



The Reading Chair

Young Children is pleased to introduce **The Reading Chair**, a regular feature written by Isabel Baker. It will include reviews of new children's books to help readers select good books for the children they teach.

***Kitten's First Full Moon* by Kevin Henkes. 2004. New York: Greenwillow. 32 pp. ISBN 0-06-058828-4. Ages 2 and up.**

Henkes has done it again, and this time he has won the 2004 Caldecott Award for his new book, *Kitten's First Full Moon*. With simple clarity he writes about a kitten that just cannot reach that big bowl of milk in the sky, the moon. "Poor Kitten." Kitten, similar to a typical preschool child, is inquisitive, brave, persistent, and sometimes unlucky. "Poor Kitten." After a whole evening of chasing down the moon, she sadly walks back home empty-handed and with an empty stomach. "Poor Kitten." However, waiting for her on the stoop is a great big bowl of milk. "Lucky Kitten." Children will enjoy being a step ahead of the kitten, but they will identify with her frustration and appreciate the reassuring ending.



Henkes's story lines demonstrate his clear intuition about children's needs, desires, and imaginations. He also understands the rhythm and predictability that make a strong children's book.

***Miss Polly Has a Dolly* by Pamela Duncan Edwards. Illus. by Elicia Castaldi. 2003. New York: Putnam's. 32 pp. ISBN 0-399-23857-3. Ages 2 and up.**



This centuries-old nursery rhyme tells the story of a dolly who is "sick, sick, sick," and her owner, Miss Polly, who sends for the doctor "quick, quick, quick." One never knows in the original version if the dolly recovers from her illness. In

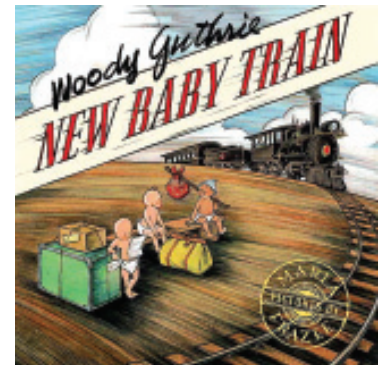
this newly fleshed-out rhyme, not only does the dolly fully recover, she goes out for "ice cream, cream, cream" with Miss Polly and the doctor.

The rhythm, rhyme, and alliteration are contagious. The messages about the importance of nurturing and following doctor's orders are clear. Elicia Castaldi is a new illustrator who provides fresh, playful, collage-style illustrations.

***New Baby Train* by Woody Guthrie. Illus. by Marla Frazee. 2004. Boston: Little, Brown. 32 pp. ISBN 0-316-07203-6. Ages 3 and up.**

The stork delivery may be outdated, but where *do* babies come from?

In this imaginative explanation, a picture-book rendition of Guthrie's folk song, an older boy takes care of all the babies on the Baby Train. They journey across the country, each baby waiting to be united with the right family for him or her. One baby reads the newspaper while others sleep or read a book. The conductor delivers a tray of baby bottles filled with milk. It is a perfect combination of the naïve and the sophisticated.

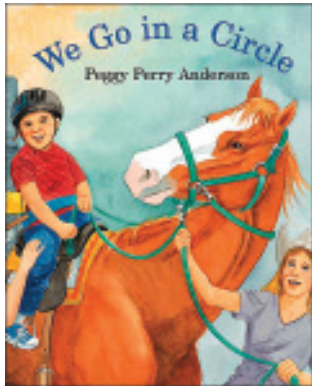


Frazee is a pro at illustrating babies. She also draws us in to the 1930s Dust Bowl era setting by using brown tones throughout the book and on the endpapers. Children will understand that the book is not meant to be taken literally. What they will be delighted by is the book's rhythm, the babies' playful journey, and the sense of security the book provides when each baby is welcomed by the smiling and loving faces of his or her new parents.

Isabel Baker, MAT, MLS, is president of The Book Vine for Children, a national company dedicated to getting good books into the hands of preschool children and their teachers. Isabel has worked as a children's librarian and is currently a presenter on early literacy and book selection. Chair illustration by Diane Greenseid.

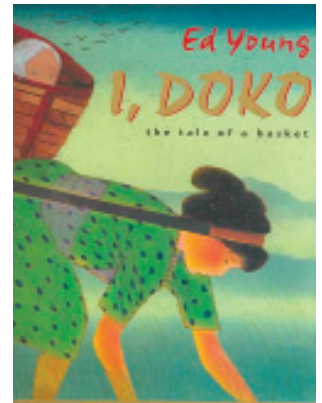
***We Go in a Circle* by Peggy Perry Anderson. 2004. Boston: Houghton Mifflin. 32 pp. ISBN 0-618-44756-3. Ages 3 and up.**

Peggy Anderson knows how to tackle sensitive subjects through frank and reassuring stories. *We Go in a Circle* is about finding one's place and using one's unique abilities to overcome obstacles. When a racehorse suffers a serious leg injury, his racing career is over and his usefulness is suddenly called into question. But when he is taken to a therapy center to give rides to children with differing abilities, readers realize that there are many ways to be helpful and feel special. With simple no-frills language, Anderson leaves plenty of room on the page for a story of considerable depth.



***I, Doko: The Tale of a Basket* by Ed Young. 2004. New York: Philomel. 32 pp. ISBN 0-399-23625-2. Ages 5 and up.**

The masterful storyteller Ed Young tells a powerful folktale from Nepal through the voice of a woven family basket, Doko. Doko was chosen from stacks and stacks of baskets at a market when both he and his master were young. As Doko tells his own life story—how he carried his master's baby, later hauled a dowry for that child's bride, and then carried her newborn child—Doko also tells the story of his master's family. In his old age, the master becomes ill and feeble. His grandson, in a surprising twist at the end of the story, uses Doko to remind his relatives of the importance of caring for and respecting family members, even when they are old.



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