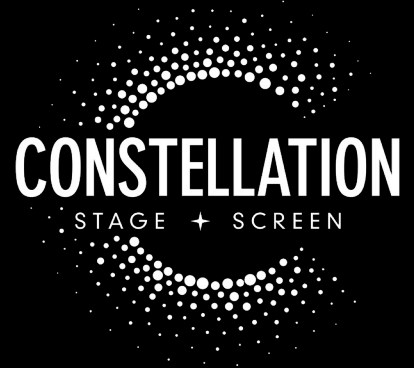


AN ACTIVE STUDY GUIDE FOR
TEACHERS OF YOUNG AUDIENCES



DON'T
LET THE
PIGEON
DRIVE THE
BUS!

THE MUSICAL!

Art © Mo Willems



APRIL 28 - MAY 14
WALDRON AUDITORIUM

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PIGEON'S AUTHOR: A BIOGRAPHY

WHO IS MO WILLEMS?

Mo Willems was born in Des Plaines, Illinois, a small city outside of Chicago. He began drawing and creating at a young age. His family relocated to New Orleans, Louisiana when he was a boy. He lived there through high school. During high school he created a comic strip which was printed in the school paper. He attended New York University's Tisch School for the Performing Arts



where he received a degree in animation. The illustrations in his picture books have a traditional, American animation style.

Mo began his career as a writer for the show *Sesame Street*. He won six Emmy Awards while working with *Sesame Street*. Besides his animation and television work, he also tried his hand at stand-up comedy, recorded essays for the radio, and created several television shows.

In 2003, Mo Willems wrote his first children's book, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*. The book was beloved by critics, children, parents, and librarians around the world. For this title he was given the prestigious Caldecott Honor. The next book, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* also received the Caldecott Honor. Since that time, Mr. Willems has written more than 50 titles. Besides the Pigeon books, Willems's *Elephant and Piggie* books are also wildly popular. Some other titles by Mo Willems that you might recognize include *Leonardo and the Terrible Monsters*, *Edwina*, *The Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct*, and *Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed*.

Mr. Willems lives in Massachusetts with his family. Besides his three Caldecott Honors, he has also won two Carnegie Medals for animation and three Theodor Seuss Geisel awards.

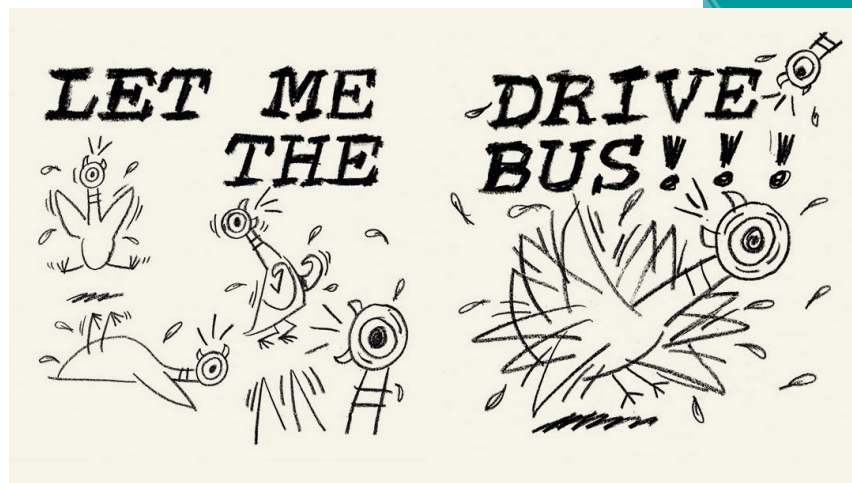
FUN FACTS

- Did you know that the Pigeon is hidden in every one of Mo Willems's books?
- Most of Mo Willems's Pigeon books only have two characters. One is ALWAYS the Pigeon.
- Mo Willems's biggest inspirations are the Charlie Brown and Snoopy characters created by Charles M. Schultz.

BEFORE YOU SEE THE PLAY: START THE CONVERSATION

READ THE BOOK OUT LOUD WITH YOUR CLASSROOM. AFTER READING IT STRAIGHT THROUGH ONCE, TURN THROUGH THE PAGES AND:

- Teach your students how to recognize a title and author's name on a book. In this case, the author is also the illustrator. You can explain what that means.
- Draw attention to the simple drawings and how they show you where the story takes place, who the people in the story are, and changes in the Pigeon's feelings.
- Point out that words in all capital letters and the use of exclamation points tell the reader to read those parts with more excitement and intensity.
- Look at the different faces that Pigeon makes. Ask the children what the different faces mean. Have them explain how they can tell.
- Ask the children how it made them feel that Pigeon wanted to do something that the grown up in the story didn't want him to do because it was not safe.
- Ask the children if they ever wanted to do something very badly, but weren't allowed.
 - » What were some of things that you wanted to do, but weren't allowed to do?
 - » How did you feel when you were told, "no?"
 - » Why do you think that you're not allowed to do these things that you want to do?
 - » What kinds of things do you say or do to try to make your (parent, teacher, babysitter) change their mind?



SEEING THE PLAY: BEING A GOOD AUDIENCE MEMBER

Experiencing theater is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allows the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. We invite you to laugh when it is funny, cry when it is sad, gasp when it is shocking, but refrain from talking during the show, as it disturbs audience members and performers alike.

HERE ARE SOME HELPFUL GUIDELINES ON HOW TO ENJOY THE PERFORMANCE:

- Leave cell phones, tablets, hand held games, and other distracting and noise-making electronic devices at home or turn them completely off.
- Do not text during the performance. The light and the motion is very distracting to those around you, on stage, and the tech crew behind you.
- Gum and food must stay in the lobby. Drinks are only allowed if they have a lid.
- The lights dimming and going out signal the audience to quiet down and settle in your seats: the play is about to begin.
- Don't talk with your neighbors during the play. It distracts people around you and the actors on stage.
- Focus all your attention on the play to best enjoy the experience. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. These elements all help to tell the story.
- Get involved in the story. Laugh, cry, sigh, gasp — whatever the performance draws from you. The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.
- Remain in your seat during the play. Please use the restroom before or after the show, as well as during intermission.
- During the curtain call, remain in your seat and applaud because this is part of the performance too. The actors will come out on stage one more time to say thank you for your participation as an audience member.



AFTER THE PLAY: KEEP THE CONVERSATION GOING

WHAT CAN YOU DISCUSS WITH YOUR STUDENTS ABOUT DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS?

DISCUSS RESPONSIBILITIES.

What are your responsibilities at home? How about at school? Do other kids have different responsibilities than you? Why does the driver say “no” to the pigeon? If the driver had let the pigeon drive, what might have happened?

THE TEXT STYLE PROVIDES AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT AND VOICES IN STORYTELLING.

Did the play get louder and more exciting at the same times that the book did?

HOW DO THINGS CHANGE FROM BOOK TO A PLAY?

You can speak with your class about the things that were the same in the play, and the changes that were made to make it more accessible for the stage.

PIGEON'S CHARACTER ACTIVITY

PIGEON HAS MANY FEELINGS DURING THE STORY *DON'T LET THE PIGEON DRIVE THE BUS*. HOW MANY CAN YOU FIND? CAN YOU WRITE DOWN THE OPPOSITE OF THOSE TRAITS?

_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

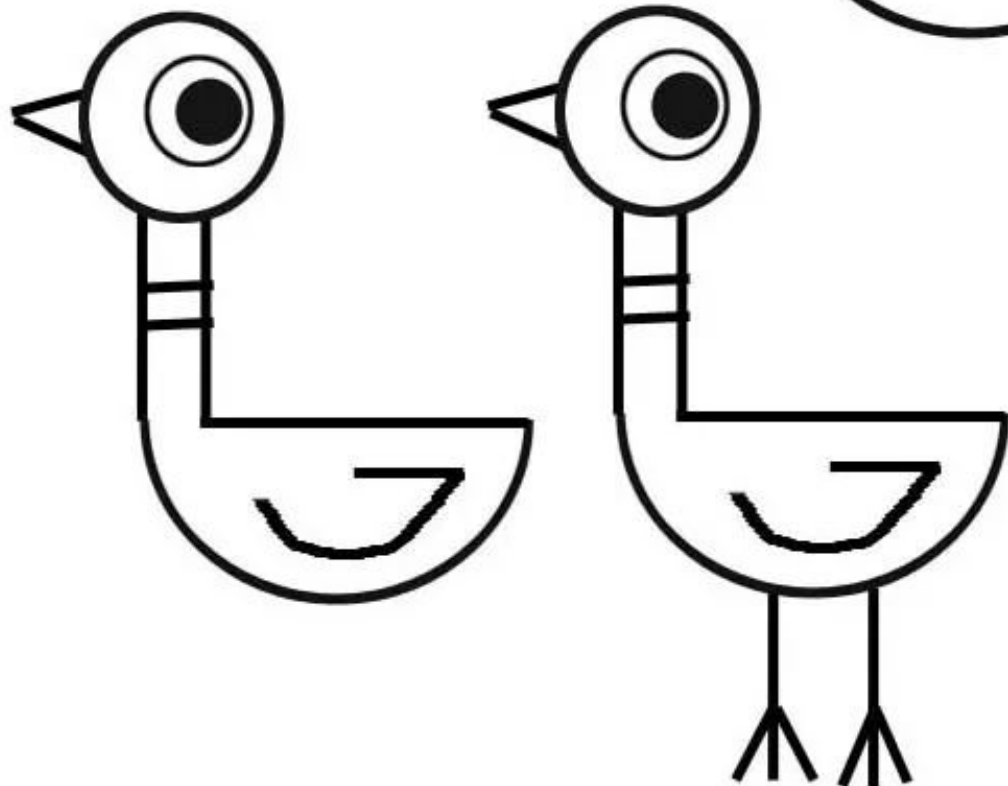
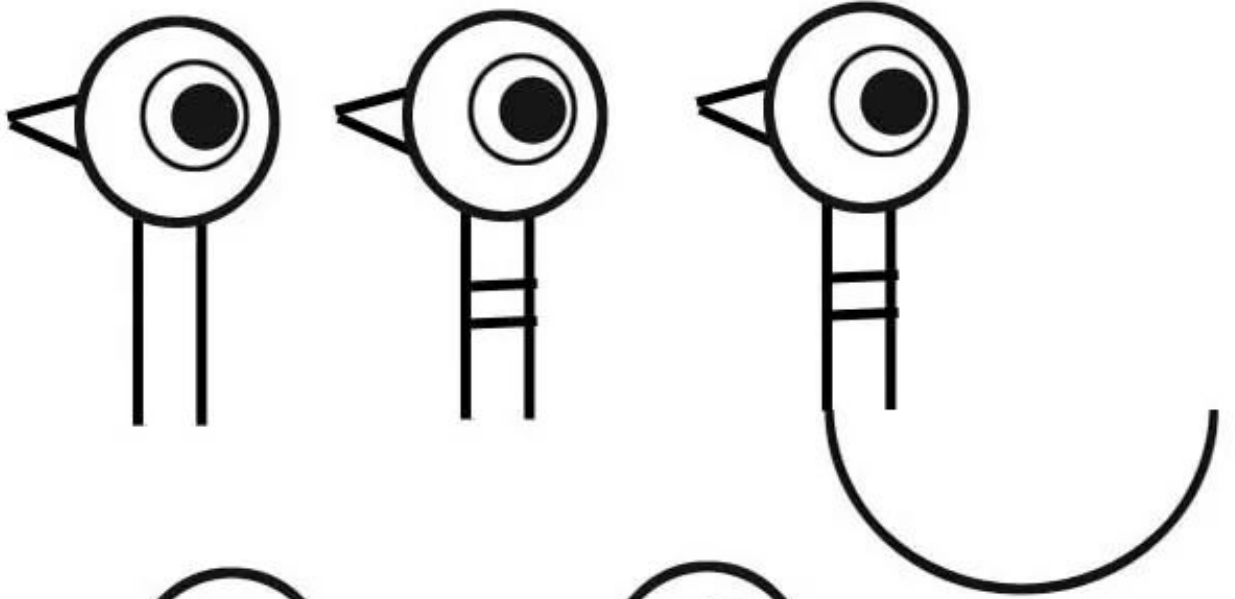
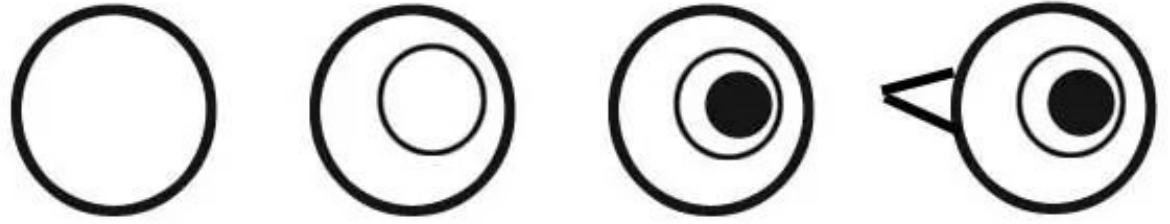
_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

_____ IS OPPOSITE OF _____

Some responses might be:

- Happy – Sad
- Angry – Calm
- Frustrated – Patient
- Rude – Polite
- Hopeful – Discouraged
- Sneaky – Honest

PIGEON ART: A STEP-BY-STEP GUIDE



PIGEON WRITING ACTIVITIES

WRITING ACTIVITY #1: NOW THAT YOU KNOW HOW TO DRAW PIGEON, WHY NOT MAKE UP YOUR OWN PIGEON STORY!

Teachers of younger students can make this a group project, and first and second grade students can write their words to fill in the slots. These are the parts of the story that you must decide on:

WHAT WILL THE PIGEON BE TRYING TO DO?

(Be sure to think of something that the pigeon—and kids—should not do.)

WHERE WOULD THE PIGEON TRY TO DO THIS?

(Think of where the pigeon would be to do what he wants. Does he want to fly a plane? If so, he would be at the airport.)

WHO WILL BE THE OTHER CHARACTER IN THE STORY?

(After you have picked what to do, who would he be talking to? If he wanted to fly a plane at the airport, he would probably talk to a pilot.)

HOW DOES PIGEON TRY TO GET YOU TO DO WHAT HE WANTS TO DO?

(Does pigeon make a promise? Or beg? Or maybe throw a tantrum?)

HOW WILL PIGEON'S STORY END?

WRITING ACTIVITY #2: PERSONAL NARRATIVE WRITING

Ask your students: What do you do when your parents say no? Write about a time you tried to talk your parents into letting you do something.

- What arguments did you use?
 - What did they say?
 - Were you successful or not?
 - What happened?
 - Have them do a Quick Write describing their experience, and then share their stories aloud.
-

WRITING ACTIVITY #3: PREDICTING OUTCOMES

When you come to the end of the book, where the pigeon turns and sees the enormous red tractor trailer truck and says “Hey . . .” ask your group to predict what the pigeon will do next. (The back endpaper shows him, once again, dreaming, rapturously, of driving that semi.) One question the pigeon never answers is WHY he wants to drive the bus or truck. So children can write and illustrate his reasons from his point of view: “I, Pigeon, want to drive the bus because . . .”

WRITING ACTIVITY #4: NEW ADMONITIONS

Children can write and illustrate new cautionary sentences, starting with, “Don’t let the pigeon . . .” (One student wrote, “Don’t let the pigeon drive the Titanic.”) Or have them finish the sentence: “Don’t let the pigeon drive the bus BECAUSE . . .” They will come up with all sorts of interesting reasons. Be sure to have crayons available so they can get Pigeon’s coloring just right. They can add his comments in dialogue balloons.

WRITING ACTIVITY #5: WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE SEQUELS

Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Tractor Trailer Truck! is one possibility for a sequel, of course. Using dialogue balloons, kids can sketch the pigeon trying to talk his way into that or yet another forbidden activity. Students can fold a large piece of drawing paper in half three times, which will give them eight boxes to develop a new story line. Or have each child contribute one page and compile a class book.



PIGEON THEATER ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1: MAKING A PUPPET

After seeing the play, talk about the Pigeon puppet. What did you notice about it? Who moved it? Was it a real pigeon? What other puppets do you remember seeing in the play?" (Possible answers: ducklings, puppy, bus).

Now it's your turn to make your own puppet!

MATERIALS

- paper bags
- markers
- wiggly eyes
- scrap paper
- found objects
- glue
- scissors
- any additional art supplies as needed

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

By the end of the activity, students will build imagination, develop storytelling skills, and create theater props, as demonstrated by a verbal description of their puppet character.

MAKING THE PUPPET

1. The paper bag will be the body and head of your puppet character.
 2. Use art supplies to recreate a puppet from the play or an original puppet from your imagination!
 3. Think about the character you will create – does the character have a name? A job like the bus driver? What about Big Dreams like the pigeon?
 4. Next, make it move and talk! Try creating a voice for their puppet character and say a few silly lines as this character.
 5. You can use your puppet while the book is being read, or you can use them to tell their very own Pigeon story!
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ACTIVITY #2: BECOME A PIGEON

MATERIALS

- A long, 2-3-inch high strip of card stock paper
- A large circle of blue paper, at least 4 inches around
- A large circle of white paper, about 2-3 inches around
- A small orange or yellow triangle
- School glue or stapler (to be used by teacher)



MAKING THE PUPPET

1. Measure the strip around each student's head. Staple the strip so that it fits snugly but comfortably.
2. Have each student adhere the large blue circle (Pigeon's head), the large white circle (Pigeon's eye) and the small triangle (Pigeon's beak).
3. Now the children can run and play pretending that they are the Pigeon on an adventure.

ACTIVITY #3: ACT IT OUT

1. Have your group stand up and act out the pigeon's role, emulating his dialogue and especially his body language as he shifts through a masterful range of emotions.
2. He is eager, hopeful, cajoling, annoyed, joyful, deflated, doubtful, exasperated, and finally erupts into a full-blown tantrum: "LET ME DRIVE THE BUS!!!"
3. Examine and analyze that wonderfully evocative tantrum page, with the explosive yellow and black lettering, feathers flying, and six images of Pigeon having a meltdown, and then ask your actors to re-create the scene.
4. Ask them if they can recall ever having a tantrum and what it felt like.

PIGEON CLASSROOM ACTIVITY (K-2)

LEVELS AND GROWING

LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Exploring community roles and finding a pathway to personal growth.

Pigeon starts the play by walking around, then finds the bus, and eventually learns to fly! This activity practices taking small steps to demonstrate growth in nature, our community, and ourselves.

Find a spot in a room where each person has space, but can still see and listen to the instructions. Invite everyone to take a seat and get comfortable.

Discuss how in the play, Pigeon uses transportation to get around town. First, Pigeon walks, then Pigeon rides the bus, then Pigeon learns to fly.

Share that you will explore levels and growing just like Pigeon does. Level One is close to the ground, Level Two is crouched/hunched over, and Level Three is standing tall.

The instructor will share a prompt, and the level they want to see the prompt executed on. For example, “show me a snake that slithers on Level One”, or “show me a Detective looking for clues on Level Two”, or “show me a Skyscraper on Level Three”. These prompts can include animals, humans, objects, or feelings. After a few rounds of prompts, start introducing prompts that show growth. For example:

- Flower: 1, seed. 2, bud. 3, bloom.
- Mountain. 1, Pile of dirt. 2, A Hill. 3, A Mountain.
- Bird. 1. Baby in the nest. 2, Learning to fly. 3, Soaring in the Sky

After those rounds, invite players to share the following prompts on whatever level they see fit, but continue the theme of growth. Some examples could be:

- Skateboarding – Someone who is trying skateboarding for the very first time, someone who has been learning how to skateboard for a month, master skateboarder.
- Chef – Someone who is discovering and tasting a new food, someone learning to cook with that food, someone who is running a restaurant, world-class chef.
- Business Person – Someone who is brainstorming new ideas, someone who is transforming their idea into an invention, someone sharing that invention with the world

- Pigeon - Pigeon who is walking around town, Pigeon who is sitting on the bus, Pigeon who is flying.
- Human- Learning to crawl, learning to walk, walking around confidently.
- Human- Shying away from making friends, trying hard to make friends, enjoying time with their friends.
- Human- Someone who is not confident, someone trying/practicing to be confident, someone who is confident.

In reflection ask how everyone felt while growing and transforming in these prompts. How does this activity connect to the play?

PIGEON MATH ACTIVITIES

ACTIVITY #1 PIGEON WORD PROBLEMS

Write fun, simple Pigeon word problems with your students. You can draw a simple map to show the buildings around town.

Example:

- Four kids get on the bus with Pigeon at the Library.
- Two kids get off of the bus at the Candy Shop.
- One Piggie and three kids get on the bus at the Swimming Pool.
- How many kids are on the bus?
- How many animals are on the bus?

ACTIVITY #2 PIGEON WORD COUNT

How many times is each word used in the book? Make tally marks to represent each use.



PIGEON _____

BUS _____

DRIVE _____

I _____

VROOM _____

JUST _____

THE SCIENCE OF PIGEONS

WHAT COLOR ARE PIGEONS?

Pigeons are usually brown, tan, white and many shades of gray. They often have some black coloring as well. Most pigeons have a small amount of the colors green or purple on them. Some very lucky pigeons have all of those colors! Which pigeon looks the most like the one in the book? Why? If you could be a pigeon, what colors would you want to be?

PIGEONS ARE VERY SMART!

Pigeons are one of the only animals that can recognize their own reflection in a mirror. Pigeons are very good at knowing which way to go. They can recognize roads and buildings. Some pigeons are used to send messages from one place to another. These are called Carrier Pigeons.

PIGEONS LOVE TO BE IN GROUPS.

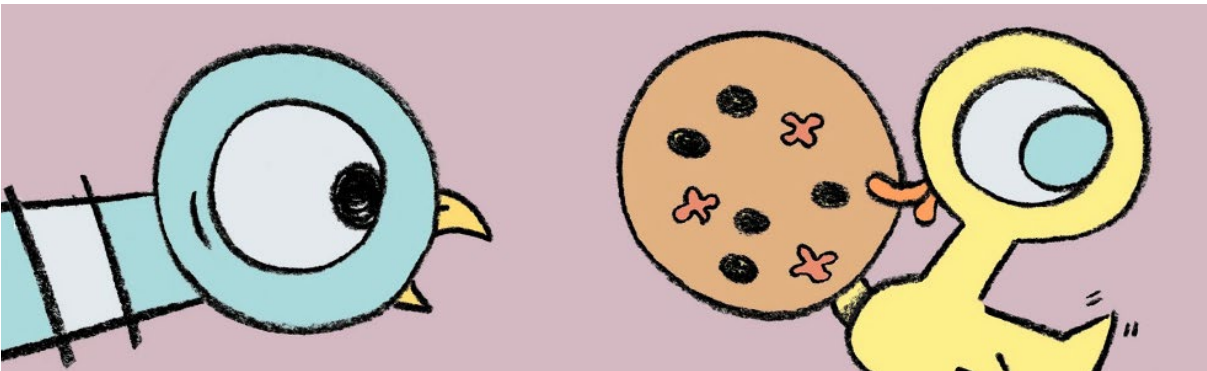
Often they have between 20-30 other pigeons around them!

PIGEONS CAN HEAR VERY WELL.

This is called a good sense of sound. They can hear things long before other animals and people can hear them. This helps them to avoid storms and dangerous things.

PIGEONS CAN FLY VERY FAST!

Pigeons can fly as fast as race car! The fastest a normal driver goes is 65 miles per hour. A pigeon can fly 92 miles per hour!



PIGEON'S SUGGESTED READING

READ THE PIGEON BOOK SERIES BY MO WILLEMS:

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Don't Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late!

The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!

The Pigeon Wants a Puppy!

The Pigeon Needs a Bath!

MORE AWARD-WINNING TITLES BY MO WILLEMS:

Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale

Edwina, The Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct

Leonardo, the Terrible Monster

There Is a Bird on Your Head!

Are You Ready to Play Outside?

We Are in a Book!

City Dog, Country Frog

OTHER SIMILAR READINGS:

Last Stop on Market Street

by Matt de la Peña and Christian Robinson

You Can't Take an Elephant on the Bus

by Patricia Cleveland-Peck

The Library Bus

by Bahram Rahman & Gabrielle Grimard

The Bus Ride

by Marianne Dubuc

The Bus For Us

by Suzanne Bloom

