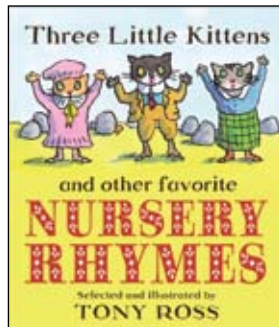




The Reading Chair

***Three Little Kittens and Other Favorite Nursery Rhymes*, selections and illustrations by Tony Ross. 2009. New York: Henry Holt. 96 pp. ISBN 9780805088854. Ages birth to 6.**

Tony Ross gives 50 Mother Goose rhymes a new, edgier side. With lightheartedness and wit, Ross creates characters in old-fashioned dress who have delightful expressions and body language. One bites his nails nervously as the rock-a-bye baby falls from the tree top (into someone's arms); two others literally have their tongues in a twist over Peter Piper who "picked a peck of pickled peppers." With one rhyme per page, the ink and watercolor illustrations are uncrowded and perfect for preschoolers. We especially appreciate the way Ross frames the book as one being read to a little girl by her grandfather, who takes it upon himself to introduce her to nursery rhymes.



Just How Long Can a Long String Be?! By Keith Baker. 2009. New York: Scholastic. 32 pp. ISBN 9780545086615. Ages 2 to 6.



On the heels of his pitch-perfect book *Potato Joe*, Keith Baker has pulled off another winner. In this story a bird and an ant discuss all the uses for a piece of simple white string. Baker's examples are imaginative, such as "[hanging] a picture on

a wall" and "[helping] the sweet pea vines grow tall." Poetic rhyming language carries the reader effortlessly from page to page, and each example contains a sense of

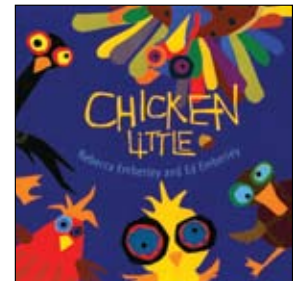
purpose or fun—tying up a birthday present that is about to be mailed, getting twisted and tangled in knots, and fortifying the bird's nest to protect its eggs. As the string winds its way from page to page and example to example, the book imparts a feeling of connectedness between all things in the world.

Baker, a former teacher who understands children's appreciation for simplicity, illustrates the book with colorful pictures that are both quaint and accessible at the same time. This book is eminently readable. It will provide pleasure and delight for readers young and old, again and again and again.

***Chicken Little*, by Rebecca Emberley and Ed Emberley. 2009. New York: Roaring Brook. 32 pp. ISBN 9781596434646. Ages 3 to 7.**

Here's the book you've been waiting for, without even knowing it: *Chicken Little* goes mod. Emberley and Emberley, a father-daughter team, have revamped the classic, adding their own irreverent commentary about this silly lot of farm animals that think the sky is falling. The result is winning. As children well know, the sky isn't actually falling. But that doesn't keep the chicken and his friends, Henny Penny, Lucky Ducky, and Loosey Goosey, from going into a panic with nary a plan. "Honestly," says the narrator, "with names like these, is it any wonder?"

Extra-caffeinated illustrations and the characters' large googly eyes pop off the page in bright colors, but the pictures are pleasing to look at and not overwhelming. It might be hard to top the popularity of Ed Emberley's book *Go Away, Big Green Monster!* which is a favorite of young children, but we imagine this title will be successful as well.



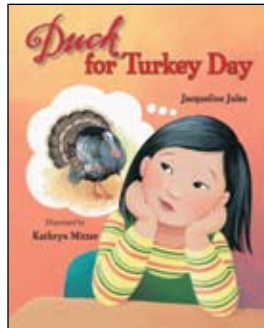
Isabel Baker, MAT, MLS, is president of The Book Vine for Children, a national company dedicated to getting good books into the hands of preschool children and their teachers. Isabel has worked as a children's librarian and is currently a presenter on early literacy and book selection.

Miriam Baker Schiffer, MFA, is a writer.

This column is available in an online archive at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

***Duck for Turkey Day*, by Jacqueline Jules. Illus. by Kathryn Mitter. 2009. Morton Grove, IL: Albert Whitman. 32 pp. ISBN 9780807517345. Ages 3 to 7.**

For young Tuyet, celebrating Thanksgiving means having turkey for dinner, just as her teacher explained. She's dismayed to learn that her family is preparing duck, and it's little consolation when her grandmother, Ba Noi, assures her that it's a delicious recipe she brought with her from Vietnam. As the family gathers and the wonderful smells of Vietnamese food waft from the kitchen, Tuyet struggles to take part in the American holiday while her family maintains a cultural connection to their home country.



Jules steers away from melodrama and instead creates a respectful but conflicted child who loves her family but also wants to fit in back at school. Mitter's illustrations nicely capture Tuyet's mixed feelings. The tension is noticeable, and it comes to a head when Tuyet's teacher asks the class what everyone ate on Thanksgiving.

As tears burn in Tuyet's eyes, her classmates' responses take her by surprise: Phong's family had noodles and chicken, Tarek's had lamb, and Amy's had tofu turkey. Tuyet realizes that enjoying her family's "Duck Day" is not compromising Thanksgiving traditions.

Mitter's illustrations are colorful and attractive and capture interesting details—vegetables on display at the Vietnamese market, a pine cone turkey Tuyet makes in class and uses as a Thanksgiving centerpiece, and various dishes classmates had over the holiday. While this is particularly timely just before Thanksgiving, it is far from a seasonal book and will be enjoyed year-round. It's a well-told tale about celebrating diversity and finding a way to assimilate without losing one's culture of origin.

***A Chair for Always*, by Vera B. Williams. 2009. New York: HarperCollins. 40 pp. ISBN 9780061722790. Ages 5 and up.**

Hooray for the fourth book in Vera B. Williams's series about Rosa! An earlier generation of readers met young Rosa 25 years ago in *A Chair for My Mother* (Caldecott Honor book). In that story, a fire destroys

the family home and Rosa begins saving money to buy a big cushy armchair for her mother. After her second and third books in the series (*Something Special for Me* and *Music, Music for Everyone*), Williams published



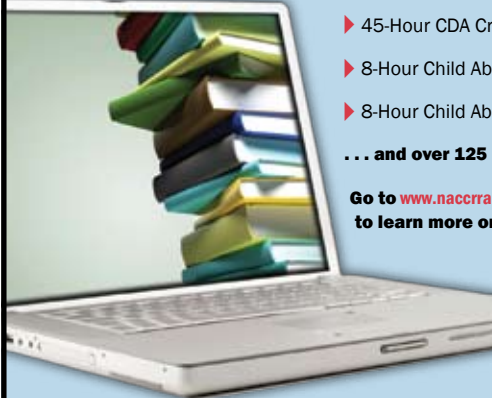
other stories, including the beloved "*More, More, More, Said the Baby: Three Love Stories* (Caldecott Honor book); but now she has returned to Rosa.

Williams revives the story line in *A Chair for Always*, as Rosa recalls the fire, celebrates the chair that has become a hub for activity in the family's new home, and waits for her new cousin Benji to be born. This book has the heart and soul of Williams's other books, offering the promise of life and the security found in family. Her writing contains interesting ideas (like Benji's home birth), distinctive language, such as "getting born," and warmth. Her recognizable watercolor illustrations are full of color and feeling, depicting the night that Rosa awaits Benji's birth.

As always, Williams paints interesting, beautiful borders on each page, some of which contain a collage of the people in the house and the activity that takes place as they await the baby. And as the family grows, Rosa makes sure there is still a place for the old chair. Amidst all the exciting changes, Rosa insists that some things, like that chair, must stay the same.

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