an umbrella.

So grab your rain boots/snow boots/flip flops/mittens/sunscreen and head outside! And if you need more inspiration, check out these books about the great outdoors to share with the children in your life.

"Chalk" by Bill Thomson is a wordless book about three children who find some magical chalk on the playground. I think wordless picture books are often misunderstood because they may seem too "easy" with no actual words to read. But wordless books give children who aren't reading on their own the opportunity to practice other really important skills, like interpreting the meaning of a picture and telling a story. You won't need written words to know exactly how the kids in this book are feeling; their faces say it all. This book is all about imagination and adventure and will inspire your kids to get outside with their own sidewalk chalk.

"Hike" by Pete Oswald, another wordless book, is about a father and son who venture a little farther than the playground for some outdoor fun. You follow them step-by-step as they wake up, get ready, and drive out to the wilderness for a beautiful hike with a very special purpose.

"Kamala and Maya's Big Idea" by Meena Harris and Ana Ramírez González is based on a story about our own Vice President Kamala Harris and her sister Maya. When they were little girls Kamala and Maya thought their apartment complex should have a playground, but when they asked the building manager he told them it would be too expensive. Kamala and Maya were determined so they figured out a way to raise money and get their community involved, and they helped to build a playground for everyone to enjoy.

"The House that Once Was" by Julie Fogliano and Lane Smith combines the adventure of exploring the woods with the mystery of an old abandoned house. Two children playing in the woods come across a lonely old house that still holds clues about the people who used to live there. The children follow a "path that's now covered with weeds" to a "door that was once painted white." The poetic story is all about a house that used to be a home.

"The Great Indoors" by Julie Falatko and Ruth Chan shows what happens at home when a family goes on a camping trip: the forest animals take a vacation in their house! The animals can't wait to plug in their hair styling tools, keep some ice cream in the freezer, and sing a little karaoke on their relaxing vacation in the great indoors.

"Alvin Ho: Allergic to Camping, Hiking, and Other Natural Disasters" by Lenore Look and LeUyen Pham is a chapter book for those kids who might not be enthusiastic about spending time outdoors. Alvin has anxiety about a lot of things, including the camping trip he's being forced to take, but with a little help from his dad he gets through the experience and might just have a little fun, too.