



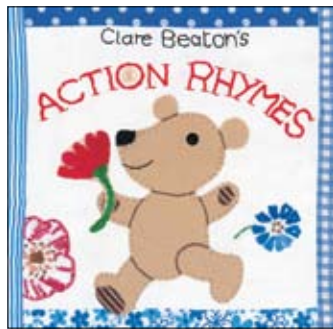
Illustration by Diane Greensted

The Reading Chair

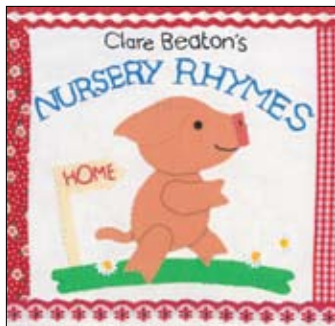
Clare Beaton's Action Rhymes, by Clare Beaton. 2010. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 14 pp. ISBN 9781846864735. Ages birth to 3.

Clare Beaton's Nursery Rhymes, by Clare Beaton. 2010. Cambridge, MA: Barefoot Books. 14 pp. ISBN 9781846864728. Ages birth to 3.

Beaton is known for using her signature stitched fabric collages to illustrate compilations of rhymes and concepts for the youngest readers, such as *Playtime Rhymes for Little People* and *Baby's First Book*. In these two new books, Beaton creates something for small hands: chunky board books with generously sized pages that offer one rhyme per spread, accompanied by her appliqué artwork.



Action Rhymes includes selections with well-known hand movements, such as "Pat-a-Cake," "Incy Wincy Spider," and "Heads and Shoulders." *Nursery Rhymes* contains familiar selections, such as "Humpty Dumpty" and "Hey Diddle Diddle" as well as less-known rhymes, such as "A Hive for a Honey Bee" and "I Had a Little Nut Tree." What makes these books stand out is the quality of Beaton's artwork. Her hand-stitching feels organic, she incorporates a variety of fabric patterns and accessories into the collages, and the visible weave of the fabrics adds texture to the page. These rhymes are in a perfect pint-size format for sharing with very young readers.



The Quiet Book, by Deborah Underwood. Illus. by Renata Liwska. 2010. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 32 pp. ISBN 9780547215679. Ages 3 to 7.

This book demonstrates that quiet moments aren't just the blank spaces in one's day, but that quiet can be full of thoughts, feelings, and poignance. There are placid quiet moments, such as "first one awake quiet" and "swimming underwater quiet." There are pregnant quiet moments, like when you realize you've dropped your bread on the floor, jelly side down. There's the high-stakes "thinking of a good reason you were drawing on the wall quiet." There's "sleeping sister quiet" and "right before you yell 'SURPRISE!' quiet."



The characters in this imaginative book are gentle animals rendered in pencil and colored in soft earth tones. Each subtle scenario feels like a small revelation, one that nurtures and satisfies. Use this book for extension activities, such as asking children what other kinds of quiet they've experienced.

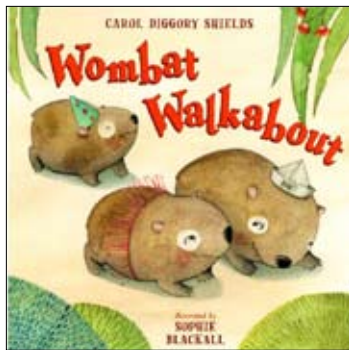
Wombat Walkabout, by Carol Diggory Shields. Illus. by Sophie Blackall. 2009. New York: Penguin. 32 pp. ISBN 9780525478652. Ages 3 to 7.

Written to the tune of "Five Little Ducks" and set in the Australian outback, this is the tale of six woolly wombats who "went walkabout." As Jen, Jack, Theodore, Pru, Clive, and Lee saunter single file through the woods, they stop to smell the flowers, throw pebbles, listen to the kookaburra, and pick gum nuts. In contrast to their roly-poly figures, these adorable animals dress daintily: one wears a thin decorative ribbon, another dons a small pair of polka-dot shorts, and a third has on her tutu. But because no one

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 online at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

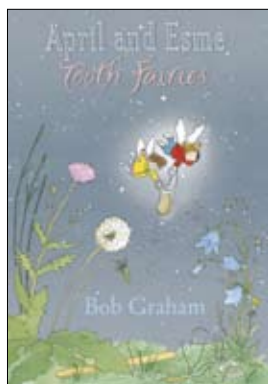


looks back, they do not notice that the dingo has been picking them off one-by-one for his lunch! Finally, the last two wombats realize that they are all alone, and they hatch a plan to rescue their friends. The story provides great tension.

Lending a sense of place is Shields's rich vocabulary, including the names of native animals and flora (gum tree, wattle tree, eucalyptus), and the use of words like *bloke* and *mate*. Ultimately, it's cooperation that wins the day, and this tight-knit group ends its walkabout by huddling around the table at home to share afternoon tea.

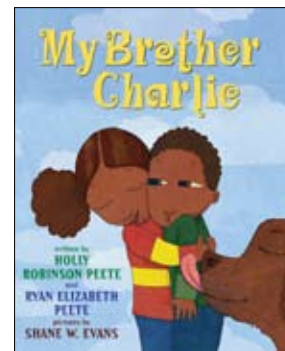
April and Esme, Tooth Fairies, by Bob Graham. 2010. Boston: Walker Books. 32 pp. ISBN 9780763646837. Ages 4 to 8.

Losing teeth is a magical rite of passage in childhood, thanks to the tooth fairy. Readers will be surprised to learn more about the fairy—or rather family of fairies—who slips coins unnoticed under their pillows at night. In this inventive coming-of-age tale, fairy sisters April and Esme are ready to make their first tooth-and-coin swap without the guidance of their parents. It's a difficult journey, but the sisters insist they are finally old enough to make it alone. They set off into the night toward a boy's house with a coin in their satchel. When the boy begins to awaken, they're faced with a potential disaster, but they manage to avert it and complete the swap.



Graham brings hipness and humor to the story. He incorporates a cell phone unobtrusively (the girls text their mother as the boy awakens, and she tells them what to do). And while they're checking in on the boy's sleeping grandmother, April teaches her sister that they're not supposed to collect dentures. This original story is full of wonder. It will be particularly enjoyable for small groups, because children will want to examine the detailed illustrations.

My Brother Charlie, by Holly Robinson Peete and Ryan Elizabeth Peete. Illus. by Shane W. Evans. 2010. New York: Scholastic. 36 pp. ISBN 9780545094665. Ages 4 to 8.



Based on the true story of the authors' family, this book is about twins Callie and Charlie, who have much in common except Charlie's autism. The story is told in Callie's voice using straightforward and reassuring explanations. "Charlie's brain works in a special way," says Callie, as she talks about activities she shares with her brother. Charlie finds it hard to make friends and show his feelings, but he's "a fish in the water" and "has a special way with animals."

Charlie's family struggled when the doctor predicted that Charlie wouldn't say "I love you" like other children. But, explains his sister, "I have learned from Charlie that love doesn't always come from what you say. It can also come from what you do." This tender book is a loving portrayal of everyday life with a sibling who has autism, including the ways Callie adapts her play to Charlie's needs, how they cope with challenges, and Callie's appreciation for the strengths her brother brings to their family.

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