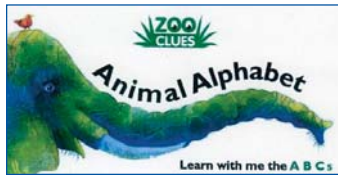




The Reading Chair

Zoo Clues Animal Alphabet, by Alex Lluch. Illus. by David Defenbaugh. 2005. San Diego, CA: Wedding Solutions. 54 pp. ISBN 1-887169-49-0. Ages birth to 5.

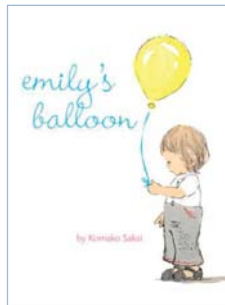


This engaging alphabet board book presents easy-to-read uppercase and lowercase letters in the same vibrant colors that Defenbaugh uses to paint 26 animals, one for each letter of the alpha-

bet. But with only one letter and a small part of an animal showing on every right-hand page (the rest hides around the corner on the next panoramic spread), this book is a continual guessing game for the curious. From the koala to the lion, the urial to the yak, this book is sometimes predictable and sometimes challenging—a perfect balance for young readers.

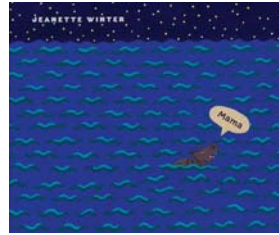
Emily's Balloon, by Komako Sakai. 2006. San Francisco, CA: Chronicle. 40 pp. ISBN 13 978-0-8118-5219-7. Ages 2 to 5.

In this lovely, understated story, a small child brings home a helium-filled balloon and makes it her new friend. Toddlers will enjoy how Emily's thoughtful (and apparently single) mother weights the balloon with a spoon, but that doesn't keep it from getting stuck in a tree. The challenge for Emily is going to sleep alone in her bed, able only to gaze at the balloon through her window until morning, when her mother will borrow a ladder and bring it down. In Sakai's tender, pencil-and-wash illustrations, each page has an obvious focal point. Perfectly captured are the wonder of the balloon and the longing and anxiety of toddlers in these simple bumps in the road.

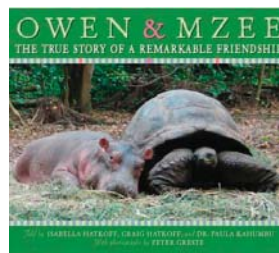


Isabel Baker, MAT, MLS, is president of The Book Vine for Children, a national company dedicated to getting good books into the hands of preschool children and their teachers. Isabel has worked as a children's librarian and is currently a presenter on early literacy and book selection.

Chair illustration by Diane Greenseid.



Mama, by Jeanette Winter. 2006. New York: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 13 978-0152-05495-3. Ages 2 to 5.

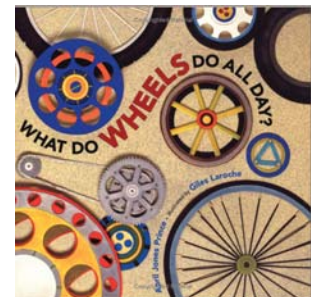


Owen and Mzee: The True Story of a Remarkable Friendship, by Isabella Hatkoff, Craig Hatkoff, and Dr. Paula Kahumbu. Photographs by Peter Greste. 2006. New York: Scholastic. 36 pp. ISBN 0-439-82973-9. Ages 5 and up.

These two books tell the same true story of a baby hippo who was separated from his mama during the tsunami disaster in December 2004. In Winters' version of the story, *Mama*, rich and powerful artwork accompanied by two repeated words of text—"Mama?" and "Baby!"—illustrates the hippos' love for each other, their fear when separated, and the baby's adoption of his new mama, a tortoise. *Owen and Mzee*, for an older audience, uses real photos and an intriguing documentary style to explain how the baby hippo weathered traumatic events and eventually found comfort in the close companionship of a 130-year-old giant tortoise. Told in two unique and complementary ways, this is a remarkable and hopeful story of interconnectedness, reminding us that love conquers all.

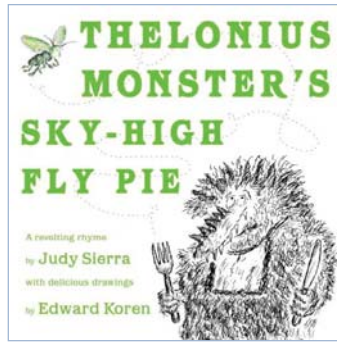
What Do Wheels Do All Day? by April Jones Prince. Illus. by Giles Laroche. 2006. Boston, MA: Houghton Mifflin. 32 pp. ISBN 13 978-0-618-56307-4. Ages 2 to 7.

Colorful cut-paper relief illustrations give dimension and movement to each page in this inventive and upbeat new book. Its unusual strength lies in the variety of vehicles in the book, the interesting verbs that Prince chooses—push, pull, pedal, tow, spit, sputter, parade, patrol—and the way Laroche captures the wheels' power through the body language of characters on a merry-go-round, a skateboard, and more. While the text is sometimes stiff, the illustrations make the reader think beyond the most common uses for wheels.



***Thelonius Monster's Sky-High Fly Pie*, by Judy Sierra. Illus. by Edward Koren. 2006. New York: Alfred A. Knopf. 36 pages. ISBN 13-978-0-375-83218-5. Ages 4 to 8.**

In a book that evokes “I Know an Old Lady Who Swallowed a Fly,” Sierra and Koren weave an original story about a monster who makes a revolting pie topped with flies. Sierra’s rich writing and Koren’s expressive scratchy line drawings—famously featured in his *New*



Yorker cartoons and adapted surprisingly well for this young audience—make a delightfully disgusting tale, greater than the sum of its parts. The book is made in black-and-white with two exceptions: the printed text and the flies’ wings are a pleasing lime green. A great read-aloud book that ends with a vegetarian twist.

Copyright © 2006 by the National Association for the Education of Young Children. See Permissions and Reprints online at www.journal.naeyc.org/about/permissions.asp.