



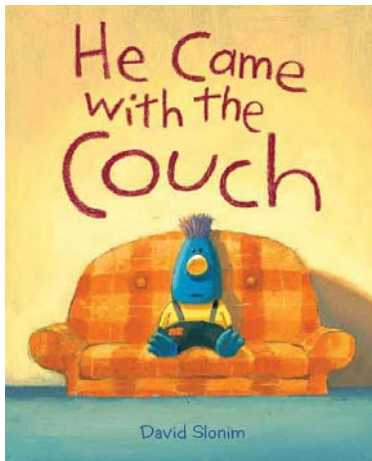
Diane Greeneid

The Reading Chair

Off to Bed.
 ISBN 0-7636-2766-6.
Out to Play.
 ISBN 0-7636-2767-4.
 Both by Michel
 Blake. Photog. by
 Trish Gant. 2005.
 Cambridge, MA:
 Candlewick Press.
 Board book, 14 pp.
 Ages birth to 3.

The textured covers are only the beginning of the unique design of these board books. Each page has black-and-white photographs of a child playing with a familiar object, which is featured in full color. The first item in each book—a bear in *Off to Bed* and a boat in *Out to Play*—also appears at the end, and children will enjoy anticipating its return. Little hands will have no problem gripping and turning the easy-to-open graduated pages, which are a new and welcome addition to the board book category.

He Came with the Couch, by David Slonim. 2005. San Francisco: Chronicle Books. 32 pp. ISBN 0-8118-4430-7. Ages 3 to 7.



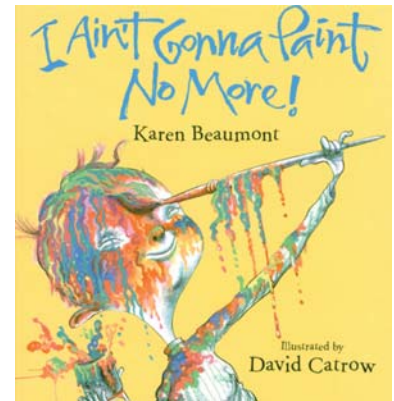
Dedicating the book to Jim Henson, Slonim has created his own zany Muppet-like character for this original tale. Children will be drawn to the improbable luck a family has when it purchases a couch at a rummage sale and finds that it comes with a new housemate. The hilarious illustrations fill in the details and enrich the story.



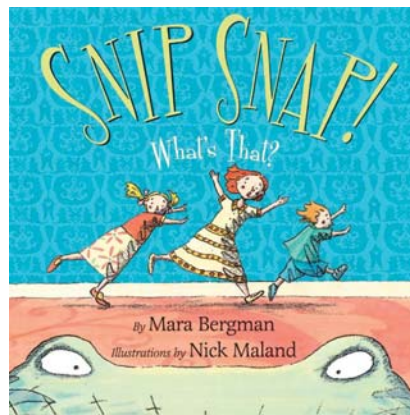
Adults and children alike will understand that what is real in this fanciful and quirky story is the power of unconditional love and nurturing.

I Ain't Gonna Paint No More! by Karen Beaumont. Illus. by David Catrow. 2005. New York: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 0-15-202488-3. Ages 3 to 7.

This interactive songbook is one of the year's best. Beaumont's lyrics and Catrow's lively ink-and-paint illustrations capture a free-spirited boy who, try as he might to obey his mother, can't resist one last dab of messy paint. Review parts of the body with children as they sing along to the tune of "It Ain't Gonna Rain No More." This song, an old favorite, provides a proper reason to use improper English.



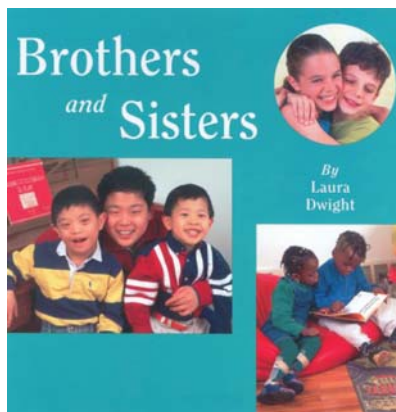
Snip Snap! What's That? by Mara Bergman. Illus. by Nick Maland. 2005. New York: HarperCollins (Greenwillow Books). 32 pp. ISBN 0-06-077754-0. Ages 3 to 7.



From the sewer cover ajar on the title page to the alligator "creeping . . . creeping up the stairs," this book is not shy about the scariness of monsters. Children will enjoy collectively chanting, "Were the children scared? YOU BET THEY

WERE!" Bergman has perfectly paced this refrain, with the question on one page and the answer on the next, creating just the right amount of drama for the picture book crowd. Scary books help children acknowledge their fears and cope with them. And what child won't appreciate how this frightening tale ends: when the children have had enough, they scare that alligator out the door. "And was the alligator scared? YOU BET IT WAS!"

***Brothers and Sisters*, by Laura Dwight. 2005. New York: Star Bright Books. 32 pp. ISBN 1-887734-80-5. Ages 4 to 8.**

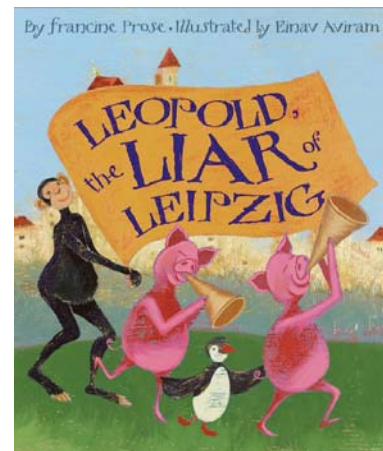


Dwight has chosen a diverse set of families—Caucasian, African American, Asian, Middle Eastern—to explain a diverse set of physical disabilities. While at least one child in each family has a disability affecting everyday life, the stories told by their siblings make it clear that these children have the same feelings and thoughts as their brothers and sisters. They all want to play, to laugh, to wrestle, and to be loved. The disabilities—congenital amputation, Asperger’s syndrome, blindness, deafness, Down syndrome, and cerebral palsy—are named and explained in detail in the glossary at the end of the book.

The text is somewhat stiff, but the language is clear and the photographs tell a wonderful story by themselves.

***Leopold, the Liar of Leipzig*, by Francine Prose. Illus. by Einav Aviram. 2005. New York: HarperCollins. 34 pp. ISBN 0-06-008075-2. Ages 4 to 8.**

Acclaimed adult and children’s fiction writer Francine Prose gives us Leopold the master storyteller, who tells of faraway lands with linguistic enchantment through the use of alliteration. Imagine “the great galaxy of Gelato” which “is governed by a gabby gorilla named Gertrude.” But when the stern and scientific Doctor Doctor Professor Morgenfresser nearly causes Leopold’s demise by accusing him of telling lies, the townspeople—and readers—resolve that stories are different from lies, and it never hurts to have something wonderful to believe in. Highly stylized illustrations from new illustrator Einav Aviram.



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.

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