

# Understanding the Dewey Decimal System

---

Mrs. Paula McMullen  
Library Teacher  
Norwood Public Schools



# Who was Melvil Dewey?

- Developed the Dewey Decimal System in 1876.
- Founded the American Library Association.
- Set up the first professional library school.



# What Drove Dewey Crazy?

- Not being able to find books easily on the library shelves,
- So he developed a better way to find books – and named it after **himself**!





# What is the Dewey System?

---

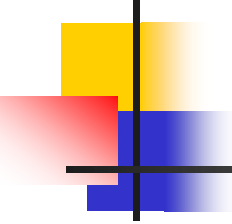
- System developed by Melvil Dewey in 1876 to organize books.
- Divides all knowledge into **ten large categories**.
- Each category is divided into **ten divisions** and then into **ten subdivisions**.
- Every book can be placed in a **category**, and then into a **division** and **subdivision**.



# Dewey Categories

---

- Let's look at how Dewey divided all knowledge into ten large **categories**, each with 100 numbers assigned to it:

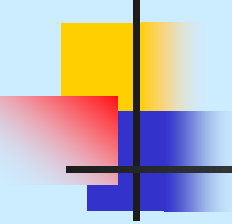


# (000-999)

## Ten Dewey Categories

---

- 000-099 – Generalities
- 100-199 – Philosophy & Psychology
- 200-299 – Religion & Mythology
- 300-399 – Social Sciences
- 400-499 – Languages
- 500-599 – Natural Sciences
- 600-699 – Applied Sciences & Technology
- 700-799 – Fine Arts
- 800-899 – Literature
- 900-999 – History, Geography & Biography



(500-599)

# Natural Sciences Category

---

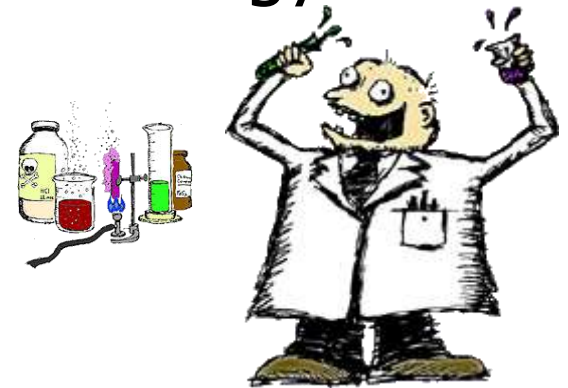
- Let's see how Dewey divided the **Natural Sciences Category** into ten smaller **divisions**, each with ten numbers assigned to it:



# Divisions in Natural Sciences

---

- 510 - Mathematics
- 520 - Astronomy
- 530 - Physics
- 540 - Chemistry
- 550 - Earth Sciences
- 560 - Paleontology & Paleozoology
- 570 - Biology
- 580 - Botany
- 590 - Zoology





(550-559)

## Earth Sciences Division

---

- Let's look at how Dewey divided the smaller **Earth Sciences division** of the **Natural Sciences category** into ten even smaller **subdivisions**, each with a single number assigned to it:

# Subdivisions in Earth Sciences



- 550 - Earth Sciences
- 551 - Geology, hydrology, meteorology
- 552 - Rocks & Minerals
- 553 - Economic geology
- 554 - Earth sciences of Europe
- 555 - Earth sciences of Asia
- 556 - Earth sciences of Africa
- 557 - Earth sciences of North America
- 558 - Earth sciences of South America
- 559 - Earth sciences of other areas



# Rocks & Minerals Subdivision

---

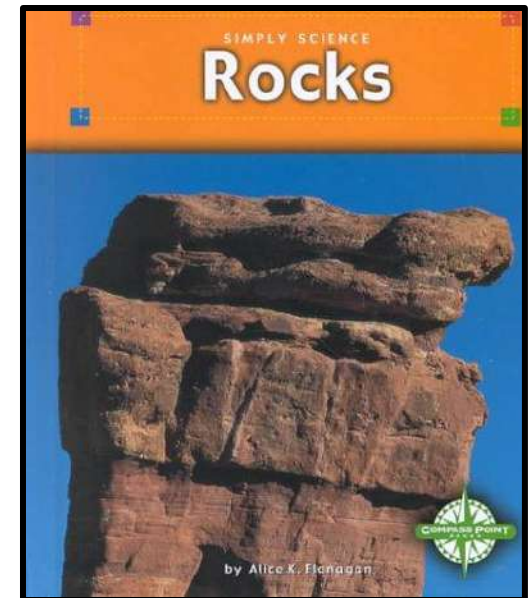
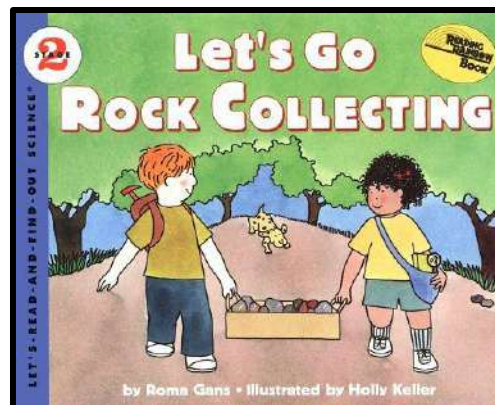
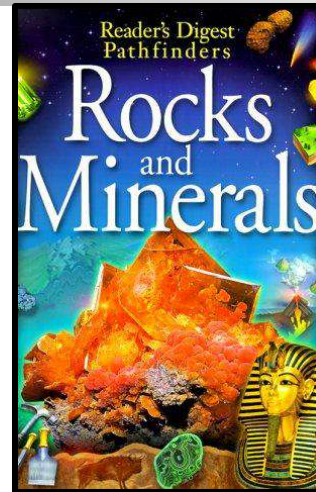
- Let's see how Dewey assigns the same three-digit number to books about rocks:

# 552 – Rocks & Minerals



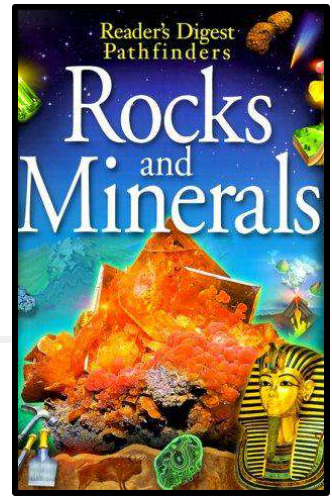
- All books that are about rocks will have this Dewey number:

552



# How Does it Work?

- Dewey uses a “code” of numbers.
- Each book is put in a category, division, and subdivision according to its subject.
- Each book is given a three-digit number.



552  
MCM

- 5 – Natural Sciences
- 5 – Earth Sciences
- 2 – Rocks & Minerals

# Why is it called the Dewey ***"Decimal"*** System?

- Additional digits after the decimal point further narrow the subject.
- Books on a specific subject have the same number and are next to each other on the shelf.



567.9

- 5 – natural sciences
- 6 – paleontology & paleozoology
- 7 – fossil cold-blooded vertebrates
- .9 – dinosaurs

# How does Dewey help us find books?

- Books on the same subject are given the same Dewey number.
- All books on the same subject are shelved together.
- Books are arranged in number order from 000-999.





# Ten Dewey Categories

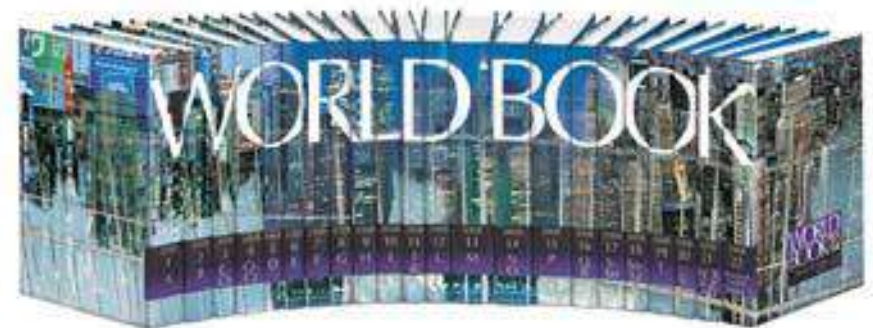
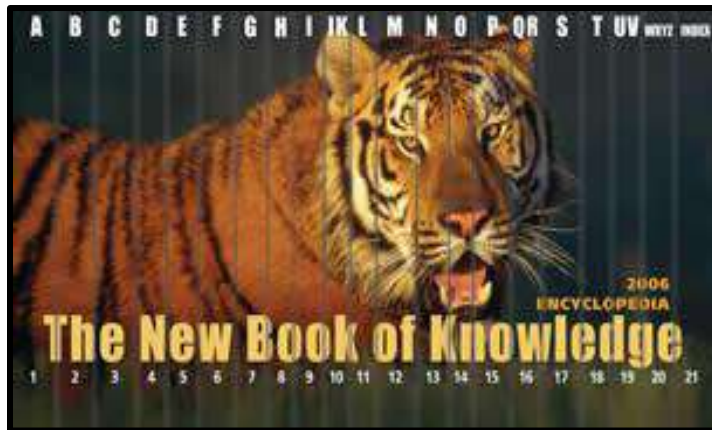
---

- Let's look at the ten categories of the Dewey Decimal System and see the kinds of books we would find in them:



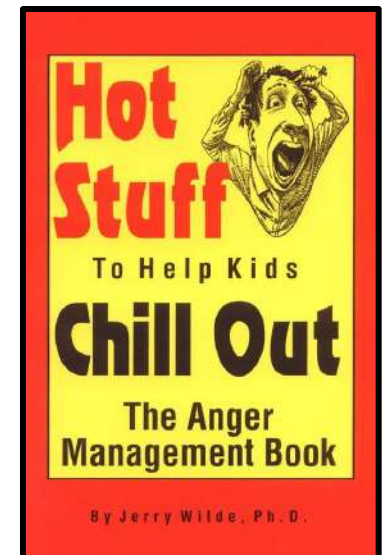
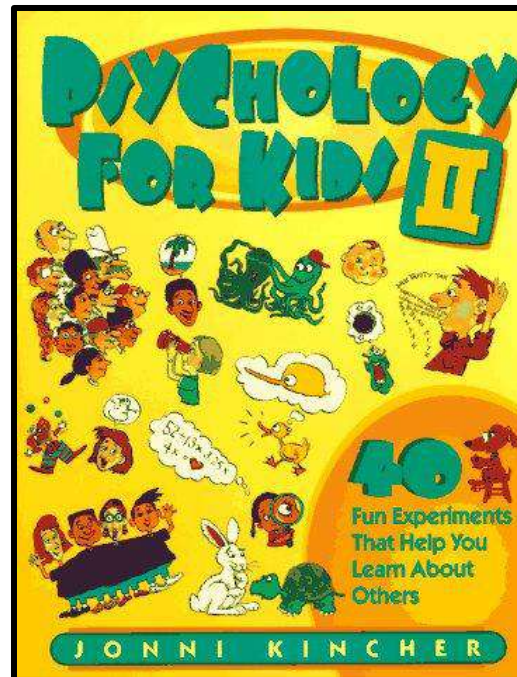
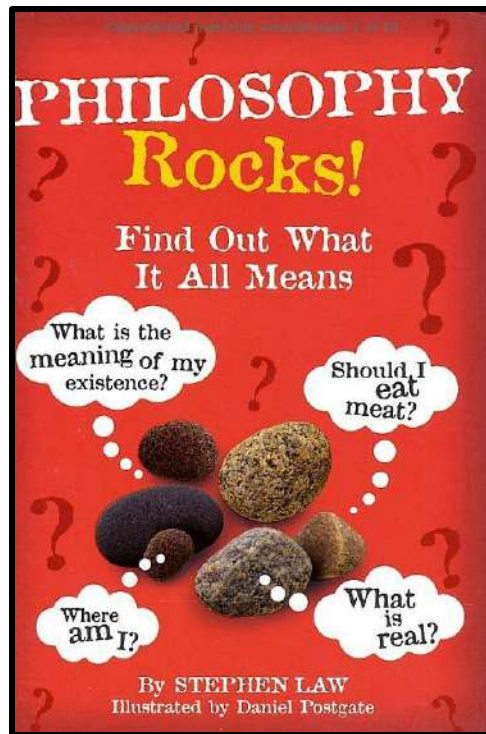
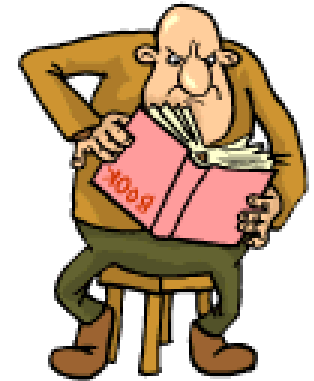
000-099

# Generalities



# 100-199

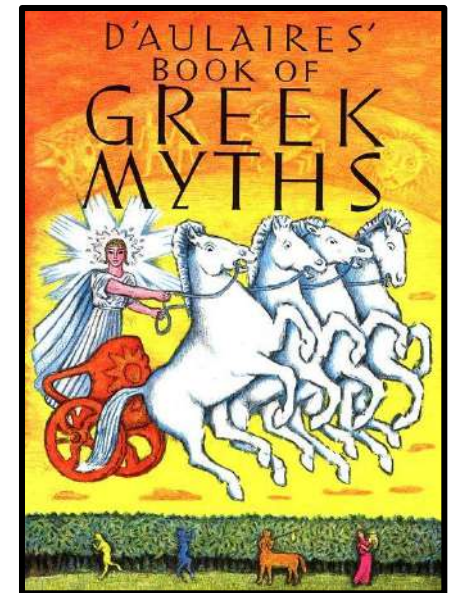
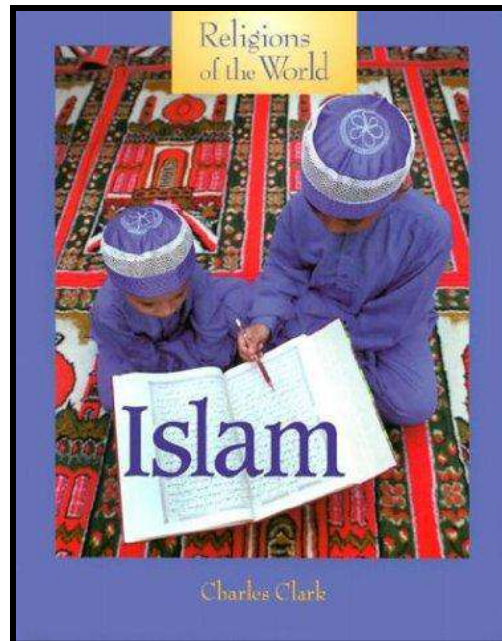
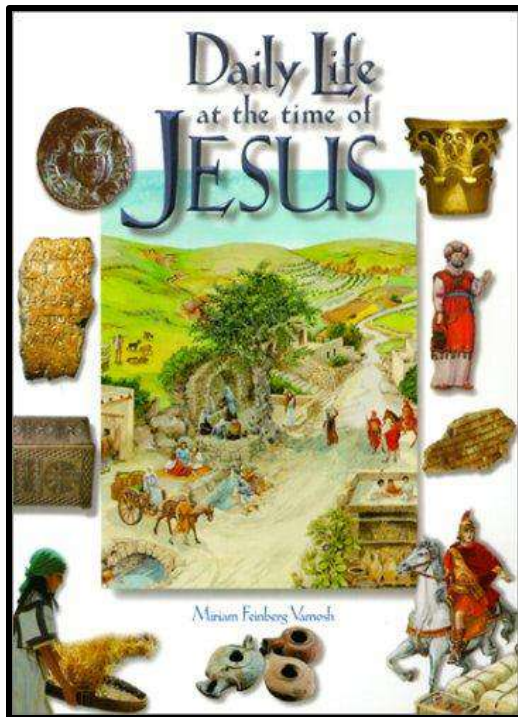
## Philosophy & Psychology





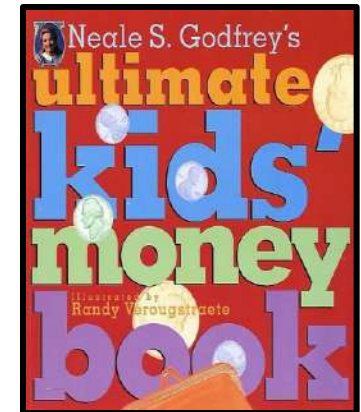
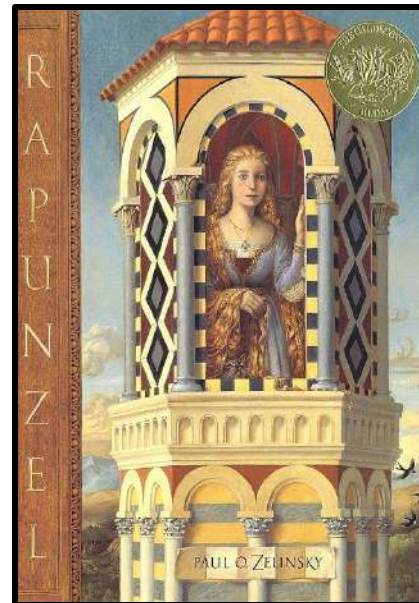
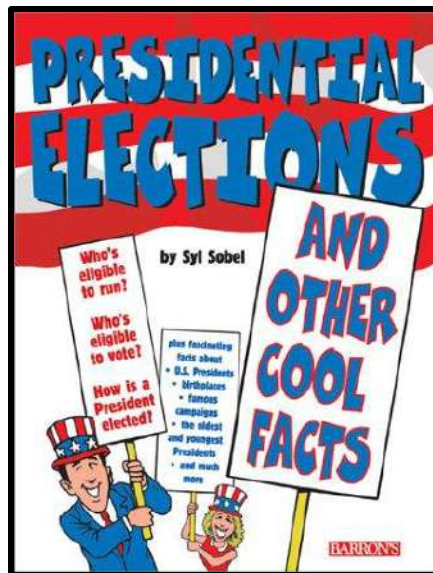
# 200-299

## Religion & Mythology



# 300-399

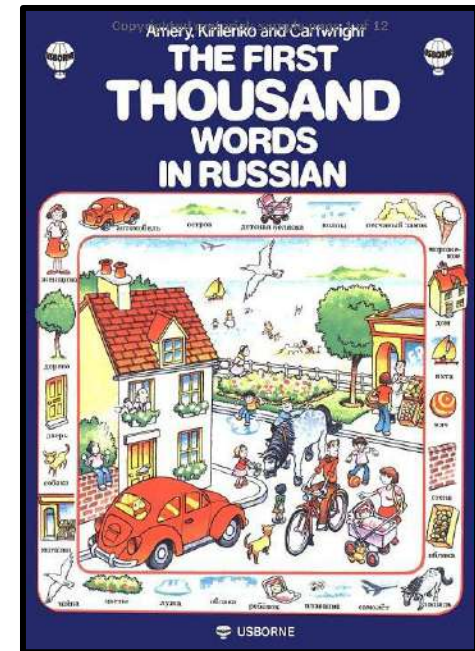
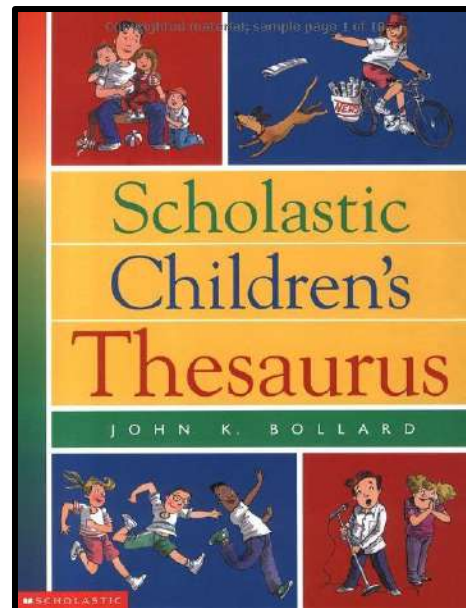
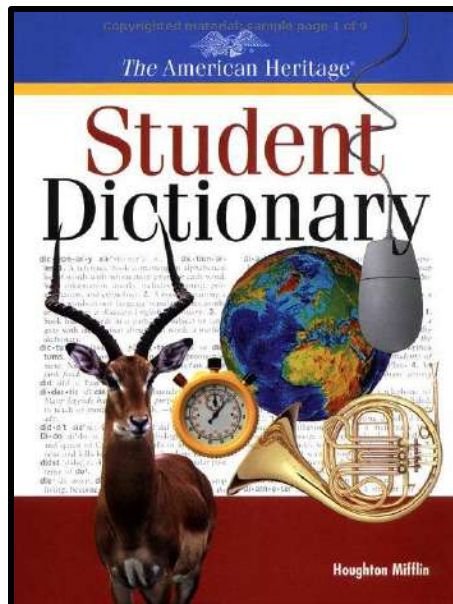
## Social Sciences





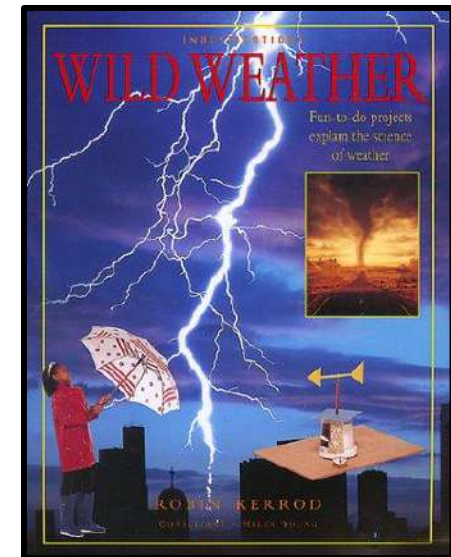
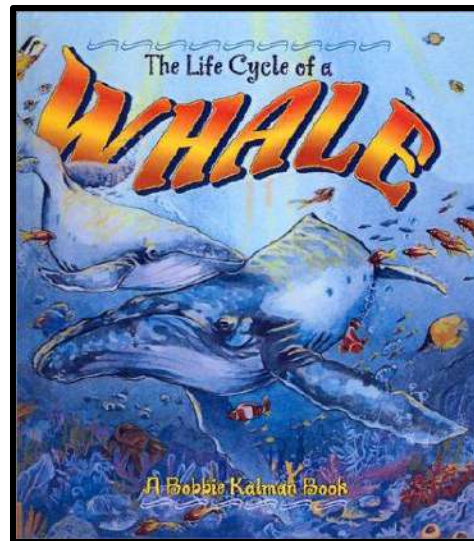
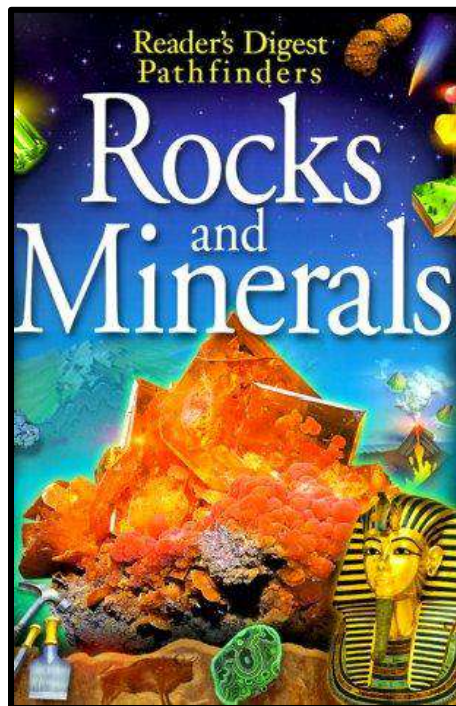
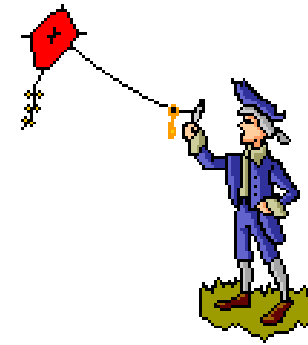
# 400-499

## Languages



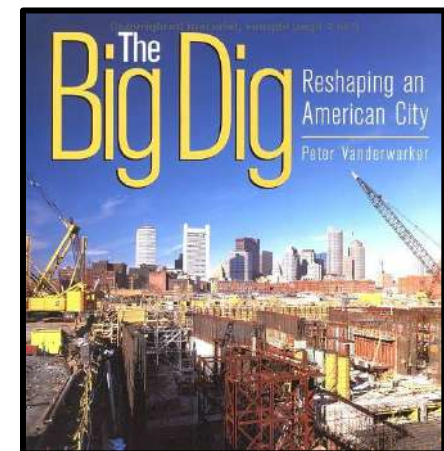
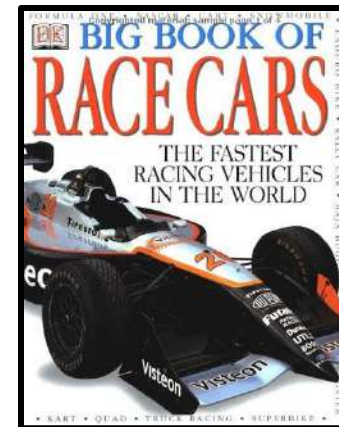
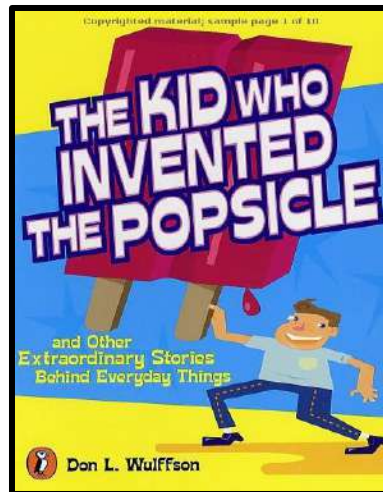
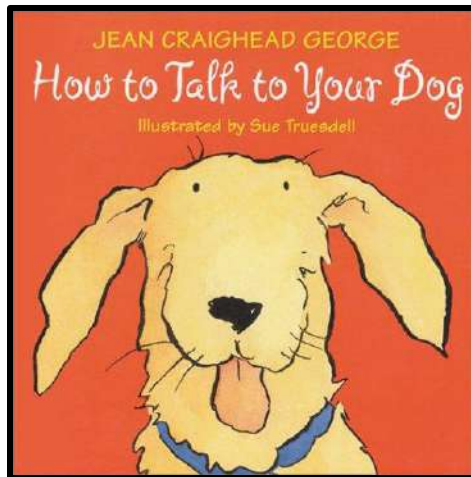
# 500-599

## Natural Sciences



# 600-699

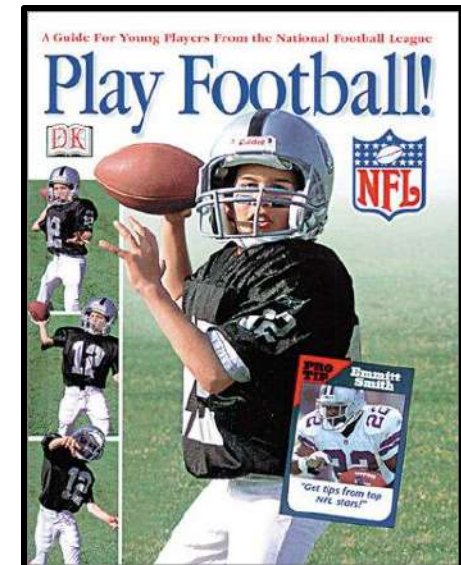
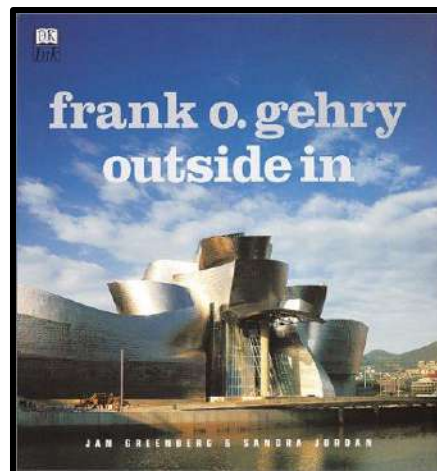
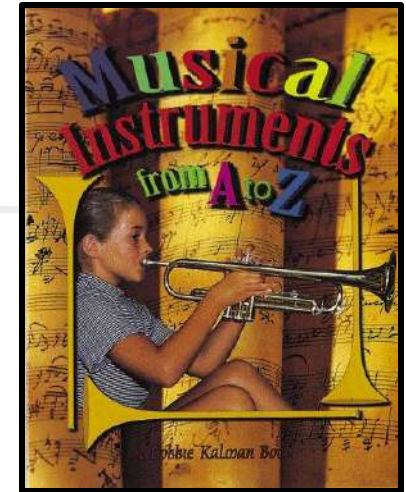
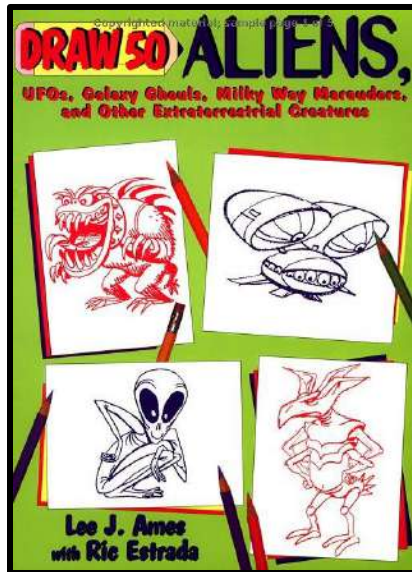
## Applied Science & Technology





# 700-799

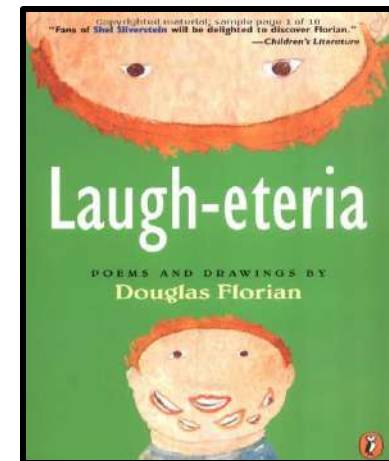
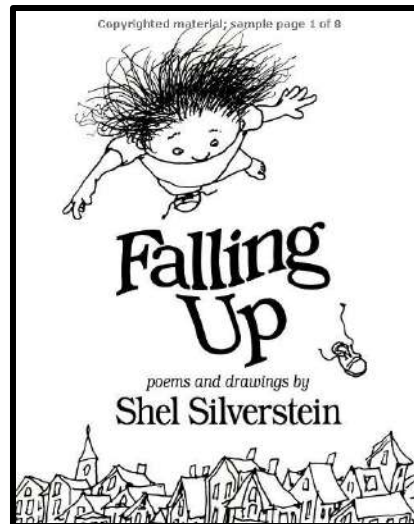
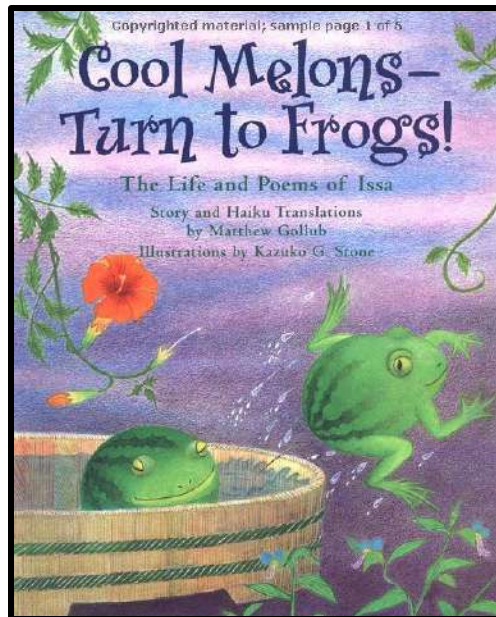
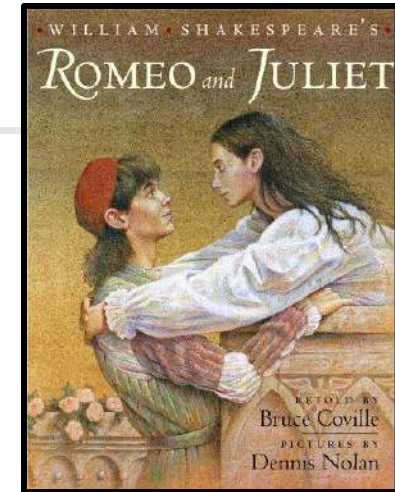
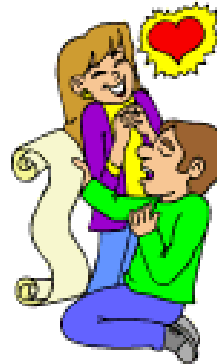
## The Arts





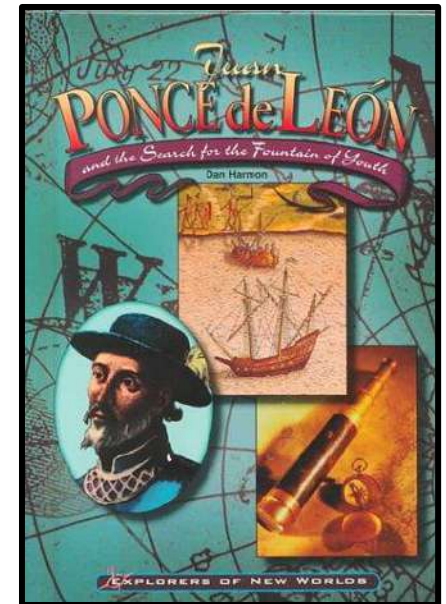
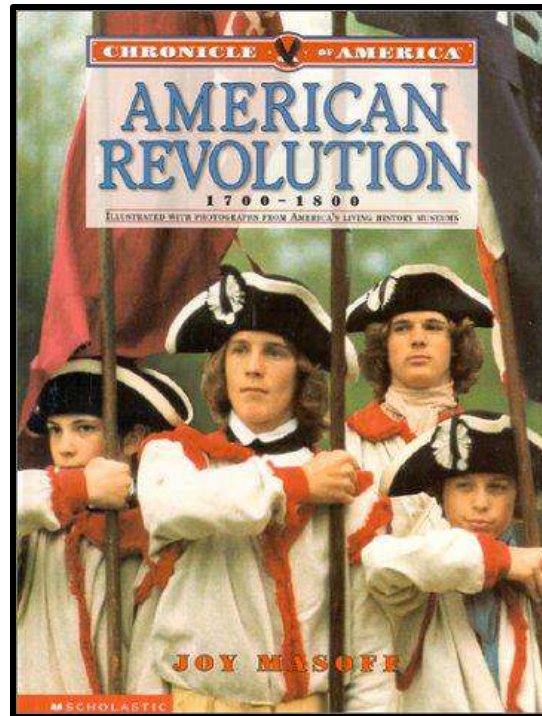
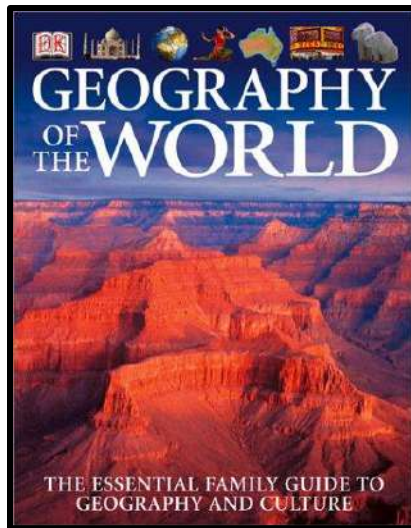
# 800-899

# Literature



# 900-999

## Geography, History & Biography





# Let's Review Dewey!

---



- Books on the same subject are given the **same Dewey number**.
- All books on the same subject are **shelved together**.
- Books are arranged in **number order** from 000-999.



# Don't Forget Fiction Books!

- **Fiction books** have not been given Dewey numbers.
- The call number for a fiction book is "F" and letters from the author's last name.
- Fiction books are arranged alphabetically by the author's last name.

