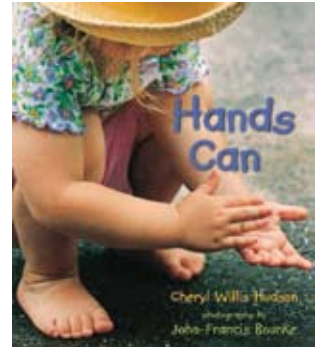




# The Reading Chair

***Hands Can* (Board book), by Cheryl Willis Hudson. Photographs by John-Francis Bourke. 2007. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. 24 pp. ISBN 9780763632922. Ages birth to 3.**

Originally published in hardcover in 2003, this lovely photo-illustrated book is well suited to the board book format of this new edition. The language describes all the things young hands can do: they “can wave,” “touch things high and low,” “tie a shoe,” and “say ‘I love you’” (with a hug); they can “mold things,” “fix things,” and “plant seeds in a row.” The crisp photographs capture children of all skin colors, and gentle rhyme ties all of the pages together. Each picture is a conversation starter.



***Every Friday*, by Dan Yaccarino. 2007. New York: Henry Holt. 32 pp. ISBN 9780805077247. Ages 2 to 7.**

On Fridays, the young narrator and his father leave the house early to take a leisurely stroll through the city and stop at their favorite diner for breakfast. Rain or shine, they watch the shops open, give and get friendly waves, and take their time while the commuters rush around them. An ode to sons and dads, to reassuring routine and ritual, to stopping to smell the roses, to not overscheduling, and to enjoying city sights, this book is a winner in every way. The retro-style gouache illustrations have a bold look that young readers will find inviting.

***Alligator Boy*, by Cynthia Rylant. Illus. by Diane Goode. 2007. New York: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 9780152060923. Ages 3 to 7.**

Cynthia Rylant and Diane Goode, longtime collaborators, have done it again. In this wonderful new book, they celebrate a young boy’s devotion to his fantasy life: he insists on being an alligator. Like many children who take on an alter ego, the little boy stays in character everywhere—at the breakfast table, while learning to spell in his father’s lap, and even at school where his new persona helps him confront the school-yard bully. As Rylant makes clear in this quirky story, fantasy play for the young is a full-time job! Goode’s old-fashioned illustrations, which depict a buttoned-up family from decades past, will reassure readers that the boy’s need to reimagine himself is perfectly appropriate. A winner!

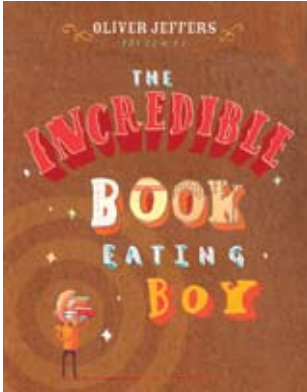


**Isabel Baker**, MAT, MLS, is president of The Book Vine for Children, a national company dedicated to getting good books into the hands of preschool children and their teachers. Isabel has worked as a children’s librarian and is currently a presenter on early literacy and book selection.

**Miriam Baker Schiffer** is a writer and is pursuing an MFA in creative writing at Columbia University in New York.

Chair illustration by Diane Greenseid.

***The Incredible Book Eating Boy*, by Oliver Jeffers. 2007. New York: Philomel. 32 pp. ISBN 9780399247491. Ages 3 to 8.**



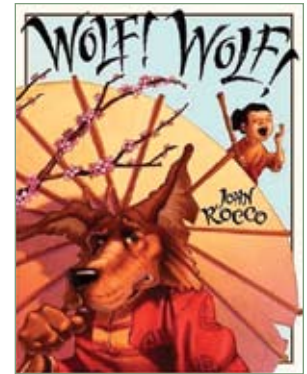
Henry devours books—literally. He actually eats them! It starts almost by accident. And he finds that the more he eats, the smarter he gets, until one day he realizes he’s had too much (a nice nod to moderation). Without giving those books time to digest, all of that knowledge jumbles up inside him and Henry can no longer speak straight.

While recovering, Henry happens to read a few lines from a book he picks up off the floor, “and it was so good.” He discovers that, by reading, he can still be very smart if he just gives it a little time.

The story line isn’t the only original element of this book. The illustrations were painted and drawn on top of pages from old books, with the typeface resembling that of a typewriter. Each page is full of creative detail, including a great finishing touch: the back cover has a bite taken out of it—literally.

***Wolf! Wolf!* by John Rocco. 2007. New York: Hyperion. 32 pp. ISBN 9781423100126. Ages 4 to 8.**

In this ingenious twist on the traditional hungry wolf tale, the carnivorous predator is too old to chase animals like he used to, so he plants a small garden. When weeds prevent his vegetables from coming up, the wolf begins to rethink how he might get his next meal. Just then, he overhears someone calling his name. Turns out, it’s a young goat herder crying wolf. After the townspeople tire of the false alarms and stop running to the herder’s side, the wolf comes upon the lad, and the two strike a deal.

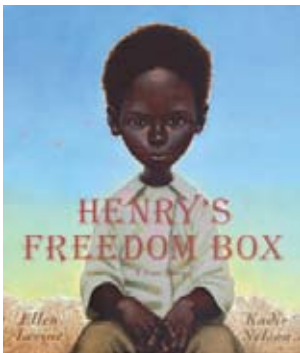


This tale provides real suspense while defying expectations. It is full of vim, and it has vegetarian overtones. John Rocco’s artwork, set in the Far East, is fantastical and vibrant. Children will love getting to know the frightening wolf in a new context.

***Henry’s Freedom Box*, by Ellen Levine. Illus. by Kadir Nelson. 2007. New York: Scholastic. 40 pp. ISBN 9780439777339. Ages 5 and up.**

“Henry Brown wasn’t sure how old he was,” this book begins. “Henry was a slave. And slaves weren’t allowed to know their birthdays.” Using straightforward language and dwelling on all of the right details, Ellen Levine makes this true story accessible to young children. It’s a story about a slave named Henry, who is forced to separate from his parents, wife, and children before he finally decides to escape to freedom in 1849—shipped in a box from Richmond, Virginia, to Philadelphia.

Levine’s compassionate retelling ends on a hopeful note, but she is careful not to gloss over the true distress Henry suffers. Kadir Nelson, who is known for his awe-inspiring artwork, brings incredible emotion to the book with his pencil, watercolor, and oil illustrations, inspired by an 1850 lithograph of the real Henry Brown.



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