

Tom Betty Susan

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I come from a readerly family and a home full of books, so not surprisingly, when I started Grade Primary (kindergarten), learning to read was the main highlight.

Our school used the Ginn Basic Reader series, which consisted of 14 books or so, covering several elementary grades.



In these books, we were introduced to siblings Tom, Betty, and Susan, whose world was vividly depicted in simple language, accompanied by beautiful and expressive illustrations.



This book series has long since faded into near oblivion, so imagine my delight a few years back, when I discovered a set of the first three books, still in remarkable condition, for only a few dollars at a local thrift store. They are the very editions we used in Grade Primary, the ones from which I first learned to read. I gladly snapped them up.



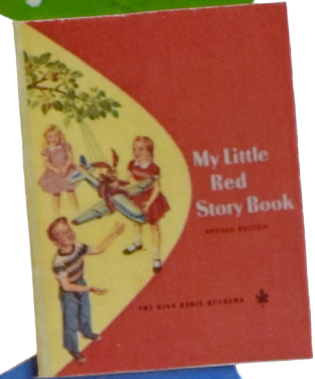
I loved all the books in the series, but these three are the most iconic and evocative for me. And that can mean only one thing: memory ornaments!

My first ornament features the books themselves, or at least their iconic covers. Before I made this ornament, I toyed with the idea of creating actual miniature books, with pages that open, and I may yet make some like that.

But for my first Tom-Betty-Susan ornament, I decided to use just the cover images, which I mounted on card stock and glued together in a vertical row. I didn't think this one needed any further embellishment, since the covers themselves are so colourful and festive looking.

This 5" ornament looks cute on the tree, but I wasn't done yet. I made a second ornament using my 2.25" button machine, using two of my favourite images from the books.

The first shows the three children browsing in the library, a pastime beloved by my sister and me, while the second has the children admiring cupcakes in a bakery window after an outing with Mother.

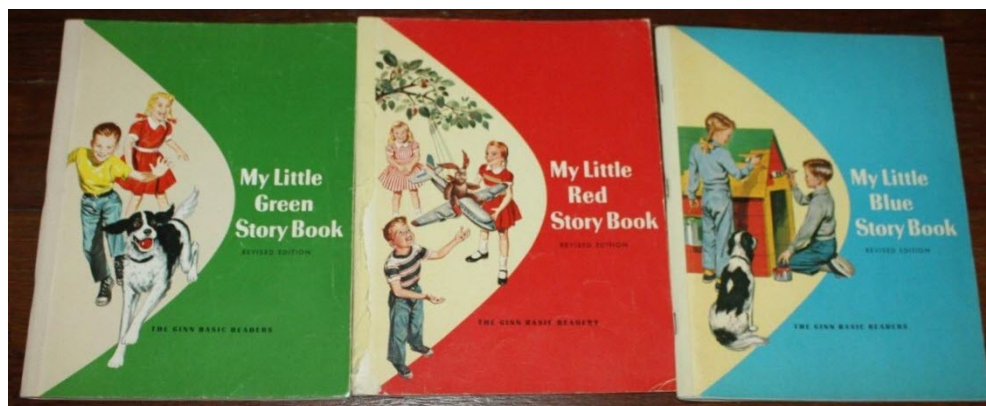


I really love the evocative images on this ornament, but what really *makes* it are these oh-so-cute tiny book dangles. I needed four books for my bauble, so I added a yellow book from a later level in the series.

I made the teeny books from cardstock and used jump rings to attach them to a short length of chain, so that they dangle freely without obscuring the button faces. The little books add some eye candy and a bit of movement to the ornament. Adorable!



I made these ornaments in a burst of nostalgia, to capture something of what these books meant to me all those years ago, and what they still represent now.

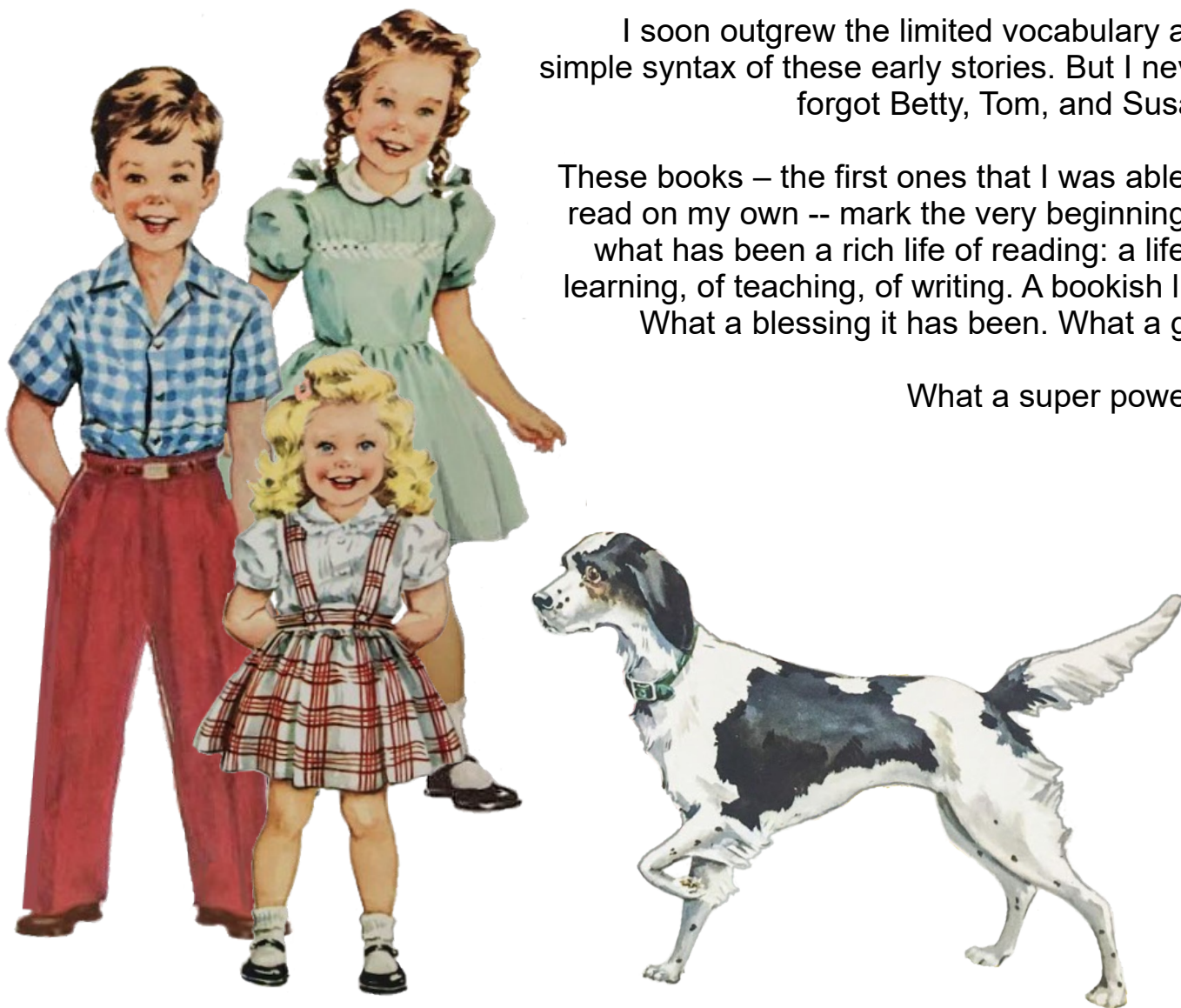


When I open them today, I find myself transported right back to the first moments of my reading life, and the sensation of being on the threshold of something wonderful. As indeed I was: I was off and reading.

I soon outgrew the limited vocabulary and simple syntax of these early stories. But I never forgot Betty, Tom, and Susan.

These books – the first ones that I was able to read on my own -- mark the very beginning of what has been a rich life of reading: a life of learning, of teaching, of writing. A bookish life. What a blessing it has been. What a gift.

What a super power.



So: to Mrs. MacDonald, Miss Huntington, and Mrs. Lewis, who so very long ago gave me the precious gift of reading and thus helped set my feet upon my life's path, a heartfelt – and long overdue -- thank you.