

## 5 New Books Plus an Old Favorite

### The Once Controversial *Goodnight Moon*

It's hard to believe that *Goodnight Moon* was once considered too sentimental to gain a spot on the shelves of the New York Public Library. All that's in the past now as we share why *Goodnight Moon* continues to be a surprising and soothing book enjoyed by children, families, and teachers around the world. Also read about five new books we love.

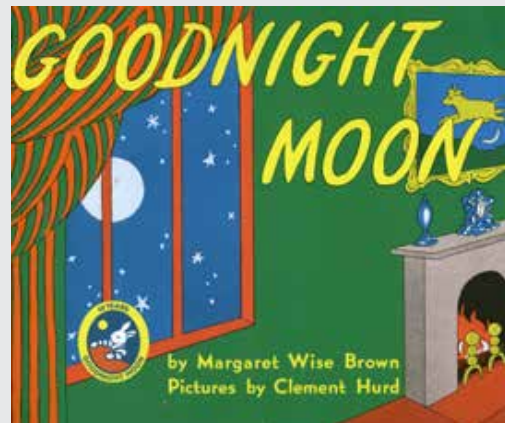
#### Forever Favorites

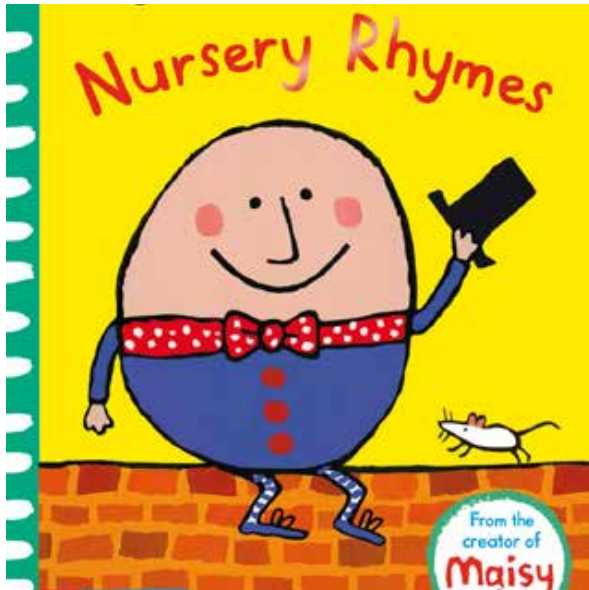
In each issue we feature a classic book to reintroduce old favorites to teachers.

#### Goodnight Moon

By Margaret Wise Brown. Illus. by Clement Hurd. 2007 (60th Anniversary Edition). New York: HarperCollins. 32 pp. Ages 2 to 6.

First published in 1947, this classic is as relevant as ever. Margaret Wise Brown had an instinct for sound, and the rhythm in this book is unparalleled. Most books at the time were nursery tales, fairy tales, or moral tales. *Goodnight Moon* was unusual in that it was about routine and ritual. The New York Public Library wouldn't even put it on their shelves for 20 years because they deemed it too sentimental! The book faced challenges before publication, too. Clement Hurd, the illustrator, was asked to remove the cow's teats from its udder because they were considered too risqué. Take another look, and you'll see how strange it seems. Also notice the creative details that Hurd wove throughout (examine the changes in the clock, mush, moon's position, and shadows). The best page of the whole book, in our minds, is "Goodnight nobody." Don't overthink it. It's quirky and surprising and artful. Soothing but never dull, this book remains a winning pick decades later.

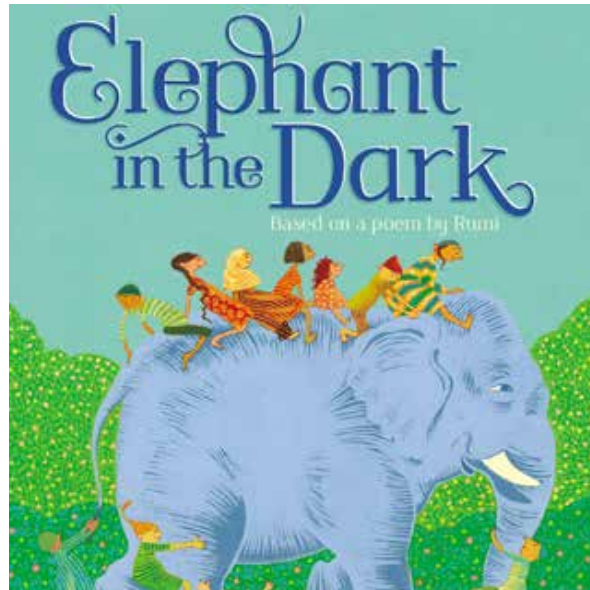




## Nursery Rhymes

Illus. by Lucy Cousins. 2015. New York: IPG. 10 pp. Ages birth and up.

This lovely selection of nursery rhymes—accessible in its one-rhyme-per-page format—offers bold and appealing illustrations. There are a diversity of characters (including an African American Little Miss Muffet and a multiracial group in All the King's Men), something lacking in most nursery rhyme collections. Nothing beats Mother Goose for providing children with rich language from an early age. The words often rise above the everyday language they hear at home and in conversation. Rhymes, which naturally appeal to children, are an important (and enjoyable!) tool for developing pre-literacy skills. This is a great addition to any library.



## Elephant in the Dark

Based on a Poem by Rumi

By Mina Javaherbin. Illus. by Eugene Yelchin. 2015. New York: Scholastic. 32 pp. Ages 4 to 8.

Inspired by a poem by Rumi, this is the story of a big misunderstanding that arises when a group of villagers become so focused on their own perspectives that they fail to see the bigger picture. A merchant brings a mysterious creature back from his travels in India and puts it in his barn for the night. The villagers demand to see the creature right away, but the merchant asks them to return in the morning. Impatient, they sneak into the barn one-by-one to find out what kind of creature it is. Feeling around in the dark, every villager comes to a different conclusion about what the creature is. As the sun rises, the villagers are so set on arguing with each other, they don't notice the merchant and the creature (a beautiful elephant) setting out for a walk. Yelchin's expressive and colorful illustrations were inspired by Persian miniature paintings as well as his own background in theatre and storytelling. Young readers will love pointing out the villagers' mistakes, and they will delight in discovering the precious elephant.

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### About the authors

**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.

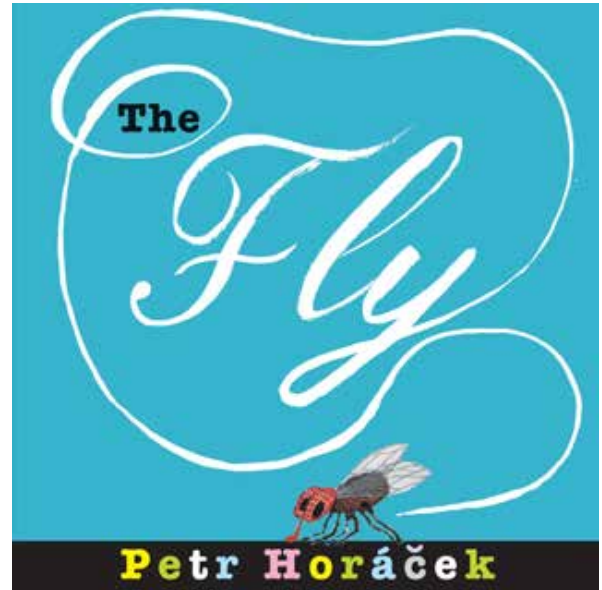
**Miriam Baker Schiffer**, MFA, is a writer in Brooklyn, New York. She consults on book selections for The Book Vine, in McHenry, Illinois. Miriam's new children's book, *Stella Brings the Family*, was published by Chronicle Books in 2015.



## Home

By Carson Ellis. 2015. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

It's human nature to want to see how others live, whether that means taking an architectural tour, traveling, or just visiting a friend's new house. This majestically illustrated book (made from gouache and ink, and printed on high-quality paper) takes readers to see myriad homes in places near and far, real and imaginary. From the country to the city, large homes to small homes, homes on the water and homes on land, this book has it all. There are clean and messy versions of the same home, nursery rhyme-inspired homes (the old woman who lived in a shoe), and made-up homes like an underwater castle where knights ride seahorses. The text is playful ("French people live in French homes") and invites readers to imagine ("Who in the world lives here? And why?"). There's a lot to discover and discuss in subsequent readings. The book comes together nicely, ending with a picture of the narrator waving to the reader from her home.



## The Fly

By Petr Horáček. 2015. Somerville, MA: Candlewick Press. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

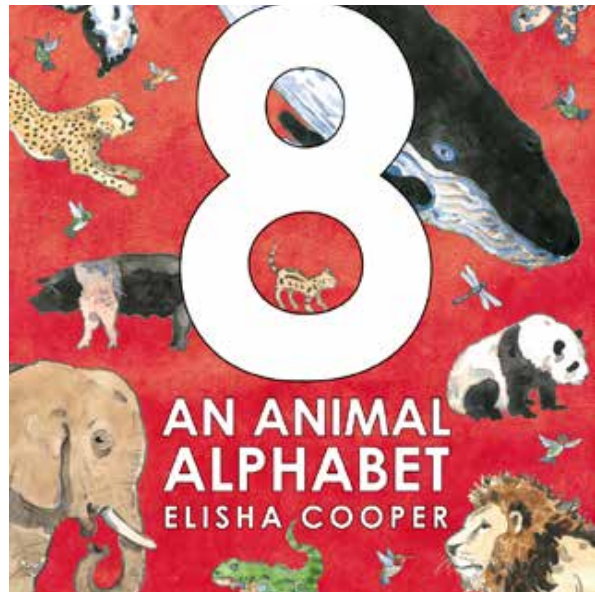
The next time you think about swatting a housefly, you might want to think about things from the fly's perspective. In this story, a fly tells the reader about its day escaping the swatter and trying to survive. The fly wonders what makes people so determined to bring its demise. It's perfectly happy to share a snack from the kitchen fruit bowl, but the humans aren't so generous. The fly likes to visit the lovely smelling cows, yet they flick him with their tails. Why? Frog tongues and bird beaks are also a threat—this fly can't catch a break! Horáček infuses humor onto every page. For example, the fly's morning exercise consists of 156 laps around the lamp (we've all had *that* fly in our house). Die-cut pages add tension by giving the illusion of a swatter coming out of the page and down on the fly. The story ends with the fly looking up at the reader, pleading for the book to stay open. "HEY, don't close the book . . . HELP . . . HELP . . . Do you want to squash me?" What a powerful ending and a fantastic way to spur classroom discussion about seeing things from a new perspective.

Past editions of *The Reading Chair* are available at [www.naeyc.org/yc/columns](http://www.naeyc.org/yc/columns).

## 8: An Animal Alphabet

By Elisha Cooper. 2015. New York: Scholastic.  
32 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

This quirky book is full of art and intrigue. But it's also a counting, alphabet, and science book at the same time. Cooper likes animals, and he loves the number 8. He calls it "round and adorable" and says it's "fun to count (move over, 10)." Organized from A to Z, Cooper presents a variety of animals on each page, one of which appears eight times. Can you find it? Animal names are listed at the bottom of each page, and a key is at the back. This fun browsing book includes over 180 animals, from the common ant, bumblebee, and camel, to the unusual xerus, yapok, and zebu. Take off the book jacket, and find another surprise!



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