

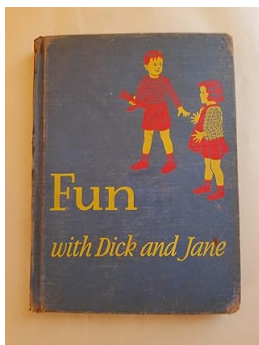


A TIMELINE OF THE WOMEN
WHO CHANGED AMERICA



May 2024 Her Story ENewsletter Children's Book Authors from the 1940s

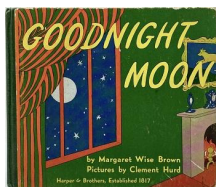
For decades women have written children's books that have become classics. In this newsletter, we focus on two authors who were writing in the 1940s – May Hill Arbuthnot and Margaret Wise Brown. You might remember their books from school, or possibly from bedtime stories read to you.



May Hill Arbuthnot co-authored the first volume in the *Dick and Jane* series which was published in 1940. The books provided tools through which millions of children learned how to read. An educator, author, editor and critic, Arbuthnot received her undergraduate degree from the University of Chicago and her master's degree from Columbia University. She became the director of a kindergarten primary training school in Cleveland, Ohio, that through her efforts became the department of education at what was then Western Reserve University (today Case Western Reserve University).

Arbuthnot wrote a number of books including the textbook, *Children and Books*, as well as the *Basic Reader Series* (known as the *Dick and Jane* series). She also published anthologies including *Time for Poetry* and *Arbuthnot Anthology of Children's Literature*. The Women's National Book

Association honored her with what is called today the WNBA Award for a woman "who has done meritorious work in the world of books beyond the duties or responsibilities of her profession or occupation." She also received the Regina Medal from the Catholic Library Association for excellence in the field of children's literature. Additional recognition of her work are the Arbuthnot Honor Lecture and the Arbuthnot Award given by the American Library Association and the International Reading Association, respectively.



Margaret Wise Brown's first children's book was titled *When the Wind Blows*. Her classic, *Goodnight Moon*, was published in 1947. The so-called "laureate of the nursery" graduated from Hollins College in Virginia and worked as a teacher while studying art and writing children's books. After *When the Wind Blows* was published in 1937, she was hired as an editor by W.R. Scott and wrote the *Noisy Book* series, among others. She collaborated with illustrator Clement Hurd on *The Runaway Bunny*, *Goodnight Moon*, and *My World* which are published together in a collection called *Over the Moon*. Interestingly the New York Public Library

banned *Goodnight Moon* for many decades. It was not made available to patrons until 1972. It is estimated that *Goodnight Moon* has sold an estimated 48 million copies and has been translated into at least thirteen languages.

Brown wrote a number of other books, some of which were published in the years after her untimely death at age 42 in 1952. After her death, more than 70 unpublished manuscripts were found by her sister who tried to sell them but then stored them for decades. In 1991, the manuscripts were rediscovered, and many were published from 1993 to 2017.

May Hill Arbuthnot and Margaret Wise Brown are among the more than 850 women profiled in our book *Her Story: A Timeline of the Women Who Changed America*. Women's accomplishments continue to inspire and encourage us. Continue to help us tell women's stories!

Charlotte Waisman and Jill Tietjen

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