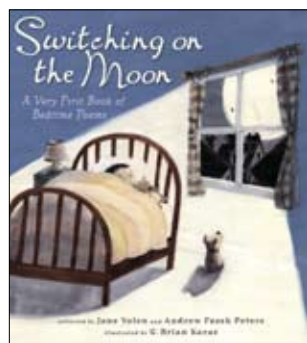
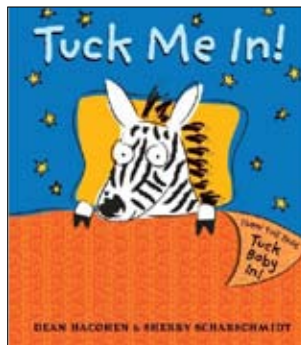




The Reading Chair

***Tuck Me In!* by Dean Hachohen and Sherry Schar-schmidt. 2010. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. 36 pp. ISBN 9780763647285. Ages birth to 3.**

Young children find reassurance in the nighttime routine of getting tucked in. In this cozy book, a series of stuffed animals asks to be tucked in, and by turning the die-cut pages shaped like blankets, readers can do just that. Each animal looks invitingly at the reader, and we found ourselves taking pleasure in turning the pages—or blankets—to secure them snugly in bed. The illustrations contain simple lines and blocks of bright color. The book ends by asking, “Does anyone else need to be tucked in? Do you? Good night, you!” A comforting interactive book that is a nice bridge to nap time or bedtime.



***Switching on the Moon: A Very First Book of Bedtime Poems*, collected by Jane Yolen and Andrew Fusek Peters. Illus. by G. Brian Karas. 2010. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. 96 pp. ISBN 9780763642495. Ages 3 to 7.**

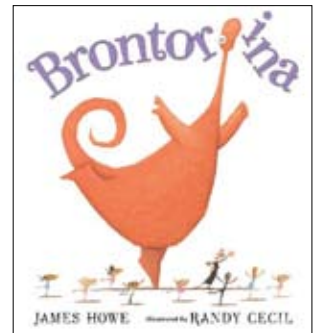
Jane Yolen teams up again with Andrew Fusek Peters on a poetry collection for young children. Their earlier collaboration, *Here’s a Little Poem*, offers poems about a child’s daily life. Like *Tuck Me In!* this collection also focuses on bedtime, in three sections: Going to Bed, Sweet Dreams, and In the Night. The strengths of *Here’s a Little Poem* are repeated in this

new collection—from Langston Hughes to Children’s Poet Laureate Mary Ann Hoberman, the selections are superb. And yet these poems speak to the youngest children, with only one poem per page to make them more accessible. Here’s a lovely poem about a quarter moon by Marilyn Singer: “How strange that someone thinks it nice / to eat the moon—a giant slice. / I wonder if he finds it kind / to leave a bit of rind behind.”

Karas’s colorful illustrations in gouache, acrylic, and pencil vary in style from page to page to fit the poem. Good poetry lulls the reader into its embrace, and this collection will do just that at nap time, nighttime, or any time.

***Brontorina*, by James Howe. Illus. by Randy Cecil. 2010. Somerville, MA: Candlewick. 32 pp. ISBN 9780763644376. Ages 3 to 5.**

Ballet is all about form. But in James Howe’s humorous twist on what it means to be a ballerina, a dance school realizes that sometimes the form must change to accommodate the subject. In the story, an oversized Brontosaurus dreams of being a ballerina. “But you are a dinosaur,”



says Madame Lucille, headmistress of her eponymous dance academy for boys and girls. “In my heart I am a ballerina,” replies the endearing Brontorina. Except for a couple of detractors who declare that it can’t be done, all at the academy welcome Brontorina.

No one denies her gracefulness or her commitment, but in the weeks that follow, Brontorina’s size threatens to hurt the children and damage the building. “‘Oh, fiddlesticks!’ said Madame Lucille. ‘Why didn’t I see it before? The problem is not that you are too big. The problem is that my studio is too small.’” And so the

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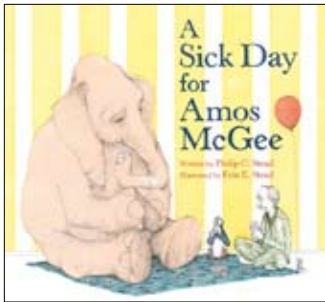
Miriam Baker Schiffer, MFA, is a writer.

Chair illustration by Diane Greenseid.

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

dancers go in search of a studio “big enough to hold all of Brontorina’s talent.” In oil-based illustrations, Randy Cecil captures the charm of this gentle giant and the out-sized way in which she towers over everything else on the page. Ballet lovers will appreciate that the positions are named and illustrated.

***A Sick Day for Amos McGee*, by Philip C. Stead. Illus. by Erin E. Stead. 2010. New York: Roaring Brook Press. 32 pp. ISBN 9781596434028. Ages 3 to 6.**

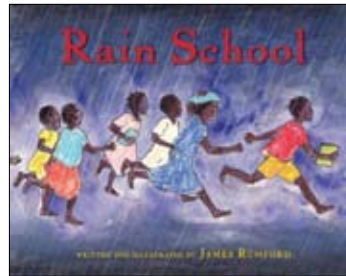


Amos McGee is a tender zookeeper with a fragile frame who takes time each day to visit with the animals. He plays chess with the elephant and gives him plenty of time to think through his next move. Amos lets the tortoise win at footraces, and he sits quietly with the shy penguin. In this story of friendship, Amos knows how to offer the kind of companionship each animal needs. When Amos falls ill with a cold and the animals realize he won’t be visiting them, they make a visit to Amos instead—taking the bus, of course.

The story is tender without being saccharine. The muted color palette in Erin Stead’s woodblock print and pencil illustrations adds warmth and restraint, just right for the tenor of the story. Stead’s rendering of the animals is magnificent. Children will ask the reader to pause

so that they can gaze a little longer at the pages of this beautiful, soulful book. This is a book to love.

***Rain School*, by James Rumford. 2010. New York: Houghton Mifflin. 32 pp. ISBN 9780547243078. Ages 4 to 7.**



When a group of children gathers for the first day of school in rural Chad, their teacher greets them with their first lesson: they will work together to build their school. Using teamwork and the materials around them, they make mud bricks for the walls and desks. They gather grass and saplings for the roof. And then their studies begin. Many months later, after the school year wraps up, the seasonal rains wash the school back into the earth. “It doesn’t matter,” says the narrator. “The letters have been learned and the knowledge taken away by the children,” who will build their school back again in time for the next year’s lessons.

This is a moving depiction of steadfast spirit and dedication to learning. It is beautifully told with simple and straightforward text, only a few lines per page. The illustrations of the barren landscape are rendered in browns and yellows, and it’s the children and the materials they build with that brighten the pages.

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