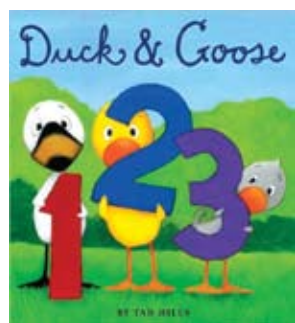
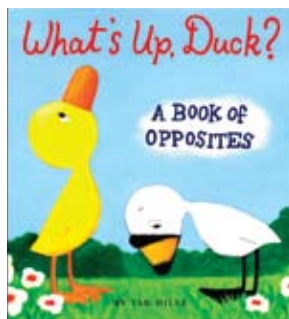




The Reading Chair

***What's Up, Duck? A Book of Opposites*, by Tad Hills. 2008. New York: Random House. 20 pp. ISBN 9780375847387. Ages birth to 4.**

***Duck and Goose, 1, 2, 3*, by Tad Hills. 2008. New York: Random House. 20 pp. ISBN 9780375856211. Ages birth to 4.**



With a lovable cast of feathered friends, Hills brings counting and opposites to life in these two board books for young children. Challenging concepts are hard to teach, but Hills uses clear examples and simple connections in both books. Friendship between the characters is subtly addressed on each page, making the examples

more engaging. Hills paints expressive faces, and his characters' big round eyes say everything, eliciting connections with readers. These playful and appealing books will encourage young readers' conversations and language development.

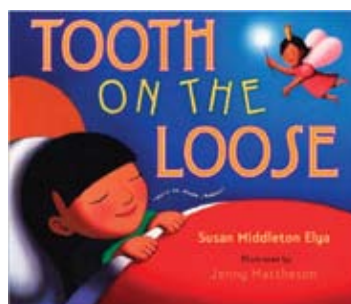
***Truck Stuck*, by Sallie Wolf. Illustrated by Andy Robert Davies. 2008. Watertown, MA: Charlesbridge. 32 pp. ISBN 9781580891196. Ages 2 to 6.**

Have you ever glanced up as you are about to drive under a low bridge and wondered what would happen if your car got stuck? In this story a truck encounters a low-hanging viaduct and does get stuck. Traffic backs up and readers see a host of interesting vehicles (recycling truck, excavator, limousine, and exterminator van,

to name a few), all of which are in a hurry to get moving. They have "Phones to fix. Concrete to mix. Lawns to mow. Scouts on the go." And while this vehicle lovers' paradise is engaging enough, a subplot adds richness:



a lemonade stand that benefits from the bottleneck. It's the boy and girl selling the refreshments who find an interesting solution for freeing the truck: lowering the vehicle by deflating its tires (a real-life technique). Great dramatic tension and inventive rhyming text make this book a knockout.



***Tooth on the Loose*, by Susan Middleton Elya. Illustrated by Jenny Mattheson. 2008. New York: Penguin Putnam. 32 pp. ISBN 9780399244599. Ages 3 to 7.**

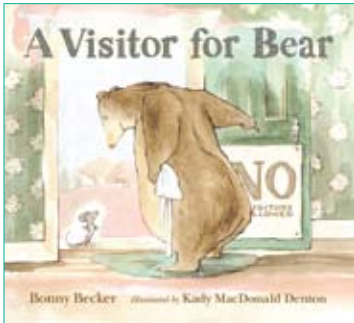
A young girl needs to earn a dollar so she can buy a birthday gift for her papá. A loose tooth could provide the answer if it weren't stubbornly hanging on. Simple and colorful illustrations complement the fast-paced rhyming text that is sprinkled with bolded Spanish vocabulary, and the illustrations offer plenty of help in translating the words. "My brother—**hermano**—said, '**Chica**, good luck! That tooth is worth money, **un dólar**—a buck.' The double tension of losing a tooth and wanting to find a gift for Papá adds even more energy. "I needed that tooth out today, not **mañana**. But yanking? Too painful. I tried a **manzana**. . . I tried to walk **perros** and give puppies **baños**

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, MFA, is a writer.

Chair illustration by Diane Greenseid.

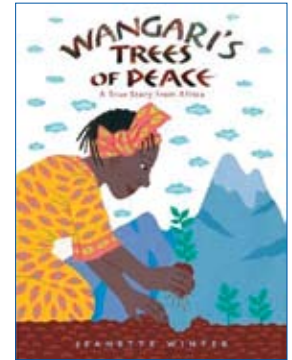
to earn myself money for Dad's **cumpleaños!**" Just as time is running out and none of her money-making efforts are yielding success, the child's family reminds her that sometimes the best gifts can be made for free. In a poem for her father, she writes, "I have **no dinero**, this card's all I've got. But Papi, **te quiero**, I love you a lot." An upbeat and fun book!



***A Visitor for Bear*, by Bonny Becker. Illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton. 2008. Cambridge, MA: Candlewick. 56 pp. ISBN 9780763628079. Ages 3 to 7.**

Bear is a recluse, and he has no plans to change. He even keeps a sign on his front door: No visitors allowed. When a mouse sneaks in, Bear goes to great lengths to send him away. But, as mice do, Mouse returns again and again, insisting that he only wants one cup of tea. While they're sipping, Bear discovers that it is not so bad having an attentive audience on hand. Mouse laughs at his jokes, and Bear does a handstand for Mouse. And when Mouse keeps his word and walks out the door upon finishing his tea, Bear begs him to stay by convincing him that his No Visitors sign is for salesmen, not friends. Expressive watercolor and ink illustrations deliver slapstick comedy. Everyone needs a friend, including this lovable curmudgeon of a bear, who finds one in the insistent, impish mouse.

***Wangari's Trees of Peace: A True Story from Africa*, by Jeanette Winter. 2008. Orlando, FL: Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 9780152065454. Ages 5 and up.**



Winter, author of *The Librarian of Basra* and other remarkable works of nonfiction for children, again delivers a true story of heroism in the face of political danger. Using language simple enough for children and choosing subjects that young readers can identify with (saving Basra's library, for example, and in this new book, reforesting Kenya), Winters also connects to readers with verdant and bold illustrations.

This is the story of Wangari [Maathai], a woman who realizes that deforestation is impoverishing her country's small villages by ruining the land. She starts a women's movement to plant seedlings across Kenya. Despite government opposition, Wangari keeps her important work going and is eventually recognized with the 2004 Nobel Peace Prize. This inspirational story touches on themes of environmentalism, the possibility for creating great change by starting in one's own backyard, and the power of everyday women.

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