

***Picnic*, by John Burningham. 2014. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 32 pp. Ages 2 to 5.**

John Burningham knows just how to talk to children through his writing and illustrations. In this inviting story, a boy and girl (called simply “Boy” and “Girl”) prepare a picnic for themselves and their animal friends. Sparse text and straightforward sentences are part of the story’s quiet and accessible nature, but this is not a simple book. In fact, Burningham fills the story with activity: the excitement of preparing one’s lunch, of setting out for a picnic, of frolicking with friends, and of tucking in at the end of it all (with a fun peek-a-boo element that will appeal to the very young). There’s even a scene in which the group runs from a bull that chases them across the countryside! The illustrations in this large hardcover book have plenty of serene white background, creating a feeling of immensity and spaciousness. This gives readers the feeling that they can step into the story, rather than just peer into the pages from the sidelines. A satisfying and delightful read.

***Some Bugs*, by Angela DiTerlizzi. Illus. by Brendan Wenzel. 2014. New York: Beach Lane. 32 pp. Ages 2 to 7.**

This lively book is chock-full of bugs. With energetic rhyme, readers leap from page to page, looking at all the things that bugs can do: “Some bugs CLICK. Some bugs SING. Some bugs do a BUZZING thing. Some bugs BUILD. Some bugs MAKE. Some bugs HUNT. Some bugs TAKE!” The critters are illustrated in vibrant colors, with precise but playful pen- and brush-strokes. Each spread features something new—for example, bugs at the back door, under a log, in a pond, pollinating flowers, and carrying away fruit salad from a picnic basket. The culminating picture pulls it all together when we see that all of these scenes take place in a little boy’s backyard,



where he is eating his lunch and catching butterflies. A guide at the end of the book names each bug and makes this a fantastic nonfiction resource for young readers.

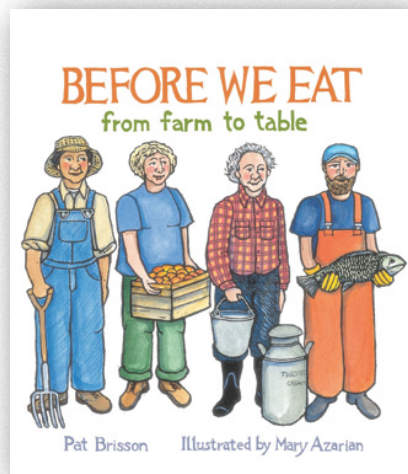
***Dreaming Up: A Celebration of Building*, by Christy Hale. 2012. New York: Lee & Low. 40 pp. Ages 3 and up.**

This brilliant ode to open play juxtaposes illustrations of children playing—stacking cups, making mud pies, hiding in a cardboard box—with photos of famous architectural feats composed of similar-looking elements. For example, a baby’s stacked cups resemble the Petronas Towers in Malaysia, and mud pies are reminiscent of the rooftop of a mosque in the New Gourn Village in Egypt. Children will enjoy seeing familiar building materials and thinking about the monumental structures they can build. Educators will benefit from the reminder that free play fuels great creative achievements. Frank Lloyd Wright is quoted: “The maple wood blocks are in my fingers to this day.”

***Before We Eat: From Farm to Table*, by Pat Brisson. Illus. by Mary Azarian. 2014. Thomaston, ME: Tilbury House. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 6.**

Celebrating all the people who are involved in growing, harvesting, selling, and preparing our food, Pat Brisson’s graceful homage is filled with gratitude and devotion to those whose efforts produce our every meal. Acclaimed illustrator Mary Azarian (Caldecott 1999) provides beautiful woodcut prints that truly bring this book to life. Among those honored are the clerks at the store, the fishermen, the animals, and the beekeepers, too. This peaceful ode will inspire readers to take a deep breath and sit down, as a family or community, in appreciation. A great lead-in to mealtime at school.





***This Book Just Ate My Dog!*, by Richard Byrne. 2014. New York: Henry Holt. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 6.**

In the last few years, we've seen books published where the pages are not just a backdrop against which to tell a story, but an invitation to physically engage with the narrative. Such is the case in *The Incredible Book Eating Boy* (by Oliver Jeffers), where the main character chews the corners of the book, and *Press Here* (by Hervé Tullet), where the dots on the page "move" when the reader shakes the book. *This Book Just Ate My Dog!* has similar appeal, drawing readers' attention to an often overlooked part of the book, the gutter—the inner spine where the pages meet. Most illustrators try to avoid the gutter, lest their art get swallowed by the fold. But swallowing his artwork is exactly what Byrne had in mind for this story. When a girl takes her dog for a walk, it gets lost in the gutter. And then the folks who come to its rescue also disappear right into the middle of the book. So the little girl has to jump in herself and find a way to sort things out. Because so much of the action happens in the invisible space between the pages, readers will enjoy using plenty of imagination as they help resolve the mystery.

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The Reading Chair is available at www.naeyc.org/yc/columns.

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