

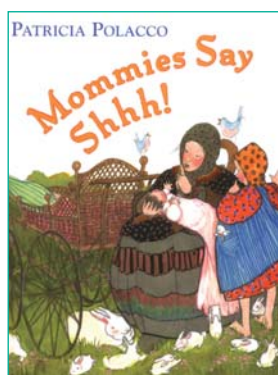
The Reading Chair



***Mommies Say Shhh!* by Patricia Polacco. 2005. New York: Philomel Books. 32 pp. ISBN 0-399-24341-0. Ages birth to 3.**

Life on a farm can be noisy! Polacco uses lilting, repetitive language and rich watercolor illustrations to show various animal families and the sounds they make. “Dogs say buff, buff, buff. Sheep say baa, baa, baa. Geese say honk, honk, honk. Bunnies say nothing at all.”

And what happens when all the animals speak up all at once, causing quite a ruckus when a baby is sleeping nearby? “Mommies say shhh, shhh, shhh.” Young children will appreciate the building tension in this story and the mother’s resolve to calm everyone down. A great read-aloud where little ones will enjoy chiming in.

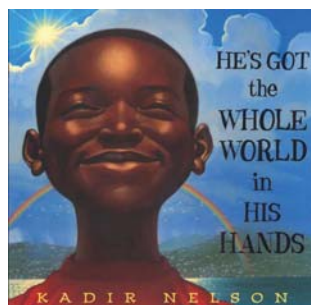


***The First Day of Winter*, by Denise Fleming. 2005. New York: Henry Holt and Company. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8050-7384-1. Ages 2 to 6.**

Caldecott Honor illustrator Denise Fleming is known for her pulp paintings on colored cotton fiber using hand-cut stencils. She also has a well-tuned ear for rhyme and rhythm and what speaks to young children. In this cozy winter book, children can sing along as a snowman takes shape, day after day. He acquires scarves around his neck, peanuts for toes, and pockets full of birdseed.



Young readers will be drawn to Fleming’s vivid art (even the white snow seems colorful), her well-written rhymes, and her creative use of nature. Best new winter book for preschoolers this year.



***He's Got the Whole World in His Hands*, by Kadir Nelson. 2005. New York: Dial Books for Young Readers. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8037-2850-6. Ages 2 and up.**

“He’s Got the Whole World in His Hands” is a well-known spiritual that has evolved into one of this country’s most beloved folk songs. The interconnectedness of people, community, and nature is common to all versions. In this edition, Nelson portrays an African American family in its home, in its neighborhood, and gazing across the whole world.

The book contains several pictures meant to look like they were drawn by children. Nelson created them using his left hand and colored pencils. In his other pencil, oil, and watercolor illustrations, the use of light is striking. The luminous cover is a taste of what’s inside.

***The Giant Hug*, by Sandra Horning. Illus. by Valeri Gorbachev. 2005. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 40 pp. ISBN 0-375-82477-4. Ages 3 to 6.**

Owen, an adorable piglet, wants to send a GIANT hug to Granny for her birthday. Not a picture of a hug or a letter describing it. He wants to send the real thing. In good spirits, Mr. Nevin, the charming canine letter carrier, decides to give it a try. He gets a hug from Owen and then passes it on to Ms. Porter, the mail sorter. She gives the hug to Leroy the driver, who passes it on to James, who takes it to the airport.



All the endearing postal workers, even when they are a little uncomfortable, benefit from the love they are passing along.

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.

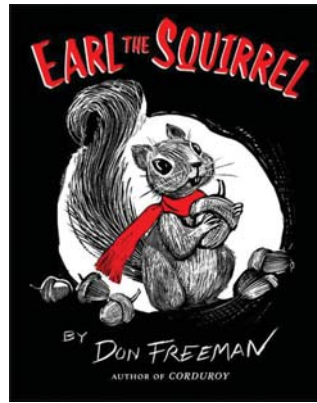
Shelly the mail carrier arrives at Granny's and gives her the big hug. "That's the most wonderful piece of mail I have ever received. You send that grandson of mine a big kiss," exclaims Granny, and she plants a kiss on Shelly's cheek.

Gorbachev's charming illustrations give each postal worker—Ms. Porter the sheep, Leroy the rabbit, James the porcupine, and Shelly the duck—a distinct and endearing personality. Field trips, play-acting, and studies of community helpers are only some of the activities this book will encourage. The endpapers are full of illustrated postage stamps, another inspiration for classroom activities.

***Earl the Squirrel*, by Don Freeman. 2005. New York: Viking Press. 46 pp. ISBN 0-670-06019-4. Ages 4 to 8.**

A coming-of-age story for the preschool set. Earl's mother has decided that he is becoming a spoiled little squirrel who must learn to collect acorns on his own.

Earl has several false starts. There is the girl down the road who does his work for him, a cranky owl whose good



advice he ignores, and a raging bull that he stumbles upon accidentally. But soon enough Earl does learn to collect acorns on his own, thanks to a stroke of good luck.

Freeman used the same type of scratchboard art in this book that he used in *Corduroy*. Almost 30 years after the author's death, Freeman's son Roy is bringing this story to young readers for the first time.

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