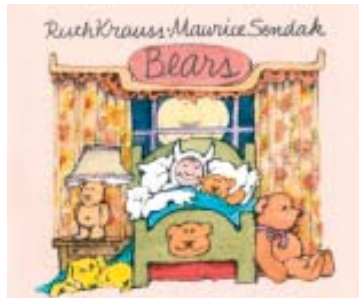




The Reading Chair

***Bears*, by Ruth Krauss. Illus. Maurice Sendak. 2005. New York: HarperCollins. 24 pp. ISBN 0-0602-7994-X. Ages birth to 4.**

Bears, written by Ruth Krauss and illustrated by Phyllis Rowand, was first published in 1948. Maurice Sendak was still an undiscovered artist at that time, but he and Krauss soon after became close friends and collaborators.

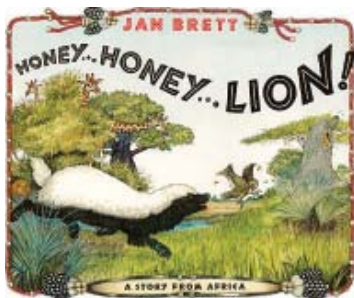


In this year's reissue, *Bears* has new illustrations by Sendak. Krauss's charming story—having only 27 words—about bears and their fantastic habits now has a new twist. In addition to illustrating the bears, Sendak has added a subplot: Max, the white-suited character from *Where the Wild Things Are*, can be seen searching for his dog, who has snatched one of Max's teddy bears. This is a piece of literary history and a seductive read for children. Sendak and the late Krauss are together again!

***Honey . . . Honey . . . Lion!* by Jan Brett. 2005. New York: Putnam's. 32 pp. ISBN 0-399-24463-8. Ages 3 to 7.**

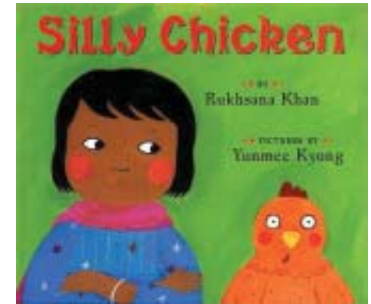
Jan Brett has outdone herself! This is the compelling story of the African honeyguide, a bird that leads a badger to honey in exchange for the badger's sharing the feast. Legend says that if the badger refuses to share the honey, the bird will next time lead him to a lion!

In this dramatic tale, one badger learns his lesson the hard way. There is excitement, indignation, and suspense in this wonderful life lesson about teamwork and appreciation. Brett's realistic illustrations are especially noteworthy. The sight of the honey makes me want to dive right in, and the moral of this story will invite children back for many more readings.



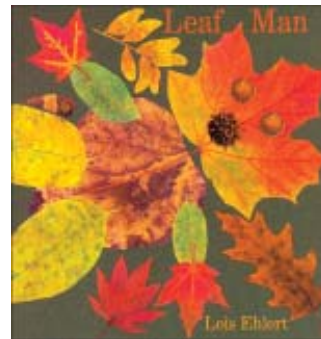
***Silly Chicken*, by Rukhsana Khan. Illus. Yunmee Kyong. 2005. New York: Viking. 32 pp. ISBN 0-670-05912-9. Ages 3 to 7.**

We've all heard of sibling rivalry, but this endearing tale set in Pakistan explores it on another level. A young girl feels dismay at the attention her mother gives Bibi, their pet chicken. Only when the chicken escapes its pen and is lost, causing the mother much distress, does the child begin to miss the animal.



When the family manages to hatch the chicken's abandoned egg, the little girl realizes that it is quite easy, after all, to adore a chicken. The story captures the sadness and joy of the cycle of life and the frustrations and rewards of being part of a family. The illustrations are lovely.

***Leaf Man*, by Lois Ehlert. 2005. San Diego, CA: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 0-1520-5304-2. Ages 3 to 8.**

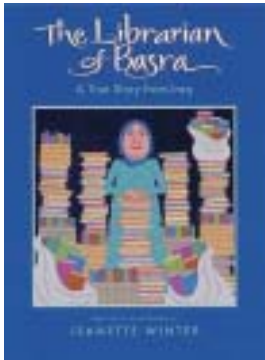


Leaf Man is one of Lois Ehlert's best! A deceptively simple story line about a leaf figure that travels with the wind allows Ehlert's collage-style leaf pressings on each page to take center stage. Ehlert collected these leaves on her travels across the country and color-copied them right away before their orange-reds and yellow-greens had a chance to fade. "Leaves," Ehlert says, "are among the most beautiful art supplies in the world."

(cont'd on p. 2)

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 Greenesid.

The leaf collages suggest a world of possibilities for extending the book's use in the classroom. For example, children may want to start their own leaf collections from neighborhood trees, identify different species by comparing their leaves to those in the book, and make collages using the leaves they collect.



***The Librarian of Basra*, by Jeanette Winter. 2005. Orlando, FL: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 0-1520-5445-6. Ages 4 to 8.**

This timely new release tells the true story of a brave Iraqi librarian's determination to save her city's books from wartime ruin. As it became increasingly

clear to her that Basra's library would become a military target, she disobeyed government orders and smuggled thousands of books into safe hiding. By the time the library was ravaged by fire, she had saved most of the collection.

The story's depiction of war in both text and illustration is honest and straightforward rather than sensational, making it an appropriate choice for young children. Readers will be drawn in by the challenges this librarian faced, and they will feel inspired by the difference one woman made for an entire city.

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