



Mo Willems: Mo Knows Kids and Kids' Books

Mo Willems is to picture books what Fred Astaire is to dance. They both make it look easy. For Willems, the clarity of palette, the simplicity of line, and the resonance of the story combine to create a book of deceptive elegance. Willems dives into the essence of

Astaire's appeal: "When I was a young animator," recalls Willems, "I learned to animate like Fred Astaire because he dances with his body—Gene Kelley dances with his feet."

It's a simple thing to think about but challenging to execute. "I want a five-year-old to be able to draw my characters," says the multiple Geisel Award-winner. "Most of my work ends up being reductive—putting less in, fewer lines, fewer words." In the end, "everything is simple and pure."

One of Willems' heroes is also a master at the squiggly line that contains volumes of emotion. "I never got to meet Charles Schulz," laments the author/illustrator. He did, however, have the opportunity to write the introduction to *The Complete Peanuts* and confesses that "I was given—or snuck—one of his nibs from his studio."

Mo then proceeded to put it to good use: "That nib is what I drew *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed* with. I felt like I was drawing Snoopy with his big floppy head and tiny body." From Snoopy to Naked Mole Rat may seem like several steps backwards on the evolutionary ladder but the multiple award winner has a unique approach to projects. "One of my working theories is that if an idea is bad enough then it is worth doing," he explains. "Starring a naked mole rat seemed like a pretty terrible idea so I had to see what it would be like."

Pigeons may also seem like unlikely fodder for a successful series of children's books. Mo notes that most of the books that have become series were originally conceived as single volumes. "One of the things that makes the Pigeon books work," confides the author, "is that the character remains the same. Pigeon never really learns anything." From *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus* to *The Pigeon Wants a Puppy*, Pigeon never gets beyond the single-mindedness of a toddler who sees a treat.

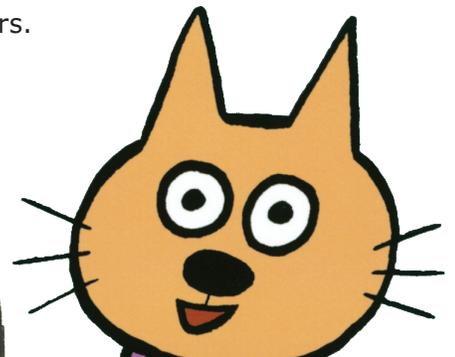
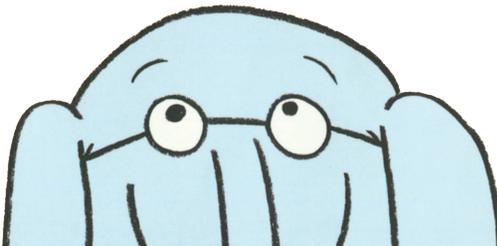
Mo Willems is not a one-trick Pigeon. *Knuffle Bunny* is a more complicated story both narratively and visually. By superimposing his pastel illustrations on stark black and white photography, Willems creates a world that children can relate to on multiple levels. The real world is never as vivid as the one inside their heads. There are now three *Knuffle Bunny* books and Willems put a great deal of effort into collecting the photographs that give the *Knuffle* books their distinctive look.

But that may not be the end of *Knuffle Bunny*. Willems wrote the lyrics for a musical *Knuffle Bunny*, and more could follow if that is a success. What more is coming from Mo? Among his many projects is a new series of books for very young children starring Cat the Cat. Will the nib that drew Snoopy be applied to a feline protagonist? We'll just have to wait to find out.

Interviewed by Ellen Myrick, Fall 2009.

* * * * *

For more interviews with children's authors go to the Library Corner section of our Web site at www.btsb.com and select Featured Authors, or select Author Showcase for information on over 800 children's authors and illustrators.

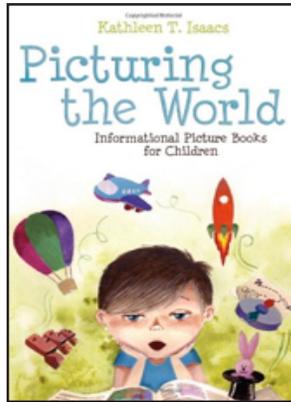




Book Reviews

by Ellen Myrick

Picturing the World: Informational Picture Books for Children, by Kathleen T. Isaacs. Published by ALA Editions, 2012. 216 pp.



At a time when informational books have suddenly been given the spotlight by Common Core, Kathleen Isaacs' thoughtful and thorough guide to the best informational picture books of the last several years has become an even more invaluable resource.

Isaacs starts with the basics--what exactly is an informational book and what is a picture book? By clarifying this from the get-go, Isaacs helps us understand why she included what she did. She also underscores the relationship--and it is not a synonymous one--between informational picture books and books that are shelved in nonfiction in the library.

Perhaps most importantly, she examines the use of poetic license head on. No, the sun does not *really* talk to us, but in Molly Bang's *Living Sunlight*, for example, the use of the sun as a narrator gives structure and meaning to the story. Isaacs also addresses the various awards (including the Sibert) and advises readers to look closely at the criteria to better understand how to use awards, honors, and notable lists as selection tools.

The book is organized by subject matter: Ourselves and Our World at Home and School; The Natural World Around Us; The World We Make; The Things We Do; The World of Faith and Festivals; Our World

in History; and Our World Today. The helpful appendices include the mentioned awards and best-of-the year lists as well as subject, title, and author and illustrator indexes. The titles included range from *14 Cows for America* to *Zero Is the Leaves on a Tree*, and from *What's Inside Your Tummy Mommy?* to *Book Fiesta* and 246 more.

Veteran reviewer Kathleen Isaacs makes the most of each annotation of the 250 included books. With concise descriptions that nevertheless provide plenty of substance and key bibliographic detail, this is truly a must-have for any librarians wanting to boost their informational text collection. Each annotation also specifically speaks to the informational text component, noting when source information is or is not acknowledged, what types of backmatter are included, and helpful presentation tips such as pairing possibilities. At a time when teachers and librarians are digging deeper into the Common Core, it is more helpful than ever to have an authoritative resource that covers books that meet young people's informational text needs and are readily available.

A list of the titles recommended in *Picturing the World* that are available from Bound to Stay Bound Books can be found here, <http://bit.ly/19fQKLW>.

* * * * *

For more reviews of adult books visit the Library Corner section of our Web site, www.btsb.com and select Professional Shelf.

Shows pride of ownership and increases school awareness!

CUSTOMIZED COVERS

Your logo printed on BTSB durable hardcover books at no additional charge!

Specify any title to be ordered and we'll provide you with a free quote.

www.btsb.com/customcovers

Bound to Stay Bound
Books Social Media
Watch for special offers!



2013 BTSB SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS



The Association for Library Service to Children (ALSC) has announced this year's recipients of the BTSB Scholarships. They are:

Ashley L. Dean of Poquoson, VA plans to attend Simmons College.

Marianne Dolce of Deltona, FL plans to attend the University of South Florida.

Rebecca Lynn Dunn of Lawrence, KS plans to attend the University of Washington.

Casey Marie Fox of Knoxville, TN plans to attend the University of Tennessee at Knoxville.

Each recipient will receive a \$7500 scholarship to go to graduate school in library science and prepare for a career in children's library services. This makes over 80 BTSB Scholarships that have been awarded since the program began in 1985.

For more information about the BTSB Scholarships, contact ALSC at 800-545-2433 or at www.ala.org/alsc. For a complete listing of our BTSB Scholarship winners go to the About Us section of our Web site www.btsb.com and select Scholarships.

NOW AVAILABLE



PLAYAWAY®

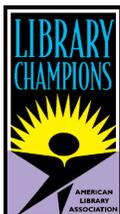
THE ALL-IN-ONE AUDIOBOOK

Visit www.btsb.com for a complete list of over 2,000 PLAYAWAY® titles.

PLAYAWAY® brings the power of audio to learners at every level - improving performance when used independently or paired with printed book.

Listen while you learn.

Order online at www.btsb.com



Bound to Stay Bound Books
1880 West Morton Ave. Jacksonville, IL 62650-2619
Phone: 800-637-6586 Fax: 800-747-2872
info@btsb.com www.btsb.com

