



A Fuse #8 Production

SLJ's TOP 100

PICTURE BOOKS

You could argue that the first books a child encounters will influence how they read for the rest of their lives. Stretching the definition of what constitutes a “picture book” to include everything from board books to easy titles, the readers of *School Library Journal* voted on what they felt were their own individual Top Ten picture books of all time. Points were given for rank and order and counted accordingly. The result is a list of the Top 100 Picture Books for the 21st century.—*Betsy Bird*

The List

1. [Where the Wild Things Are](#)
by Maurice Sendak (1963)

2. [The Very Hungry Caterpillar](#)
by Eric Carle (1969)

3. [Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus](#)
by Mo Willems (2003)

4. [Goodnight Moon](#)
by Margaret Wise Brown,
illustrated by Clement Hurd (1947)

5. [The Snowy Day](#)
by Ezra Jack Keats (1962)

6. [Make Way for Ducklings](#)
by Robert McCloskey (1941)

7. [Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale](#)
by Mo Willems (2004)

8. [Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day](#)
by Judith Viorst, illustrated
by Ray Cruz (1972)

9. [Bark, George](#)
by Jules Feiffer (1999)

WHERE THE WILD THINGS ARE



STORY AND PICTURES BY MAURICE SENDAK

1 [Where the Wild Things Are](#)
by Maurice Sendak
(1963)

VOTED AND QUOTED

Arguably the single greatest picture book ever created. —Hotspur Closser

BIRD'S WORDS

Was there ever any doubt in your mind about what would be voted the #1 picture book? After all, I can say nothing about it that my clever readers haven't said better. Some of these comments make it clear that when this poll was conducted Mr. Sendak was still alive and well. With that in mind, you cannot claim that it has arrived here at #1 due to its creator's passing. Again and again the masses cry out that this is the ultimate picture book.

The synopsis from Anita Silvey's *100 Best Books for Children* reads, “the hero rages against his mother for being sent to bed without any supper. Banished, an angry Max wills his bedroom to change into a forest. In that forest he finds the Wild Things. After taming them and enjoying a wild rumpus, Max grows homesick and discovers supper waiting for him—still hot. Through his fantasy, Max discharges his anger against his mother and returns sleepy, hungry, and at peace with himself.”

In terms of the scary factor, Ursula Nordstrom has this to say: “I think this book can frighten only a neurotic child or a neurotic adult.” In spite of some mild controversy, the book won a

The evolution of picture books can be broken down into two time periods: Pre-Wild Things and Post-Wild Things. Sendak's 1963 book was that instrumental in ushering in the modern age of picture books. While tackling themes of anger and loneliness, Sendak created one of the few picture books that still seems fresh after decades in print. —*Travis Jonker*



10. [The Monster at the End of This Book](#)

by Jon Stone, illustrated by Mike Smollin (1971)

11. [Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse](#)

by Kevin Henkes (1996)

12. [Green Eggs and Ham](#)

by Dr. Seuss (1960)

13. [Miss Rumphius](#)

by Barbara Cooney (1982)

14. [Caps for Sale](#)

by Esphyr Slobodkina (1947)

15. [Frog and Toad Are Friends](#)

by Arnold Lobel (1970)

16. [Harold and the Purple Crayon](#)

by Crockett Johnson (1955)

17. [The Story of Ferdinand](#)

by Munro Leaf, illustrated by Robert Lawson (1936)

18. [A Sick Day for Amos McGee](#)

by Philip Stead, illustrated by Erin E. Stead (2010)

19. [The Tale of Peter Rabbit](#)

by Beatrix Potter (1902)

20. [Pete the Cat: I Love My White Shoes](#)

by Eric Litwin, illustrated by James Dean (2010)

1 Where the Wild Things Are [continued]

Caldecott Medal, thereby proving that librarians have superior taste when it comes to these matters.

This book was originally begun in November 1955 under the working title *Where the Wild Horses Are*. The trouble? Sendak didn't like how he depicted horses. I find this strange, since he did a fair number

of illustrations for horse-related books. In any case, horses were eventually substituted for "things." *King Kong* proved an inspiration for the book, as did cheek-pinching relatives. Said Sendak of his own

There is no moment in any picture book more perfect than when Max returns to his room and his dinner is still hot. Enough said. —Katie Ahearn

For me this has to be number 1, not only because it's a wonderful adventure story for little ones, not only because it demonstrates the power of imagination, not only because love, anger, defiance, and love again are so inextricably intertwined, not only because it's a amazing example of how an illustrator combines the elements of design so successfully, but because it does all these things in 32 pages and 1,200 words, AND children love it! —Diantha McBride

story, "From their earliest years, children live on familiar terms with disrupting emotions.... They continually cope with frustration as best they can. And it is through fantasy that children achieve catharsis. It is the best means they have for taming Wild Things."

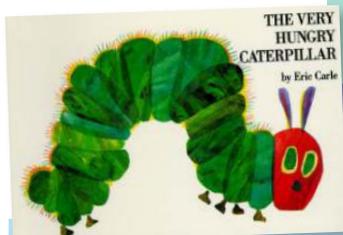
Still perfectly crafted, perfectly illustrated. It doesn't really matter that Maurice Sendak is sick of the thing, this is simply the epitome of a picture book. Sendak, like Shel Silverstein and Roald Dahl, rises above the rest in part because he is subversive. Max is not a sweet little boy, he's a crazy little kid like so many are in real life. And yes, the monsters represent his wildness, but that's boring from a young reader's standpoint. The fact is, Max gets to go have a monstrous adventure, and then he comes home and finds, not only soup, but a slice of cake. Because parents do manage to forgive their crazy little kids, and that's a nice thing to know. —Kate Coombs

Monsters forever.—Rose Marie Moore

2 The Very Hungry Caterpillar

by Eric Carle (1969)

PHILOMEL BOOKS • GRADE LEVEL: K-2



VOTED AND QUOTED

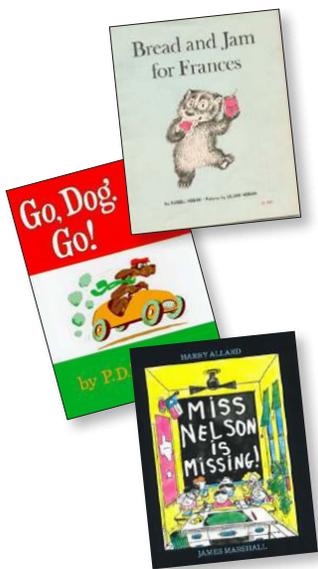
One of the very few pictures books that is just perfect —language-appropriate, interactive, a great story, a counting exercise and a science lesson all rolled together. —Pat Vasilik

BIRD'S WORDS

One wonders if this book would have done quite so well had it been known by its original title: *A Week With Willie*

Worm. Now, as we near the end of the Top 100 Poll, *voilà!* Here is the iconic insect with big, expressionless eyes and frighteningly popular standing in the hearts and minds of adults and children everywhere.

B&N's description: "A caterpillar hatches out of his egg and is very hungry. On his first day, he eats through one piece of food; on his second, two, and so on. Little holes cut in the pages allow toddlers to wiggle their fingers through the food.... Vivid and colorful illustrations and ingenious



- 21. **Millions of Cats**
by Wanda Gag (1928)

- 22. **Corduroy**
by Donald Freeman (1976)

- 23. **Chicka Chicka Boom Boom**
by Bill Martin Jr. and John Archambault, illustrated by Lois Ehlert (1989)

- 24. **Tuesday**
by David Wiesner (1991)

- 25. **Kitten's First Full Moon**
by Kevin Henkes (2004)

- 26. **We Are in a Book**
by Mo Willems (2010)

- 27. **Bread and Jam for Frances**
by Russell Hoban, illustrated by Lillian Hoban (1964)

- 28. **Go, Dog, Go!**
by P.D. Eastman (1961)

- 29. **Miss Nelson is Missing!**
by Harry Allard, illustrated by James Marshall (1977)

- 30. **Owl Moon**
by Jane Yolen (1987)

- 31. **Blueberries for Sal**
by Robert McCloskey (1948)

- 32. **The Little House**
by Virginia Lee Burton (1942)

2 The Very Hungry Caterpillar [continued]

Carle is a genius, pure and simple. Is there a five-year-old alive who isn't familiar with this book? The caterpillar is the poster child for greed. —*DeAnn Okamura*

layered pages help preschoolers learn the days of the week, how to count, and how a caterpillar turns into a butterfly.”

100 Best Books for Children discusses the Willie Worm dilemma, placing credit for the caterpillar switcheroo firmly in the camp of editor Ann Beneduce. Carle got the idea for different-shaped pages from books he read as a child in Germany.

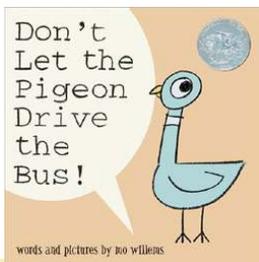
Asked in a *Metro.co.uk* interview why the book was such a success, Carle said, “My guess is it’s a book of hope. That you, an insignificant, ugly little caterpillar can grow up and eventually unfold your talent, and fly into the world.... But those thoughts came afterwards, a kind of psychobabble in retrospect. I didn’t start out and say: ‘I want to make a really meaningful book.’”

In a truly wonderful *Guardian* article, Mr. Carle says that the book “has been described as an allegory of both Christianity and capitalism. ‘Right after the Wall fell, I was signing books in the former East Germany and was invited by a group of young librarians to have lunch with them. One said the caterpillar is capitalist, he eats into every food one little bit and then the food rots away... if you’re indoctrinated, that’s how you will see it.’”

Back in the day, children’s librarians were mighty sketchy on books that had “novelty” elements. As Leonard Marcus in *Minders of Make-Believe* says, “The book quickly became a major commercial success, more so at first on the strength of its popularity with parents and preschool teachers than with librarians, who remained mistrustful of books with toylike elements.”

Concept-book perfection.
—DaNae Leu

Eric Carle is a genius, and without a doubt this is his greatest book. —Hotspur Closser



3 Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus by Mo Willems (2003)

HYPERION • GRADE LEVEL: PREK-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

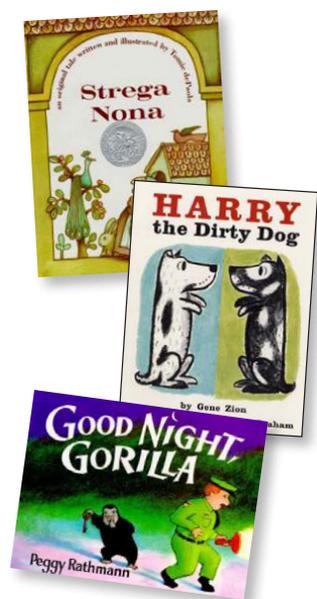
I've never met a person—young or old—who did not love this book. —Angela Reynolds

BIRD'S WORDS

Up from #5 to #3 since the previous Top 100 Picture Book Poll. It’s clear that the longer time goes on, the more followers the Pigeon garners. I credit his PR team. Not only does he have his own books to fall back on (this year’s *The Duckling Gets a Cookie?!* is case in point) but he even shows up in other characters’ books! Talk about a clever bird.

Children’s Literature describes the plot in this way: “A cute blue pigeon begs the reader to let him drive the bus while the bus driver is gone. He implores, promises, whines, begs, bribes (like I don’t get enough of this from my kids) in order to get his chance. He says things like, ‘I bet your mom would let me’ or ‘I have dreams you know’.... After the bus drives off, leaving the pigeon looking dejected,





- 33. [The Lorax](#)
by Dr. Seuss (1971)

- 34. [Strega Nona](#)
by Tomie de Paola (1975)

- 35. [The True Story of the Three Little Pigs](#)
by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith (1989)

- 36. [The Cat in the Hat](#)
by Dr. Seuss (1957)

- 37. [The Lion and the Mouse](#)
by Jerry Pinkney (2009)

- 38. [Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?](#)
by Bill Martin Jr., illustrated by Eric Carle (1967)

- 39. [Click, Clack, Moo: Cows That Type](#)
by Doreen Cronin, illustrated by Betsy Lewin (2000)

- 40. [Good Night, Gorilla](#)
by Peggy Rathmann (1994)

- 41. [Curious George](#)
by H.A. Rey (1941)

- 42. [Freight Train](#)
by Donald Crews (1978)

- 43. [Harry the Dirty Dog](#)
by Gene Zion, ill. by Margaret Bloy Graham (1956)

3 Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus [continued]

When I read this book to students after it was first published, they went crazy. The idea that the book characters were talking to them was something they had never encountered before. Now my students are quite used to this concept, thanks to Mo. I guess it wouldn't be a good idea for me to quit my job and become a Mo Willems follower. (kind of like a deadhead, but without the tie-dye and VW bus.) —Amy Miele

a semi drives up, the pigeon looks at it, and says, 'Hey...', and the end papers of the book have the pigeon smiling, eyes closed as he envisions himself driving a semi."

Here is what we know about the book's creation. When our story begins, Mo Willems is an animator, a cartoonist, and the kind of fellow who can do a gig on *Sesame Street* in his spare time. Every year he creates these little sketchbooks for his friends and acquaintances, something he's been doing since 1993. Anywho, one of them is this

funny little black-and-red ditty called *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. Well, his literary agent (Marcia Wernick) tries to sell this puppy all over town. Publishers aren't interested. It's way too weird. Too wild. The happy ending? Book sells. Mo's suddenly a picture book author/illustrator.

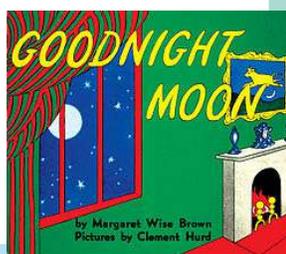
Six years later, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* is nominated to the Picture Book Hall of Fame during the 2009 Indies Choice Book Awards.

Horn Book's starred review said, "Clean, sparsely designed pages focus attention on the simply drawn but wildly expressive (and emotive) pigeon, and there's a particularly funny page-turn when a well-mannered double-page spread with eight vignettes of the pleading pigeon gives way to a full-bleed, full-blown temper tantrum."

Does it surprise you to hear that there's already been an adult parody of the book? See: *Don't Let the Republican Drive the Bus*, out in August 2012.

Proof that temper tantrums are an art form of their own.
—DaNae Leu

Willems is just a genius. 'Nuff said.—DeAnn Okamura



4 Goodnight Moon by Margaret Wise Brown, illustrated by Clement Hurd (1947)

HARPER & BROTHERS • GRADE LEVEL: PREK-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

Well, it's a classic for a reason. —Joanne Rousseau

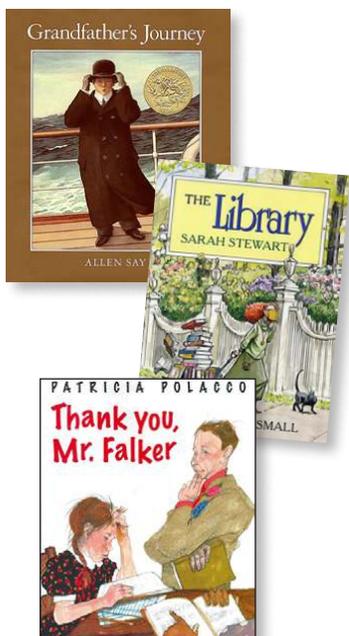
BIRD'S WORDS

Time and again my readers would tell me that they loved this book because of what it did to their children. In March 1953, this book was spotlighted in *Child Behavior*, a syndicated parental-advice column with what I consider the sentence that defines this book: "It captures the two-year-old so completely that it seems almost unlawful that you can hypnotize a child off to sleep as easily as you can by reading this small classic." And millions of parents walk around feeling guilt free.

A description of the plot (such as it is) courtesy of *The Christian Science Monitor*: "A little rabbit bids goodnight to each familiar thing in his moonlit room. Rhythmic, gently lulling words combined with warm and equally lulling pictures make this beloved classic an ideal bedtime book." ➤

4 Goodnight Moon [continued]

This one I can still recite even though I last read it at least 10 or more years ago. Again a classic that will endure and delight for a long time to come. — Christine Kelly



44. [The Little Mouse, the Red Ripe Strawberry, and the Big Hungry Bear](#)
by Audrey and Don Wood (1984)

45. [Are You My Mother?](#)
by P.D. Eastman (1960)

46. [Grandfather's Journey](#)
by Allen Say (1993)

47. [Madeline](#)
by Ludwig Bemelmans (1939)

48. [George and Martha](#)
by James Marshall (1972)

49. [Press Here](#)
by Herve Tullet (2011)

50. [The Mysteries of Harris Burdick](#)
by Chris Van Allsburg (1984)

51. [The Library](#)
by Sarah Stewart, illustrated by David Small (1995)

52. [Zen Shorts](#)
by Jon J. Muth (2005)

53. [Thank You, Mr. Falker](#)
by Patricia Polacco (1998)

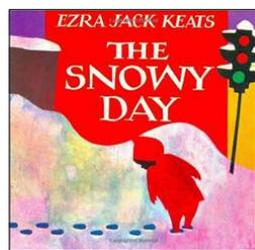
54. [Olivia](#)
by Ian Falconer (2000)

The reference book I should really have on hand for this (and don't) is *Awakened by the Moon* by Leonard Marcus, the definitive Margaret Wise Brown biography. I do not own it as I was never a *Goodnight Moon* fan (oh yeah, I said it!). In lieu of that, we shall have to look at other books for our info. *100 Best Books for Children* makes note of the fact that when Clement Hurd first illustrated this book, he made the boy and the grandmother human. They were changed into bunnies at a later date. And at editor Ursula Nordstrom's suggestion, the udders on the cow became less anatomically correct (strange, considering that Nordstrom would later defend the

very human anatomical parts found in *In the Night Kitchen*).

Recent children's books have found themselves unable to resist poking a bit of fun in this old classic. I refer of course to Michael Rex's wonderful *Goodnight Goon*, which came out in 2008 to wild laughter around the country. And the delightful book of poetry *Food Hates You Too and Other Poems* by Robert Weinstock contains the poem "Mom" and displays the usual *Goodnight Moon* set-up, albeit with hungry insects rather than bunnies. I shall take the liberty of writing out the poem in its entirety here: "I ate your father. Yes it's true. / That's what we praying mantids do. / His last words to me were 'Adieu. / If only I could eat you, too.'" Love it.

My daughter had this book read to her every night from the womb until she was almost three. When I think of perfect bedtime stories, this is at the top of the list. —DeAnn Okamura



5 **The Snowy Day**
by Ezra Jack Keats (1962)

VIKING • GRADE LEVEL: PREK-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

BIRD'S WORDS

According to Keats, "The purpose of the book and the subject matter of the book was so strong that my style changed completely. I had never painted that way before. It turned out to be the beginning of a whole new style to me because I was so deeply involved." Classic. And how.

The description from my review: "In this book, Peter wakes up to discover that snow has covered the city in the night. Delighted, he pulls on his bright red (and now world-known) snowsuit and plunges into a day of exploring and playing. He makes fun tracks and hits snow off the branches of trees. He constructs a smiling snowman and slides down steep mountains of white powder. At the end

of the day his mother gets him out of his wet clothes and gives him a nice hot bath. The next morning the snow is still there, and an ecstatic Peter calls up a friend to do the whole day over again."

100 Best Books for Children gives some additional background: "Today it is hard to believe that critics virulently attacked Ezra Jack Keats and that *The Snowy Day* was one of the most controversial children's books of the 1960s.... During the

▶



55. [Sylvester and the Magic Pebble](#)
by William Steig (1969)

56. [The Polar Express](#)
by Chris Van Allsburg (1985)

57. [Doctor De Soto](#)
by William Steig (1982)

58. [Scaredy Squirrel](#)
by Melanie Watt (2006)

59. [Officer Buckle and Gloria](#)
by Peggy Rathmann (1995)

60. [There Is a Bird on Your Head](#)
by Mo Willems (2007)

61. [How the Grinch Stole Christmas](#)
by Dr. Seuss (1957)

62. [Go Away, Big Green Monster!](#)
by Ed Emberley (1992)

63. [The Sneetches and Other Stories](#)
by Dr. Seuss (1961)

64. [King Bidgood's in the Bathtub](#)
by Audrey Wood, illustrated
by Don Wood (1985)

65. [The Arrival](#)
by Shaun Tan (2006)

66. [Chrysanthemum](#)
by Kevin Henkes (1991)

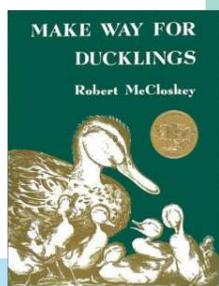
5 The Snowy Day [continued]

late 1960s and 1970s Keats... was accused of everything from stereotyped characters to having no right, as a white man, to feature black children in his books.”

As Leonard Marcus notes in *Minders of Make-Believe*, “Many readers at the time assumed that the artist, too, must be black.” Keats was in fact the son of eastern European Jews who settled in Brooklyn during the late 1800s.

Eric Carle might have his own museum, but Mr. Keats inspired a veritable foundation, The Ezra Jack Keats Foundation, started in 1964. According to its website, “Keats determined that his foundation would be dedicated to fostering the talent of the generations of children, artists, and authors who would follow him. When he died in 1983, his will directed that the royalties from his books be used by the Foundation.” The Ezra Jack Keats Award is given yearly to “recognize and encourage talented new children’s book authors and illustrators, who, in the spirit of Ezra Jack Keats, create vividly written and illustrated books for children (age nine and under) that offer fresh and positive views of the multicultural world inhabited by children today.”

What is it like to be a small child in the snow? Ezra Jack Keats gave us the answer with this timeless story of Peter’s gentle adventures on a day of snow. The pictures are so striking that I had to check to remember that there are, in fact, words. They describe the way Peter walks in the snow with his toes pointing out and then in, the way he drags his feet and finds a stick to drag, too. The stick is “just right for smacking a snow-covered tree.” Such fine, detailed observations! Peter wants to join the big boys’ snowball fight, but knows he’s too little. Instead he makes a snowman and a snow angel. The snowball he takes home in his pocket is the final, funny detail that brings the book to a kindly close. Because even though it melts, there is more snow for tomorrow—and a friend to play with. —*Kate Coombs*



6 **Make Way for Ducklings**
by Robert McCloskey
(1941)

VIKING • GRADE LEVEL: K-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

McCloskey's attention to detail and marvelous storytelling are a magical combination. —Heather Christensen

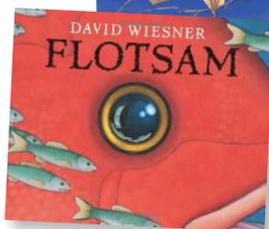
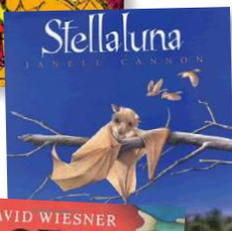
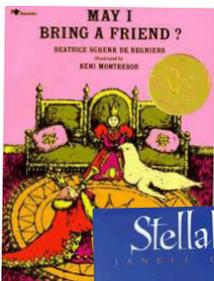
BIRD'S WORDS

Take a back seat, LeVar Burton. Clearly your book recommendation skills still pale in comparison to those of the Cap’n.

The synopsis from the publisher reads, “The busy Boston streets are too dangerous for eight little ducklings! But with a little help from a friendly policeman, Mrs. Mallard and her family arrive safely at their new home. The public garden was no place for ducklings when they were first born, but now they are old enough to brave the raucous crowds and swim with the giant swan boats.”

I once posted this as my Interesting Fact of the Day: Robert McCloskey was 28 when he won a Caldecott for *Make Way for Ducklings*. In fact, I do believe he was the youngest person to





67. **Bedtime for Frances**
by Russell Hoban, illustrated
by Garth Williams (1960)

68. **The Three Pigs**
by David Wiesner (2001)

69. **Moo Baa La La La**
by Sandra Boynton (1995)

70. **Rhyming Dust Bunnies**
by Jan Thomas (2009)

71. **Stellaluna**
by Janell Cannon (1993)

72. **But Not the Hippopotamus**
by Sandra Boynton (1982)

73. **May I Bring a Friend?**
by Beatrice Schenk de Regniers,
illustrated by Beni Montresor
(1964)

74. **I Want My Hat Back**
by Jon Klassen (2011)

75. **Cloudy with a Chance
of Meatballs**
by Judi Barrett, illustrated
by Ron Barrett (1978)

76. **Floise**
by Kay Thompson (1955)

77. **Flotsam**
by David Wiesner (2006)

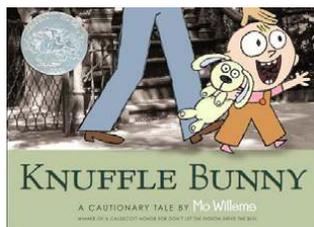
6 Make Way for Ducklings [continued]

win a Caldecott Award until a certain Ms. Erin E. Stead, illustrator of *A Sick Day for Amos McGee*, happened to come along.

In his book *Minders of Make-Believe*, Leonard Marcus discusses one of the best publicity stunts for a soon-to-be released picture book on record today. “The editors of *Life* became interested in what McCloskey was up to when they learned (doubtless thanks to a well-placed telephone call from May Masee) that the artist had recently purchased a crate-load of ducklings at a local market and hauled them up to his West Twelfth Street apartment in New York to serve as life models. . . . A reporter and photographer were dispatched to the fourth-floor walkup, and the piece was put to bed complete with candid shots of ducklings scrambling adorably up and down the artist’s sleeve.” Granted the German invasion of Poland scrapped the story, but it would’ve been brilliant! *That* is how you market a book, people.

100 Best Books for Children reports that the original working title of this book was *Boston Is Lovely in the Spring*. Had they kept it, imagine the gift this would have been to the Boston Tourism Board. The book also points out that the original names of the ducks were “Mary, Martha, Phillys, Theodore, Beatrice, Alice, George, and John.” The world would be a poorer place indeed without an “Ouack” in it.

I actually remember, when I was a very little girl, hearing Captain Kangaroo read this book on television. I remember the way the camera panned over the ducks almost getting hit by the cars. Later, I bought the book and read it many times to my sons. Best of all, when we visited the Boston Public Garden when my firstborn son was two years old, we visited the statues of Mrs. Mallard, followed by Jack, Kack, Lack, Mack, Nack, Ouack, Pack, and Quack. I took a picture of my son on Mrs. Mallard’s back, then taped that sweet picture into the front of our book. —Sondra Eklund



7 **Knuffle Bunny, A Cautionary Tale**
by Mo Willems
(2004)

HYPERION • GRADE LEVEL: PRE K-1

VOTED AND QUOTED

These perfect pictures of New York City complement the family tale of Daddy who is wrong, wrong, wrong, and Trixie, who is totally right, but can’t yet say words to tell him. Heartwarming and hilarious. —Diantha McBride

BIRD’S WORDS

Knuffle Bunny has moved up three spots since I last conducted this poll, which may owe as much to its continued popularity as to the success of its subsequent sequels. I do wonder if even Mr. Mo knew that Trixie would gain a trilogy out of the tale of one lost bunny.

The plot from my earlier review reads, “Trixie and her pop are off to the local neighborhood Laundromat one bright and sunny day. They get there, load the clothes, and take off for home when little Trixie comes to an awful realization. Knuffle Bunny, her beloved favorite toy, is missing. Unfortunately for her, she has not yet learned to talk. After some valiant tries (my favorite being the single tearful ‘snurp’) she feels she has no alternative but to burst into a

There have been others, and they are just as good, but this one still makes all of us smile (and my youngest is six now). Sometimes, the first one is still the best. —Melissa Fox



7 Knuffle Bunny, A Cautionary Tale [continued]

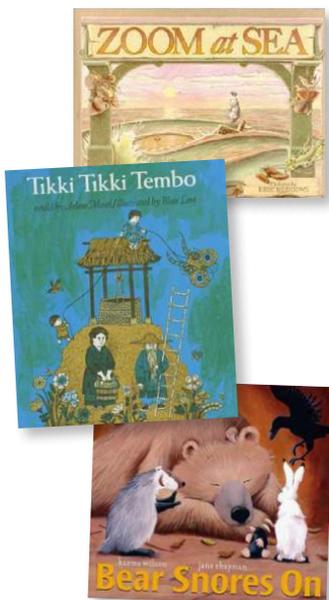
full-blown tantrum. This doesn't make her father any happier and since he hasn't realized what the problem is, he takes her home as she kicks and screams. Once home, however, her mother quickly asks, 'Where's Knuffle Bunny?' Back runs the whole family to the Laundromat where, at long last, the beloved bunny is recovered and Trixie says her first real words."

The book's distinctive appearance is part of what sets *KB* apart from the pack. When Mo spoke at a Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators conference five or six years ago, he discussed the fact that *Knuffle Bunny* was the first Caldecott Honor winner to contain photography in any way, shape, or form. He's been asked since then why he made such a "bold" choice. Willems believes

And this is the book that sealed that obsession evermore. Mo-tastic. —Pam Coughlan

that by combining drawings with photos, "They're purer than more realistic drawings of the character would have been, because their design focuses on their emotional side."

The starred *Booklist* review (which is more than a little excellent) by Jennifer Mattson said, "This comic gem proves that Caldecott Medal-winner Willems, the Dr. Spock and Robin Williams of the lap-sit crowd, has just as clear a bead on pre-verbal children as on silver-tongued preschoolers.... Even children who can already talk a blue streak will come away satisfied that their own strong emotions have been mirrored and legitimized, and readers of all ages will recognize the agonizing frustration of a little girl who knows far more than she can articulate."



78. Zoom at Sea
by Tim Wynne-Jones, illustrated by Eric Beddows (1993)

79. Pierre
by Maurice Sendak (1962)

80. Madeline's Rescue
by Ludwig Bemelmans (1953)

81. Fortunately
by Remy Charlip (1964)

82. A Visitor for Bear
by Bonny Becker, illustrated by Kady MacDonald Denton (2008)

83. Bear Snores On
by Karma Wilson, illustrated by Jane Chapman (2002)

84. Not a Box
by Antoinette Portis (2006)

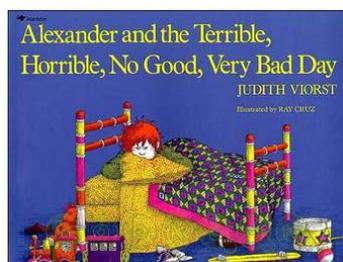
85. The Giving Tree
by Shel Silverstein (1964)

86. The Paper Bag Princess
by Robert Munsch (1980)

87. My Lucky Day
by Keiko Kasza (2005)

88. No, David!
by David Shannon (1998)

89. Tikki Tikki Tembo
by Arlene Mosel, illustrated by Blair Lent (1968)



8 Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day
by Judith Viorst, illustrated by Ray Cruz (1972)

ATHANEUM • GRADE LEVEL: K-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

We all have bad days—even in Australia. —Heather Christensen

BIRD'S WORDS

Of all the books out there that deal with *schadenfreude*, none do it quite so well as *Alexander*. Now there's a kid who just cannot win. He's the Charlie Brown of picture books. If he isn't losing his cash in *Alexander, Who Used to Be Rich Last Sunday*, then he's protesting a new living situation (not in Australia) in *Alexander, Who's Not (Do You Hear Me? I Mean It!) Going to Move*. Of course he started life in this book where everything that could possibly go wrong does. The perfect antidote to any adult that claims that childhood is one sweet, blissful, stress-free ride of innocence and carefree days.

The publisher's plot synopsis: "He could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. He went to sleep with gum in his mouth and woke up with gum in his hair. When he got out of bed, he tripped over his skateboard and by mistake dropped his sweater in the sink while the water was running. He could tell it was going to be a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. It was a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day. Nothing at all was right. Everything went wrong, right down to lima beans for supper and kissing on TV. What do you do on a day like that?"



90. **Arnie the Doughnut**

by Laurie Keller (2003)

91. **The Stinky Cheese Man and Other Fairly Stupid Tales**

by Jon Scieszka, illustrated by Lane Smith (1992)

92. **The Gardener**

by Sarah Steward, illustrated by David Small (1997)

93. **Traction Man is Here!**

by Mini Grey (2005)

94. **The Mitten**

by Jan Brett (1989)

95. **The Kissing Hand**

by Audrey Penn (2007)

96. **Ira Sleeps Over**

by Bernard Waber (1972)

97. **Where Is the Green Sheep?**

by Mem Fox, illustrated by Judy Horacek (2004)

98. **Duck On a Bike**

by David Shannon (2002)

99. **The Maggie B**

by Irene Haas (1975)

100. **The Carrot Seed**

by Ruth Krauss, illustrated by Crockett Johnson (1945)

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8 Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day [continued]

Well, you may think about going to Australia. You may also be glad to find that some days are like that for other people too.”

As *100 Best Books for Children* points out so accurately, “Bibliotherapy rarely produces a classic, but this book describes perfectly a simple childhood and adult phenomenon—a day when things just don’t go your way.” So true. And true about the bibliotherapy part as well. The Aussie travel bureau should use Alexander as their cover boy. Possible slogan for subway cars: “Having a terrible, horrible, no good, very bad day? Why not go to Australia?” Oh, it would work!



9 Bark, George
by Jules Feiffer
(1999)

HARPERCOLLINS • GRADE LEVEL: K-2

VOTED AND QUOTED

This is the very first book I ever read at story time, and it has since become my secret weapon. It never fails to get a laugh, and I love the anticipation I feel as the surprise ending approaches, especially when I know there are kids in the audience who've never heard it before.—Katie Ahearn

BIRD'S WORDS

To my mind, it’s a perfect readaloud book. The plot, the characters, the simplicity, and the sheer amount of use you can get out of it. I have read

it to five-year-olds, teenagers, adults, and tweens. Everyone agrees. George is tops.

Horn Book describes the plot like this: “When George, a lanky puppy, is told by his mother to bark, he answers with a ‘meow’ and then a series of other animal noises. When she takes him to a human vet, the man pulls animal after animal out of George’s throat. The problem seems to be solved, until the last page when George opens his mouth and ‘Hello’ comes out.”

Jules Feiffer began as a playwright, screenwriter, and cartoonist, but lately he has been turning his attention to the child side of things. Recent picture book collaborations with his daughter Kate include the really quite fantastic *My Side of the Car*.

I learned of *Bark, George’s* origins when I hosted Mr. Feiffer alongside Nick Bruel, Laurie Keller, and David Roman in a Children’s Literary Salon at the New York Public Library on humor in children’s books. Mr. Feiffer told us that when his daughter was young she would lie on the top of her bunk bed and he would lie on the bottom and tell her a story. Often,

This book has a special place in my heart, since it is the first book that my son Timothy was willing to proudly read aloud to anyone who would listen. I’ve used it in many library storytimes, and it always goes over well. Always. It’s got predictability, repetition, animal sounds, expressive drawings, and lovely surprising humor. —Sondra Eklund

Mr. Feiffer would fall asleep and forget whatever it was he told her. In the case of *Bark, George*, however, he had an inkling that he should probably write the story down.

Publishers Weekly put its finger squarely on why this book is so amazingly popular. “Feiffer reverses the old-lady-who-swallowed-a-fly plot and boosts the giddiness with every barnyard animal removed from tiny George.” Better yet, he did it with animal sounds,

One of my all-time favorite read alouds. I love the expressions of George’s mother, and the kids eat this book up. So to speak. —DeAnn Okamura

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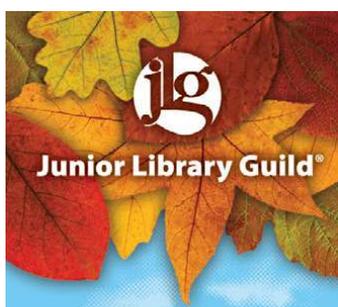
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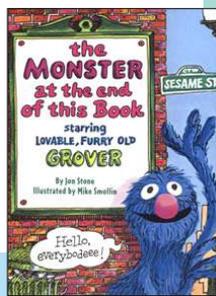
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9 Bark, George [continued]

and with gags that are perfectly aligned. I mean, when the vet puts on his longest latex glove and reaches (enter here an innumerable series of “deep”s) into George’s mouth, I always pause for just half a second before turning the page to reveal that the cow that has somehow emerged from the canine’s minuscule gullet. You can ratchet up the tension depending on how slowly or quickly you turn the pages.



10 The Monster at the End of This Book
by Jon Stone, illustrated by Mike Smollin
(1971)

GOLDEN PRESS • GRADE LEVEL: PRES-K

VOTED AND QUOTED

“Don’t turn the page.” I’ll never forget the first time I read this to my daughter. She really didn’t want me to turn the page. And then she laughed at the end. —Joanne Rousseau

BIRD’S WORDS

Jon Stone’s title is remarkable not only because it introduced so many of us to the world of intrusive narrators (though how could anyone call Grover intrusive?), but also because it stands as the rare corporate entity that has become a modern-day classic.

You will not find *The Monster at the End of This Book* in *The Norton Anthology of Children’s Literature*, on most Top 100 Picture Book lists, or in New York Public Library’s collection. And yet, it is the one and only truly successful *Sesame Street* book ever to touch the hearts and minds of readers everywhere.

Jon Stone was the Emmy-winning writer, director, and producer of *Sesame Street* until about 1996. The publisher’s plot description reads, “Generations of kids have interacted with lovable, furry old Grover as he begs the reader not to turn the page... for a monster is at the end of the book! ‘Oh, I am so embarrassed,’ he says on the last page, for of course the monster is Grover himself!”

In many ways, this book is built upon the premise of disobeying orders. The more recent *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* by Mo Willems, our #3 Top Picture Book, works on an almost opposite premise. In that book, you are given your orders at the start, and then you (the tiny reader) can feel powerful and

I had to look up the author —don’t think I ever read his name! I just thought of it as by Sesame Workshop. —Robin Parry

justified by denying the Pigeon what it wants. By contrast, moral superiority is completely lacking in Stone’s book. True, the kids know perfectly well that Grover is in the wrong, and so they delight in both the naughtiness of going against his wishes and the humor to be plumbed by his increasing breakdown. Even more remarkably, Grover is still a sympathetic character. You aren’t disobeying Grover because you don’t like him.

You *do* like him! He just doesn’t have all his facts in place (and besides, it’s fun to see him flail).

The title inspired several sequels: *Hide and Seek: With Lovable Furry Old Grover*, *Please Do Not Open This Book*, the dire-sounding *Lovable Furry Old Grover’s Resting Places*, and *Another Monster at the End of This Book*, starring Elmo. The original sold over two million copies in its first year alone.

For the pure joy of watching your audience’s faces as you read this aloud. —DaNae Leu

About: The Top 100 Picture Books list (there is also a list for children’s novels) is a readers’ poll conducted by Elizabeth Bird on her blog, Fuse #8 at *School Library Journal* (www.slj.com).