

The Reading Chair

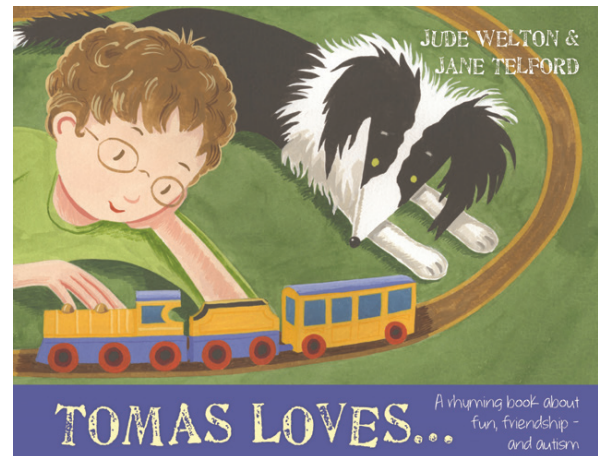
New children's books too good to miss and one forever favorite



Homes

By Judith Nouvion. 2015. New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt. 42 pp. Ages 1 to 5.

It's not often that we find beautifully photographed nonfiction board books that provide simple science lessons for the very young. This book offers gorgeous double-page images of animal homes, with an inset photo of the animal itself. A line or two of rich and to-the-point text explains how the animal builds its home, with interesting facts and vocabulary such as *sac*, *lodge*, *underwater*, *burrows*, *canopy*, and more. The book goes beyond nests and dens, showcasing a variety of surprising habitats in oceans, rivers, deserts, and even tall grass. This beautiful book is both accessible to the very young and intriguing enough to hold a preschooler's attention.

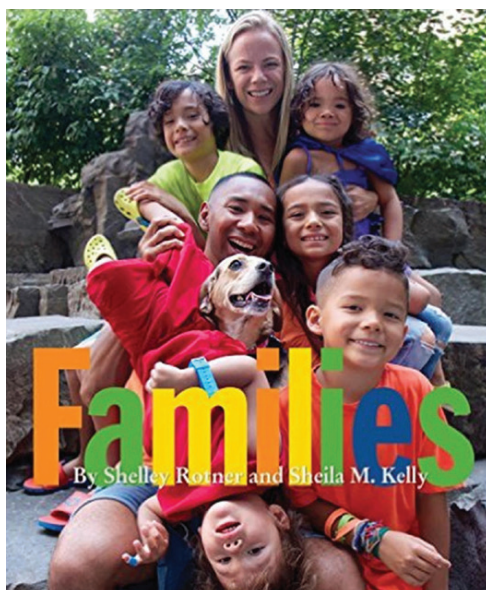


Tomas Loves ... A Rhyming Book About Fun, Friendship—and Autism

By Jude Welton. Illus. by Jane Telford. 2015. Philadelphia: Jessica Kingsley Publishers. 32 pp. Ages 2 to 6.

Get to know Tomas, a sweet and energetic boy who spends his day enjoying his toy trains, watching cars outside the window, reading books with his family, and playing with his dog Flynn. Tomas has unique interests—trampolines, riding horses—just like any kid. And as a child who falls on the autism spectrum, Tomas also has special likes and dislikes. He needs to know the plan for each day, avoids loud noises in his play, and flaps his arms when he's stressed. And he loves repeating strange-sounding words like “thingamybob” and “flipertyjane.” Using lovely illustrations and simple rhyme, this straightforward approach to understanding autism doesn't overload the young reader with too much detail, but it will help sensitize children to the needs of their friends with autism. A reassuring and positive book.

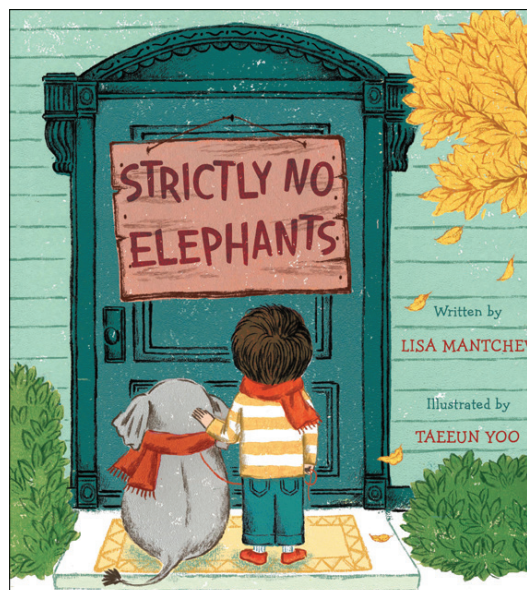
The Reading Chair—reviews of children's books that cover a diverse range of stories and characters—is available at www.NAEYC.org/yc/columns.



Families

By Shelley Rotner and Sheila M. Kelly. 2015. New York: Holiday House. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 8.

Beautiful, loving families of all kinds appear in the many photographs throughout this book, narrated by simple text. Families can be big or small, have a mom and dad, or a mom or a dad, or two moms or two dads, or a grandparent, an aunt, or an uncle. People in families sometimes look alike and sometimes don't. Some children are born into their families and others join by adoption. What families have in common is that they enjoy being together, and they help and love each other. The book presents all kinds of families, and the story's last line invites readers to share about their own. This feel-good book is direct, not sentimental. Original photography—not stock photos—fit the text perfectly. This is a great addition to every classroom!



Strictly No Elephants

By Lisa Mantchev. Illus. by Taaeun Yoo. 2015. New York: Simon & Schuster. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

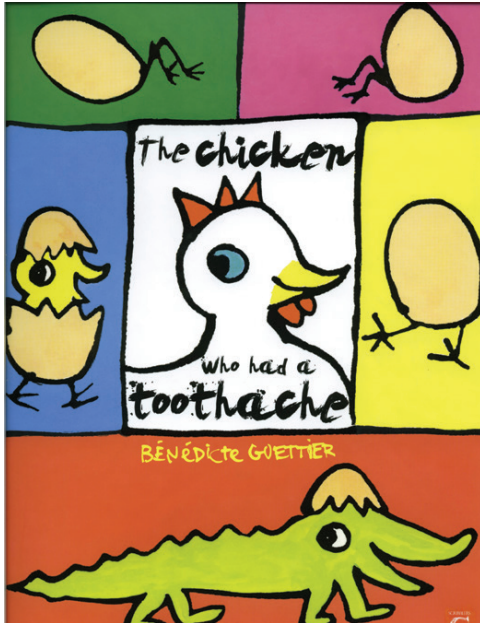
This enchanting story about inclusion and kindness is told by a boy whose pet is out of the ordinary. We see a row of brick houses in which children appear at their windows with their pets (a goldfish, a cat, a bird, a dog, and the elephant). But when it's Pet Club Day, there's a sign on the door of the club that says, "Strictly No Elephants." Feeling deflated, the boy and his elephant head home. Along the way, they meet a girl and her skunk who were also excluded from the party. The children decide to start their own club where all are welcome. Plenty of neighborhood kids show up, bringing along their usual and unusual pets.

Yoo's linoleum block-print illustrations are full of rich color—teals and golden yellow, grey and burnt red. Architectural details emphasize the charm of the neighborhood, and expressive body language captures the highs and lows of navigating friendship. A delightful and imaginative story!

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.



The Chicken Who Had a Toothache

By Bénédicte Guettier. 2015. Brighton, Great Britain: Scribblers. 42 pp. Ages 3 to 7.

What's a mother chicken to do when she has a toothache? She can't leave her children unattended while she goes to the dentist. So she bundles them all up—the hatchling, the eggs who haven't hatched, and the baby croc whom she hatched by accident—and takes them into town.

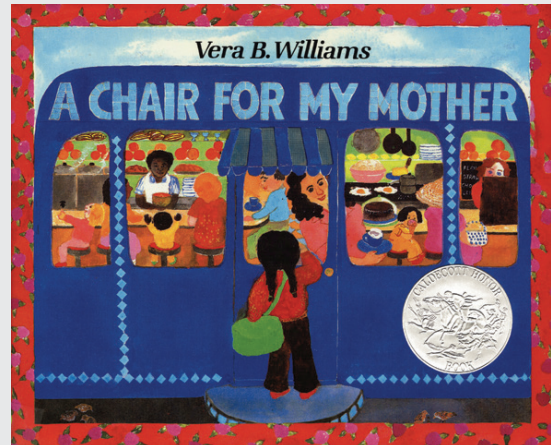
When it's the croc's turn for a checkup, the dentist finds a few cavities. Without thinking it through, he suggests that the croc eat fewer sweets and more meat ... like chicken. That doesn't sit well with the croc, who loves his chicken family. So he eats the dentist instead.

This story is absurd and entertaining but also grounded at the same time—love is what counts to Mama and her children. French author-illustrator Guettier delivers the story on big pages with bright colors and a comfortable embrace of the pleasures and hazards that, together, make life so interesting.

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Forever Favorites

Each month we feature a classic book to reintroduce teachers to old favorites.



A Chair for My Mother

By Vera B. Williams. 1982. New York: HarperCollins. 32 pp. Ages 3 to 8.

Celebrated author Vera B. Williams passed away last October, and it gives us great comfort and pleasure to read and reread her books. This title, her most famous, highlights values that shine through many of her works—embracing tough subjects (a fire, in this case), showing low-income and diverse families (this family is headed by a working-class, single mother), and celebrating the power of love. In *A Chair for My Mother*, three generations (grandmother, mother, and daughter) live together and struggle to recover financially after a fire burns their possessions. The mother works hard at a diner, the grandmother works hard at home, and the little girl helps her family however she can. All their spare coins go into a huge glass jar—savings to buy a comfortable chair for their new apartment. Williams writes from the child's point of view, focusing on details that matter to young readers, such as counting coins or getting a new pair of shoes. Williams loved using plentiful amounts of color, and her signature borders hug each page. In spite of difficult circumstances, there is plenty of love and a feeling of belonging in this family, giving the reader a sense of hope and security. This Caldecott Honor book, more than 30 years old, is as impactful and relevant as ever.