



The Reading Chair

New is not necessarily **better**, especially when it comes to children's books. The basic human needs of children—for love and security—do not change even if their surroundings do. So it is always a treat when an out-of-print book, beloved by children decades ago, is reissued for new audiences today.

The following titles are reissues of favorites that some of you may even remember.

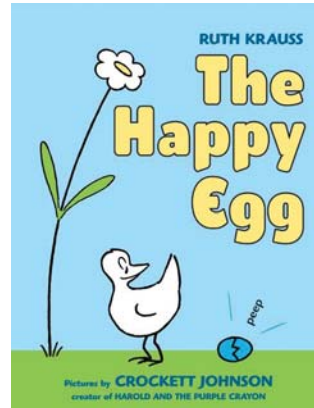
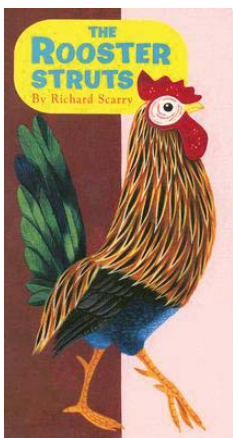
***I Am a Bunny*, by Ole Risom. Illus. by Richard Scarry. [1963] 2004. New York: Random House. 24 pp. ISBN 0-375-82778-1. Ages birth to 3.**

***The Rooster Struts*, by Richard Scarry. [1963] 2004. New York: Random House. 24 pp. ISBN 0-375-83006-5. Ages birth to 3.**

Richard Scarry's vivid illustrations come to life on the double-page spreads of these tall, slender, reissued board books. Scarry may have a reputation for cartoon-like illustrations, but in these books his art is warm, expressive, and precise. *I Am a Bunny* depicts the small animal's changing habits as one season turns into the next and the yearly cycle starts again.

The Rooster Struts shows one or two animals per page and uses simple sentences to describe how each animal moves: "The duck waddles. The goose waggles."

Word repetition, rhyme, and consistent pacing lend both books an element of poetry that will help young readers find predictability and reassurance in the language. The illustrations convey detail and suggest a sense of balance and order in the natural world. This is nonfiction-for-the-very-young at its best.



***The Happy Egg*, by Ruth Krauss. Illus. by Crockett Johnson. [1967] 2005. New York: HarperCollins. 36 pp. ISBN 0-06-076005-2. Ages 2 to 7.**

From the eminent husband-and-wife team that brought us *The Carrot Seed*, this is a welcome reissue for the preschool set. Johnson's use of negative—or blank—space puts the spotlight on his two tiny characters: the

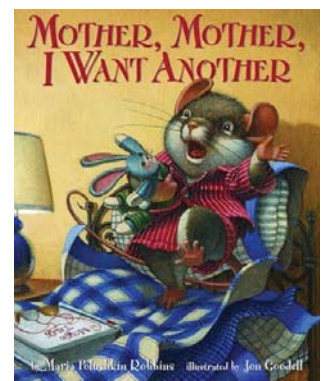
little bird and the egg. His rudimentary two-color line drawings complement the humorous language Krauss uses to introduce a newborn egg. "It was just born. It was still an egg. It couldn't walk. It couldn't sing. It couldn't fly. It could just get sat on." And it does get sat on, "and sat on and sat on and sat on" until it is ready to hatch, walk, sing, fly, and sit on other eggs.

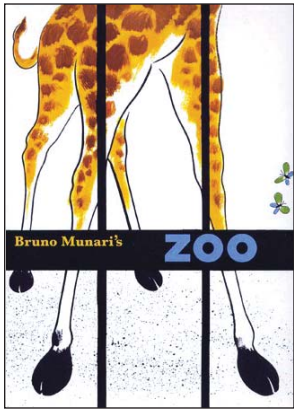
Children will delight in the suspense of waiting for the chick to hatch and find satisfaction in the promise of the cycle of life.

***Mother, Mother, I Want Another*, by Maria Polushkin Robbins. Illus. by Jon Goodell. [1978] 2005. New York: Knopf. 28 pp. ISBN 0-375-82588-6. Ages 2 to 7.**

The frustrating bedtime struggle for another kiss, another story, or another moment with a parent is familiar to all children. In this reissued story, conscientious Mrs. Mouse tries to please her child when he says, "I want another, Mother!" He wants another kiss, but she misunderstands him and looks for another mother to put him to bed. Of course, no other mother will do. Not Mrs. Duck or Mrs. Frog or Mrs. Pig or Mrs. Donkey.

Children will find reassurance and fun in the book's repetitive structure as Mrs. Mouse brings home one mother after the next. The wordplay has just the right humor for preschoolers. They will love being a few steps ahead of Mrs. Mouse as she calls upon the entire village to help her baby get to sleep.





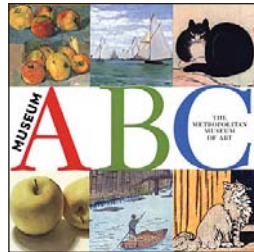
Bruno Munari's Zoo, by Bruno Munari. [1963] 2005. San Francisco: Chronicle. 48 pp. ISBN 0-8118-4830-2. Ages 1 to 6.

With imaginative descriptions, Munari gives personality to animals that many young readers will be meeting for the first time. "Some camels are more humpy than others. This one has a seat for you." Munari's playfulness and colorful illustrations are unique. Readers

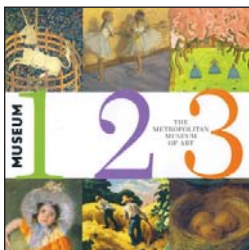
will feel that they are in the hands of an artist, not just a tour guide. "Munari is one of the most inventive picture book creators I know," says Eric Carle, author of *The Very Hungry Caterpillar*.

Nonfiction titles

Museum ABC, by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2002. New York: Little, Brown. 60 pp. ISBN 0-316-07170-6. All ages.



Museum 123, by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2004. New York: Little, Brown. 48 pp. ISBN 0-316-16044-X. All ages.



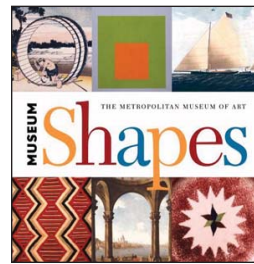
Museum Shapes, by the Metropolitan Museum of Art. 2005. New York: Little, Brown. 48 pp. ISBN 0-316-05698-7. All ages.

These books from the Metropolitan Museum of Art do it all. Whether teaching the alphabet, numbers, or shapes, they enable children to find familiarity in fine

art. In *Museum ABC*, "Z is for Zigzag." Readers will find this recognizable pattern in a Japanese woodblock

print, an American watercolor, an African beaded apron, and an Egyptian tomb painting. By presenting art from a variety of cultures, based on common themes such as shapes or letters, young readers will look for similarities among cultures while noticing how different their art forms are.

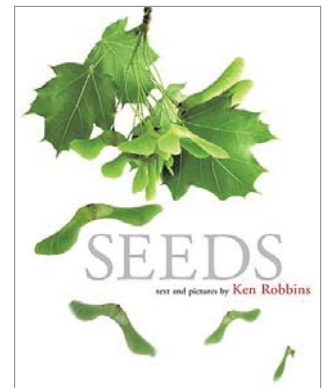
The Museum series will provide hours of browsing and careful examination for readers. Glossaries at the end give titles, artists, dates, and media for the artworks. As a follow-up activity to reading the books, one teacher bought postcard prints at a local museum and let her students arrange them according to themes they found on their own. The children loved it. These are coffee-table books for the young age set. They make excellent teacher appreciation gifts too.



Seeds, by Ken Robbins. 2005. New York: Atheneum. 32 pp. ISBN 0-689-85041-7. Ages 5 to 8.

"What you need to know about seeds is that they sprout. There's energy in every seed, and inside each seed another plant that wants to grow." These first two lines of Robbins's nonfiction page-turner will make young readers want to grow and travel with the seeds in the book. Robbins explains how varieties of seeds develop and disperse.

Sticktight seeds cling to socks, blackberry seeds travel inside the bodies of birds, maple seeds drift in the wind, and coconuts float in the water. Any classroom of children who see Robbins's stunning photography and read his clear explanations will clamor to plant seeds of their own. Instructions are included for growing an avocado pit in water.



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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