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Everyday Seeds to Grow On: Writings for Children

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**EVERYDAY SEEDS TO GROW ON:
WRITINGS FOR
CHILDREN**

Cindy A. Miller, B.A.

**An Abstract Presented to the Faculty of the Graduate
School of Lindenwood University in Partial
Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Fine Arts in Writing**

2005

ABSTRACT

The poems that comprise the following project were created for the pleasure and enjoyment of both children and adults. This master's project for the MFA in writing is the result of a lifelong interest in children's literature. The majority of the work consists of my own stories in poetic form. The reader will notice many of the prominent elements found in poetry, such as visual imagery, rhythmic patterns, and rhyme. These characteristics are most obvious in "The Garden of Giggings," writings created with picture book formats in mind. This section contains mostly funny stories whose humor can be emphasized through illustrations. These stories are meant to be illustrated. Most of the ideas for my stories are triggered from everyday situations.

An introduction to the poems discusses how no hard and fast rules govern children's literature or the way it is written. Literature for children has moved away from the didactic-based lessons of the past to a much more varied literature that includes a free-spirited type of fantasy and poetry intertwined with whimsical stories. In today's literary marketplace, the combination of fantasy and poetry in picture books is appealing to children, adults, and writers alike. That is why, while researching and examining other authors of children's literature, I realized that picture books were a good fit for my own personal style of writing at this time.

Children's literature can entertain, but it can also teach. In "Acres of ABCs," I apply the technique of alliteration in storytelling. Each letter of the

alphabet is featured in an alliterative story with a dual purpose. Every letter's story has the learning objective of helping youngsters master the alphabet. The letters, through repetition, help the children to recognize both the letter and the sounds. In addition, many of the stories challenge the children to learn more about their surroundings and about animals which they have never known. But these tales, also used as a learning tool, still tell an entertaining and sometimes silly story. They must entertain first and foremost if their educational potential is to be realized.

The introduction to my project discusses some of the reasons I think authors of children's literature have a following. They involve the use of suspense, universal themes, illustrations, rhyme, rhythm, and the bonding that takes place between the reader and the listener. Because children have such a great imagination, they may be more open to the fantasy and whimsical stories many authors write today. The impossible becomes possible in the world of children's literature and that is what keeps the stories alive and intriguing to its audience.

Overall, a successful work of contemporary children's literature must interest not just the listener, but also the reader. This is why I have included a list of my favorite books in Appendix A for others to read and enjoy.

**EVERYDAY SEEDS TO GROW ON:
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**A Culminating Project Presented to the Faculty of the
Graduate School of Lindenwood University in
Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Degree of Masters of Fine Arts in Writing**

2005

COMMITTEE IN CHARGE OF CANDIDACY

Professor Michael Castro, Ph.D., Chairperson and Advisor

Professor Ann Canale, Ph.D.

Acknowledgments

When thinking about all the people to thank for inspiring me to write and attempt to achieve my dreams, I realize there are too many to put on a page. The main thing I would like to say to all those who have helped me along the way is THANKS. Thanks for being there to support me. Thanks for helping when I couldn't find a word or phrase, or when I was frustrated, or experiencing writer's block. Thanks for listening to me and letting me bounce ideas off you. Thanks for giving me the time to write and not distracting me. Thanks for the use of your skills, equipment, and most of all friendship. Thanks for not disowning me for becoming a hermit for such a long period of time. Basically, I want to say I appreciate any effort, no matter how large or small, that has helped me to achieve my goal and work toward obtaining my dream of being a children's author.

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INTRODUCTION

Without children's literature, my existence would be flat, like the characters in some of the books we have all read. The ability to be creative helps me actually to experience life as I should. Children's literature is the outlet that seduces my mind to be more open to other worlds, to create my own fantasy worlds. Once I had been introduced to reading as a child, it became increasingly more difficult to find me without a book in my hand or at least nearby. As a matter of fact, in first grade, I was actually chastised for trying to take a book home. I don't recall the book, but I do remember I had begun the story and wanted to finish it. The teacher caught me and accused me of stealing the book. After explaining to both the teacher and my father my reasoning for taking the book, I gained a new respect for books and how precious they really are. From that appreciation of books, came my desire to write. My interest as a writer lies in developing a combination of poetry and picture books for children.

Many picture books contain a special kind of poetry for children. Poetry naturally lends itself to children's picture books, because of its rhythm and rhyme and because "children themselves are natural poets" (Yolen 105). The text of most good poetry picture books for children involves not only a rhythm but also a simple story to which the child can relate. The rhythm is not necessary, though it is appreciated. When a child is reading a book, or being read to, the rhythm helps the child to become engaged in the story. Engaging the child is one aspect of my writing I am most proud of. As I write, I envision the

children's reactions to my stories and images. The imagery of both poetry and children's picture books helps to involve the child in a very real sense. This imagery can play upon all of the child's senses--sight, touch, hearing, taste, and smell. When the writer creates a good image, the child can experience, through imagination, the same scenario as the character in the story. This can range from something simple like tasting a piece of birthday cake to feeling fear, as in the feeling of a child in a dark room. In a picture book, the children have not only the imagery of the words creating a mental picture, but also actual pictures on the page to sway them in a certain direction. As they follow along with the story, children can also follow along with the rhythm and possibly rhyme patterns, even if they don't know the words. When using rhyme, and rhythm for that matter, the writer creates a certain expectation which leads the reader to anticipate the next word or a certain beat. Often children will easily pick up on the pulse. While doing that, they begin to participate in the story, and then they can create other endings that are even better than the ones adults have made. But no matter what the rhythm or rhyme is, the story is what will stick with the child. The beauty of the picture book comes from the fact that it is not limited to being poetic, nor does it have to be realistic. Instead, it can contain elements of fantasy that are fresh and fun to the child. My stories are meant to be just that: free-thought fun and whimsical in an everyday sort of way.

This is where the fantasy comes into play. The main characteristic of modern fantasy places the reader into "a time and setting where the impossible becomes convincingly possible" (Rudman 78-79). To a child, who often

experiences new things on a daily basis, fantasy is nothing new. Instead, everything can be applied to a world of imagination. They have no sense of what is not supposed to be or what couldn't happen until they grow older and are taught that these things are not possible. Since fantasy stories create a new world that doesn't actually exist, a vivid image, through writing, must be developed for the reader.

My respect for adult writers is immense, but early on I realized that is not where my love of literature lies. Contrary to the belief of many, it is not easy to write a children's book. In my experience, it has been even more difficult to write for children than for adults. First, the subject matter is different. When writing a children's story, there is a personal criterion I must meet. The story must be something the children can relate to, whether by their own experience or their use of imagination. Also, it must keep them entertained and hold their interest, allowing them to enter the world of imagination. While all of this is key to creating stories for children, one of the most important aspects of storytelling must be remembered and respected. Though the story is for children, it must not speak down to them by being too babyish, nor can it be too sophisticated and wordy. Instead, the story must speak their language—the language of free-thought expression and imagination. This can be quite a challenge for adults to step back into the world of their childhood. One of the things that helps me when I am writing is to have the images of the action or scene in my head while I am writing the actual story (Yolen 27).

This helps to clarify the story in my mind and develop the action in a less complicated way. Because of my exposure to theatre, I often imagine the story in dramatic terms to help with my vision of how it may proceed. If I can picture it on the stage in some way, and I can see how it would be played out, then I can better describe the scene. However, this dramatic visioning does not always work with every type of writing, especially not with an alphabet book.

One of the most difficult types of picture books to write, though it may seem easy enough, is the alphabet book (Yolen, 34). The "Acres of ABCs" is my attempt to do so in a unique way. Each of the stories uses alliteration to emphasize a certain letter, but it also includes a fun animal story with a lesson that can be taken from the work. Although this project comprises a larger compilation, I see my stories as individual picture books, with one to two stanzas per page. While writing my books, I must have the images of the action or scene in my head as I am writing the actual story (Yolen 2). This is not an easy task, but I do not write children's stories because it is easy or because I cannot write. Instead, I *choose* to write for children. I believe Julius Lester put it best:

'... the prevailing view of the literary establishment is that people who write children's books do so to get practice to write a "real" book, failed, and took up children's books.

'The truth is far simpler. We are in children's literature because we have some dim moral vision of what it means to be human that

includes children, and that means the child within ourselves also.'

(Quoted in Rudman 233).

A perfect example of a children's writer who exemplifies this is Tony DiTerlizzi. In his book Ted, a lonely child finds an imaginary friend to play with. Both of them run into mischief around every turn and eventually his father, who is frustrated by his son, tells the boy there is a difference between real and imaginary friends. When the boy finally runs away to the playground where Ted lives, Ted tells the boy not to blame his father because he has basically grown up. When the father gets to the playground, he realizes this is the same playground where he had once played with his own imaginary friend, Ned. The father gets in touch with his youth again and the son is the one who benefits the most.

Several of my stories involve a similar entry into the realm of imagination. The question I ask when writing is not "What if?" like most people, but instead, "What would happen next if this happened?" Dr. Seuss, the king of imagination, seems to ask this question in his stories. He not only creates fantasy worlds, but also fantastical creatures with intense imaginations to tell his stories. As much as I would like to have the skill to do this, I have not yet achieved that particular goal. Instead, I use everyday characters and ask what would happen if they did this particular action. The results are the stories in part II. These stories, which contain the text for picture books, are the results of my own creativity. As an aspiring writer of children's literature, my goal, as reflected in the collection that follows, is to establish a solid foothold in the area

in which I am most comfortable, and then to experiment in the other genres of children's literature. The most important factor, whether writing picture books or poetry, is to keep the element of imagination alive.

I admire children for their ability to use their creative minds daily. Not only do I respect their imaginative vision, but I strive to be more like them every day. Unfortunately, as adults, we tend to get busy with our lives and paying bills and such, and then we forget that we were once children, too. Most of us, when we take the time to remember our childhood, can think of at least one book that we loved. It may have been memorable because it was funny or sad, or perhaps it was just the first book that we read on our own. Some of my first storybook experiences are still in my personal favorites booklist. When I read those books, I am transported back to that time. I can recall sitting on my bed, being read one of my favorite books, And To Think That I Saw It On Mulberry Street. It was not only the story that I enjoyed but also the time that I shared with the reader. As I recall those experiences, I have an even stronger desire to create an atmosphere for today's children to acquire this love of books and reading. Not only do the children get the exposure to words and letters, but the human bonding brings the children and the reader closer together. The whole process helps create memories to be enjoyed by all the participants and can help in the development of the enjoyment of reading.

Of the children's books that I enjoy, many are favorites because of the childhood experiences and themes contained within their pages. These universal themes are timeless. One of Lobel's books, Giant John, continues to be one of

my favorites to this day. It enticed me not only with the drawings, but, more so with the story itself. John goes in search of food for his family, and finds a king and queen for work for, to get enough money to purchase food. He builds a wonderful relationship with this family until the fairies come. They play music that makes him dance uncontrollably. In the process, he destroys the home of the family for whom he has been working. He realizes his mistake, but can't seem to control himself enough to stop dancing. The family forgives him, John rebuilds their home, and it is better than before. But an even deeper meaning than within the story is the concept of being given a second chance. Similar to John's experience, children want to have the confidence to know that they will be given another chance, especially when taking risks, again and again. Imagine if a child who is trying to walk were criticized for not standing up straight every time an attempt at walking was made. As a child, I was completely seduced by the idea that fairies could exist and they could make someone do something they didn't want to. On another level, though, I was learning several valuable lessons about giving myself and others repeat opportunities to forgive. Another lesson suggested was that everything happens for a reason and the results may produce an even better situation.

In my own writing, although I do not purposely attempt to include a lesson, some kind of moral can usually be inferred from each story. Traditional literature, as it moved from the oral tale to written, often contained didactic messages for children. These messages would dictate the correct behaviors and life lessons, often Puritan teachings, to be strictly followed by society (Rudman

3). Such lessons as manners and the “proper” way to act were addressed. In today’s more diverse society, this would not be as popular. Often, if a message is forced or overly explicit, it will be obvious and unappealing to children. The key is to make the story fun without the children realizing they are being taught a lesson.

Many authors teach a lesson without the child fully grasping this technique, and they set this up very well. Jane Yolen does this in an interesting way with How do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight? Instead of lecturing the child, she shows what the child shouldn’t do. As the story progresses, the children can see for themselves how to behave better. This manipulation of situations and words is one of the characteristics I most revere in her work. One of the most interesting challenges for me is to change words to mean something else and to change situations from the expected outcome.

Another author who has the ability to alter the endings and circumstances of stories is Janell Cannon. In many of her stories, there is an intricate and entertaining story that masks the real lesson. For example, in the story Crickwing, the lesson is multi-faceted. The roach has a physical disability and is different from all the other creatures, but in the end we realize he has the same needs as everyone else. He was looking for his purpose in life and the proper way in which to use his special talents. One of the qualities I like most about this story, and about Cannon as a writer, is her ability to tell the story in such a way that the reader doesn’t realize they are being taught a lesson. Her ability to interweave the lesson with her imagination is a method I can only aspire to

emulate. Dan Yaccarino does something similar with his story Unlovable. The dog in the story is made fun of by the other animals. Later, he finds out the new neighbor dog is just as “ugly” as he is. The story has the ability to teach children to accept themselves for who they are and appreciate those around them.

Yaccarino uses simple, but not simplistic, language. He does exactly what Jane Yolen encourages writers to do: “The storybook tells a small tale in a few words. It is simple—but not simple-minded” (Yolen 29). I subscribe to this view, because I do not talk down to children in my writings. Instead, I challenge them to learn not only small lessons, but also new words that may be above their grade level. I believe wholeheartedly that children will not accept simple-minded books, and instead require a balance between their comprehension and their need for colorful mental pictures (Russell 161). The pictures can be in their mind, but picture books work best with illustrations to emphasize the written word.

Many of my works, though written words, include my own vision of how the illustrator may emphasize those words. The picture books “should be a fusion of two artists—author and illustrator. They must complement one another” (Yolen 26). My works, without their illustrations, are not complete. In order to give the reader vision, the illustrations are crucial to many of my stories. In the story “My Name,” the girl desires a plain name. When the reader sees her in the illustration coinciding with the last page’s “punch line,” you realize how well the unusual name fits her. I envision a girl with wild hair and multi-colored clothing combinations, including tons of jewelry. If the reader doesn’t see this, the poem loses its pop at the end. The pop at the end could also be considered a

twist and I enjoy twists. In my story, "Why Think?" I attempt to put a twist on the story. The young boy seems to have lost his head, but in reality, he just can't see it. Without the illustration at the end, the reader would have only a slight inclination of the true situation.

Often, the illustrations merely emphasize what the character is experiencing. In Judith Viorst's Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day, everything is going badly: although Alexander doesn't mean to mess things up, he is just being a typical kid. My story "Just 'Cause" is loosely based upon this work and involves another child who is having a bad day. He fails to see why his bad luck keeps occurring and how some of his decisions affect the outcome of his day. The fundamental ideas and concepts underlying good children's stories, or any stories, can't be owned by one author. All the ideas are out there to be explored and presented in a different way, either by word or illustration.

Another thing the picture does for the plot of the story is help to create suspense. When reading a picture book, the anticipation is set up to entice the child to turn to the next page where the child will either have the prediction fulfilled or be amazed at the outcome (Russell 125). A good example of how the text and pictures work together to create tension and enrich the reader's experience is Maurice Sendak's Where the Wild Things Are (Russell 127). Each page builds a bigger and bigger scene of the child's temper tantrum. The drawings exaggerate the actions until they become so big that they take over. In essence, I have accomplished that with my story about "There was an old lady

who put on her shoe. . . .” The story keeps building until the only possible ending is for everyone to stop and come to a realization. The illustrations for this particular work would also follow along the same lines as Sendak’s. The vision came from the story “There was an old lady who swallowed a fly.” The visual for this story also swells to a point at which nothing more could happen. For a story like “There was an old lady who put on her shoe . . .,” one of the artists I would love to have do the illustrations would be Michael Martchenko, who has worked on many of Robert Munsch’s books. His illustrations not only display the action in the story, but use vivid colors, clean lines, and an exaggeration of the situations. However, for other stories, such as “The Tale of Nigel Nillings and his Night Fright,” I would anticipate using an illustrator similar to Steven Kellogg. His detailed, whimsical pictures include many things to help explain the story and add to the consistency of the pictures from page to page. The whimsy may be produced by the use of watercolor. His colors, though watercolor, do not appear dim. Instead all the colors are bright, especially the yellows. His colors and detail would attract the attention of any reader, child, or adult and complement well the particular whimsical tone of the story.

The readers, whether through the pictures or the words, are the prime reviewers for picture books. They are an important variable in the success or failure of a book. It is the audience that decides the book’s fate. C.S. Lewis describes the audience the best, “I am almost inclined to set it up as a canon that a children’s story which is enjoyed only by children is a bad children’s story.” (qtd in Yolen, Writing Books for Children 38). And he is absolutely right.

Each reader, whether adult or child, will identify with different parts of my stories, but my hope is that these simple happenings will bring back, for adults, the positive feelings of childhood. Why? Because my goal is to interest everyone, but especially children, in reading. I want children to experience other worlds without having to travel. I want them to have imaginary friends and visions of amazing worlds. Because, just like children, I delight in the story, not its literary merit. The most important part is to make children laugh and identify and to create an image in their minds. A good picture book, just like a good poem, will allow for the reader to recognize something in the work that makes them say, "I know how that feels" or keep the rhythm and words in their mind (Yolen 106). Isn't that really what it is all about--the wordplay, the manipulation of ideas and words to create something tangible for readers to take away with them? Books, whether picture or otherwise, are meant to be enjoyed and read by all. I hope the following stories are enjoyed by everyone who reads them.

Acres of ABCs:
Animal Alliterations

A

Anthony Aardvark ate all the apples,
When Angela Alligator approached,
All he could say was, "All Gone."

[insert picture of aardvark with an empty bucket while the alligator looks on disapprovingly.]

B

Bertie, the babbling baboon
bought a bright blue balloon.
Bernice the bumblebee sat
on top of that blue balloon.
Before they both knew it,
the balloon burst with a loud
Bang!

[insert picture of a baboon holding a blue balloon with a bee on top and the balloon popping.]

C

Clarice Cow and Cassie the Calico Cat were close friends.
They decided to go on a camping trip.
A canoeing camping trip with a cabin.
They chattered all the way to the campground.
When they got to their cabin,
they checked to see what time they could canoe.
The next day, as they convened at the canoes,
Cassie called out she would be the captain.
Clarice was concerned.
Cassie couldn't captain the canoe,
she was just a Cat.
Clarice felt the cow could captain better.
Cassie clarified the canoe would be captained by the cat.
Clarice, still not certain, conceded.
Everything was calm and the Cat and Cow
were catching quite a few catfish.
Suddenly, the canoe careened out of control.
Catching the current, the Cat knew
they would meet with certain catastrophe.
Clarice tried to help,
she couldn't calculate the current accurately.
Cassie closed in on their chance to change course.
She caught a carefully centered branch,
but lost her cap in the chaos.
Clarice knew Cassie cherished that cap,
so she made a choice.
The Cow chased after the cap, swimming through the channel.
Cassie called to her.
Clarice couldn't call back, she was too far away.
The Cat let go of the branch
and the water carried her in the canoe.
When she caught up to Clarice,
Cassie cackled at the sight of the Cow.
Clarice was caught
under the cascade of a waterfall
with the cap carelessly captured on her head.
Clarice and Cassie laughed so hard, they cried.

Then, Cassie declared,
"I should have had my camera."
But really she couldn't have cared less,
as long as her friend Clarice was safe.

[insert a picture of the cow with the cap falling off and the water pouring over
her head.]

D

Donte Dragonfly danced through the dell.
deciding to dally,
he came upon Dragon Drake.
Donte dashed up to Drake,
but disturbed by the distracting dragonfly,
Drake dodged his introduction.
Determined to rid himself of Donte,
Drake drew in a deep breath.
Donte didn't dawdle,
but instead darted out of danger
and dauntily declared,
"Adios!"

[insert a picture of a dragon breathing fire and a dragonfly just missing the flames.]

E

Elisha elephant and echidna Emily
entered an elegant café.
Each estimated she could eat more than the other.
Elisha ate eighteen english muffins and eight eclairs
Emily engulfed twenty eight eggs and almost eight enchiladas.
The elephant and the echidna
each ate equal parts of the eggplant.
Everyone turned as Elisha excitedly exclaimed,
"I have eaten everything and I think I'm going to explode."
Extremely quickly, Elisha and Emily were ejected
from the eating establishment.
The employees were relieved and emphasized this with a collective,
"Egads, glad that's the end of that."

[insert a picture of an elephant and echidna with plates of food in front of them.]

F

Freddie frog figured he would find some fun.
Flopping into the pond and finally
fumbling onto a lily pad,
Freddie noticed a fly named Frances.
Freddie called Frances over,
but Frances had been fooled before.
She stayed far away,
but Freddie said he just wanted a friend.
Frances felt sorry for him and flew over.
This was the fifth time Freddie had tried to fool Frances.
Frances figured it out too late.
As she was furiously flapping her wings,
she felt frantic and her fate was sealed.
She was now Freddie's food.
He finished her and announced,
"If I would have caught her the first time,
she probably would have been fresher."

[insert a picture of a frog looking mostly satisfied.]

G

Georgia giraffe grabbed the grape from the ground when
she glimpsed grasshopper Gary, gaping up at her.
Gary had just gotten that green grape.
Gary gave a great speech about the grape
He kept going on about how it was abruptly grabbed.
The story, growing greater by the word,
Georgia felt she was greedy.
She offered to get another grape for Gary.
This one was growing on the other side of the gate,
exactly where Gary's grape had grown.
Gary said "No thanks." And then he was gone.
Georgia gazed after Gary and said,
"Gosh, golly, gosh, all that over a grape."

[insert a picture of a grasshopper lecturing a giraffe.]

H

Having somehow gotten honey on his hoof,
horse Hastings now had hay on his hoof.
Hastings hollered for Henrietta Hen to help him.
Henrietta had heard him, but ignored him.
Earlier, Henrietta had heard Hastings call her a hag.
This had hurt Henrietta.
She would not hightail it over to Hastings.
Henrietta, not really having a hard heart,
headed to Hastings and hushed him.
Hastings explained what hurt.
Henrietta could hardly believe it,
she told him,
"I haven't a hand nor the height to help,
but I do have a hunch. You wanna hear?"
Hastings had a feeling of happiness,
the hen would have a halfway decent answer.
"The old hickory tree by hen house has a hollow spot.
Rub your hoof on that and say, 'Howdy Handsome' three times.
It has to help."
Hastings looked hopeful and hurried to the hickory tree.
As Hastings was hightailing it to the hickory,
the hens were hustling to the window.
Hastings was on his third "Howdy"
when he realized it was all a hoax.
The hen house was filled with hens cackling.
With hay still stuck in his hoof
Hastings, head hung low, headed home.
He could still hear all the "Ha-ha's."

[insert a picture of the horse rubbing the hickory tree with his hoof while the
hens watch from the window, laughing.]

I

The path of Ivanhoe the insect intersected with an inchworm.
The inchworm introduced herself as "The Infamous Inga."
Ivanhoe was immensely impressed.
Instead of acting as if she were extremely important,
they exchanged ideas and became instant friends.
One day Ivanhoe asked Inga why she was infamous.
"Oh, because of the images I invent."
Ivanhoe looked confused.
Inga began to illustrate on a piece of iceberg lettuce.
She had invented an image,
just by ingesting pieces of leaves.
Ivanhoe insisted, "I have an idea for an image."
He chewed and chewed but couldn't imitate Inga's image.
Inga took a leaf and folded it into a tiny square.
Then, she instructed Ivanhoe to insert a tiny corner into his mouth.
Ivanhoe took a petite nibble, but no more.
Inga opened the leaf.
The leaf made a wonderful image.
They were both impressed.
Inga told Ivanhoe,
"That's incredible indeed, maybe you should be Infamous too."

[insert a picture of the insect and the inchworm's beautiful leaf images.]

J

Jake the jaguar joined
Jessie Jerboa for a game of jacks.
The winner would enjoy a jar of jasmine jam.
Jessie jumped at the chance for the jam.
Just barely winning,
Jessie couldn't wait to break open the jar.
Instead, Jake asked Jessie
to join him for a game of Jai Alai.
If she won, she would gain two jars,
but if she lost, she would have to give up the jam.
Jake and Jessie played the game.
Jake jumped ahead early and won the game.
Jessie would not get to enjoy the jam.
But Jake, being a good friend to Jessie,
shared the jar of jasmine jam jollily.

[insert picture of the jaguar and jerboa sharing jam.]

K

Kevin Koala was given a task by his Uncle Ken
If he would keep watch over Kevin's kitchen,
Ken would bring him a kazoo and kite from Katmandu.
Kevin had never had a kazoo or a kite,
so he was quite keen on the idea.
Uncle Ken gave Kevin the keys and kissed him goodbye.
Katie, a kookaburra kid who lived down the way,
liked to keep company with Kevin.
Kevin was kind enough to let Katie hang out with him,
but he really felt she was kind of kooky.
Kevin didn't know much about kookaburras,
but he did think it quite peculiar
that Katie was always wearing a khaki kerchief.
Katie followed Kevin to Ken's kitchen.
When Kevin got to the kitchen door,
the key would not work in the keyhole.
Kevin didn't know, but he had the key upside down.
Katie put the key in and the lock clicked.
In the kitchen, they saw
a kettle of sauerkraut, kumquats, and kiwifruit.
Kevin and Katie decided they couldn't
let those go to waste
for the weeks Ken would be gone.
Each day they visited Ken's kitchen,
they ate some kiwifruit, kumquats, and sauerkraut.
When Uncle Ken returned from Katmandu,
he gave Katie and Kevin kudos.
Ken appreciated their quick thinking.
He had forgotten about
the kumquats, kiwifruit, and even the kraut in the kettle.
Ken said they would never have kept
and his kitchen would have smelled quite rotten.
Luckily, Ken had picked up an extra kite and kazoo.
He gave one to Kevin,
and then one to Katie,
whom he complimented on her cool khaki kerchief.

[insert picture of the koala and the kookaburra playing the kazoo while flying a kite.]

L

Larry the Lion was lazy.
He liked to lollygag in his lair
and loved nothing more than long luxurious naps.
Lucky for Lori the Lorikeet,
Larry did not like to lunch on Lorikeets.
Lori would lounge in the lair with Larry,
taking a leisurely lunch of lemons and loganberries.
Lori liked the leaves and Larry ate the berries.
Late in the day, Lori left.
Larry did not see her for a long time.
Larry, though lazy, loved his friend Lori.
He went out looking for her.
As he lingered by a lake,
Larry heard the Lorikeet's little voice.
On a log, the little Lorikeet had landed.
Lori's left leg was lame.
Larry leaped over to the log
and lifted Lori, being careful of her leg.
The Lion let the Lorikeet lay on his back
until they returned to the lair.
Larry lit the lantern and looked at Lori's leg.
Lori was lucky that Larry had looked by the lake.
Larry let Lori stay in his lair and looked after her.
He even left to locate her favorite food,
loganberry leaves.
After that lesson, Larry learned that
laziness was the last thing he longed to be.
He no longer leaned on others,
but looked out for himself,
and now his friend Lori,
whom he loved.

[insert a picture of the lazy lion lying in his lair with the lorikeet.]

M

Megan Muskrat may have been mixed up when
she mentioned to her friend, Madison the Moose,
that she must make a trip to the moon.
Madison made the remark, "You must be mad."
Megan only became more determined.
The rumor was the moon had a most marvelous marble,
one that many believed had magic.
The moose said, "Might I mention the moon,
which is millions of miles away,
is much farther than you can imagine.
It will take many months
to make it to the moon.
You can't even measure
the number of minutes."
Megan decided maybe she most definitely,
did not need to make a trip to the moon.
Megan remembered that Madison
had already given Megan
a marble with a maze of maroon in the middle.
Maybe, Megan could make that marble magical.
Megan went to Madison to give her a message.
On a piece of manilla paper, Megan made a memo.
It said, "Me, oh my, I've made a mistake.
I will not be making a trip to the moon.
My dear friend, Madison, I would miss you too much."

[insert a picture of the muskrat handing a moose a note.]

N

Once there was a Nightingale,
whose name was Nina.
She was the newest neighbor north of Nate.
Nate was the Naked Mole Rat.
Nina had no need to know,
nor did she want to know,
even the name of the Naked Mole Rat.
Nina was napping in her nest,
when Nate came to meet his newest neighbor.
Nina nearly knocked over her nest
when she opened her eyes and they were nose to nose.
Nate was not only like nothing she knew,
but even nastier looking.
Nina would have nothing to do with Nate.
Nate was as nice as can be,
but Nina would not go near Nate.
Finally, Nate went back to his own nesting area.
Never had Nate felt so lonely.
Not long after that, no more than a week,
Nate heard Nina cry out, "No, not there."
Nate, still being neighborly,
nudged his way through the nettles to Nina.
Now Nina needed Nate.
A piece of Nina's new necklace had fallen.
Nina knew she could never get into the narrow nook.
Nobody but Nate could nose his way in there.
Nate only nodded his agreement.
He knew he needed to help his neighbor,
even though Nina had never been very nice to Nate.
Next thing Nina knew,
her necklace was out of the narrow opening
and next to her.
Now,
Nina and Nate are
notably the nearest and dearest
of friends and neighbors.

[insert a picture of naked mole rat handing a nightingale her necklace.]

O

Often, Oscar the Owl would outdo his friends.
One day, Orion Otter felt obliged to
outdo Owl the only way he knew how.
Orion would outwit Oscar in an original game.
Orion sent Oscar an invitation to meet by the ocean.
The time would be one o'clock.
Oscar always open to a challenge, accepted.
Approaching the ocean,
Oscar started making an outburst,
and being obnoxious to the others around.
Orion merely told them not to be offended,
for after he outwitted the Owl,
Oscar would owe everyone an apology.
Orion explained to Oscar,
this was an original game and it was played with oranges.
Each player would have an opportunity
to open the orange without it oozing out.
The object could only be opened by Orion or Oscar,
It had to occur over the ocean,
otherwise the opposite player would win.
The shore was out of bounds.
Though Oscar thought this odd,
he did not object.
All night Oscar tried and tried,
but there was nowhere to land.
Orion, on the other hand,
had the whole ocean.
Eventually it became obvious to everyone,
including Oscar,
that Orion had outwitted him.
Oscar was obligated to offer
Orion and the others an apology.
Orion felt a little odd,
and told Oscar that's ok.
Off they went to eat the already oozing oranges.

[insert a picture of the otter peeling an orange and the owl flying overhead with
no place to land.]

P

Penguin Polly and Puffin Paul
were a pair of peppy pals.
One day they heard about a parade,
going right through Persnickety.
Polly went to ask her papa about the parade.
She pleaded that perhaps papa could let her participate,
particularly in planning the party afterwards.
Papa gave his permission, but only if Paul would participate,
plus she must provide plenty of parsnip pudding at the party.
Polly, pleased papa had given her permission,
departed to phone Paul.
Paul too had permission.
They joined the other participants
and proceeded to plan the parade and party.
Polly was given the project
of picking apart the pansies from the peonies.
The Penguin produced plentiful piles of both pansies and peonies.
Paul was to present both a pilot and a pirate
He used papier-mache and was pleased with them both.
On the day of the parade,
as they were making preparations for the party,
Papa came to see Polly
he presented her with a polka-dot prom dress.
Polly immediately put it on.
As the parade began,
Polly and Paul got a surprise,
they were named prince and princess of the parade.
At the party there was not only parsnip pudding,
but also pineapple punch, potatoes with pork,
prunes, pink popsicles and purple plums.
Papa was present and proud as a peacock.
Both Polly and Paul were pleased.
They promenaded through the party.
It was perfect.

[insert a picture of the party with all the food as Polly and Paul walk down the middle of the crowd]

Q

There were two Quails,
and they made quite a pair.
Quinn was the quiet one.
Quincy was not quite as quiet.
Quincy liked to quarrel and quibble.
When it was too quiet,
Quincy would argue with Quinn.
It happened one day, quite unexpectedly.
The two acquaintances were
quietly quilting a queen-sized quilt.
Suddenly, Quincy decided to quit.
Quinn quietly questioned his quitting.
Quincy said "We are making the quilt too quickly.
The quantity the queen wants is quite impossible,
the quality would be better if the quantity were quartered!"
Quinn reminded Quincy,
"You know we will never quench the queen's quest
for quilts by only quilting a quarter of the quantity."
Quite a pair those two made,
Two quarreling quails in the middle of quite a bit of quilting.
Quincy had consequently quenched his need to quarrel.
Quinn and Quincy then quietly continued
to quilt the queen her queen size quilts to meet her request."

[insert a picture of two quails quarreling over a oversized quilt almost covering them.]

R

Rohan Rabbit was recognized as a renown baker.
She raised her own garden, usually raspberries.
Crowds would rant about her ripe red raspberries.
Her rival, Robbie Raccoon, was rather resentful.
Robbie was repeatedly reminded of the time,
the rare time, that he was caught red-handed.
He had replaced Rohan's raspberry pie with a red radish pie.
Robbie was nearly run out of town.
Rohan had remained rather relaxed
as she reminded everyone they too had done things wrong.
Robbie regretted his rash action.
His only reasoning was he really wanted that ribbon.
He would remain a rapsallion to the rest of the crowd though.
On one rainy day, Rohan became restless.
She had been wrestling with a ridiculous idea.
Finally, she couldn't resist the urge.
Rohan raced over to Robbie's in the rain.
Robbie was rather surprised.
The Rabbit requested an agreement.
Perhaps, they could replace each of their recipes,
as ridiculous as this sounded, with one.
The Raccoon regarded Rohan with resistance.
The Rabbit explained her reasoning.
Robbie had the best rhubarb
and she had the rarest ripe red raspberries.
Robbie recognized what she was revealing.
They dropped their rivalry.
After trying and retrying recipes,
they came up with an irreplaceable
Red-Raspberry Rhubarb Tart.
Now, they are remembered as
the Raccoon and Rabbit that became real good friends.
Why?
Because they made a radical move
and replaced their rage
with respect.

[insert picture of raccoon and rabbit sharing a ripe red-raspberry rhubarb tart.]

S

Shelley the snake was sliding through the sand,
when she saw a sullen sad boy.
The slithering snake snuck up on
the sourpuss, Sammy.
Surprised by the swift appearance of the snake,
Sam speedily snatched the snake up.
He suddenly smiled.
He had a surprise for his sibling.
"Sally, oh, sis. I have something to show you."

[insert a small picture of a boy smiling with snake in his hand.]

T

Tea time for two came twice a month.
That is when two terrific friends met,
Tazia the Tarantula and Tori the Turtle.
They would talk and tease each other.
Often they would talk too much,
telling each other their troubles.
All this at a table in the teahouse, called Talia's
Talia's was truly the best teahouse,
they had terrific toast with tidbits of nutmeg.
They had tiny tasty tarts.
But Tazia and Tori had a tendency to talk,
without tasting the treats.
They would drink their tea out of teal teacups,
and totally lose track of time.
Taking them by surprise,
the time ticked away until
ultimately, they had been there for two hours.
Finally, their time was through and they turned to each other,
saying "Toodle-oo 'til next time."

[insert a picture of a tarantula and turtle taking tea.]

U

Ursula Unicorn was unable to utter anything unpleasant.

Uri the Umbrella bird came upon Ursula.

He found this to be quite unique and very unusual.

Uri urged the Unicorn to utter just one ugly thing,

But Ursula was unable to.

Uri tried umpteen times to undermine Ursula.

Ursula tried to explain Uri umpteen times that

It was uncharacteristic for unicorns to be unladylike.

Uri tried unbelievable tactics,

Including an upside-down cake underfoot.

Ursula was unflappable.

Finally Ursula explained Uri for the last time,

"To utter unkindness is utterly unpleasant.

Do you understand?"

Uri finally understood how very unusual it was

to find anyone, even a unicorn,

that doesn't ultimately utter anything ugly.

[insert a picture of a unicorn stepping on an upside-down cake with the umbrella bird watching from a tree.]

V

Viola Vampire Bat and Vernell the Vulture were very best friends.
One day Vernell voiced his craving for vanilla.
Viola had never tasted vanilla, but very much wanted to.
Vernell had a vague idea there might be some in the valley.
That night they set off on a voyage to the valley.
Viola had never visited the valley.
Along the way, they resolved to rest.
Suddenly, a venomous viper came into view.
Vernell could see it, but Viola's vision was not as good.
The viper, Vicky, was actually nice.
She told them about the vendor who sold vanilla.
But Vernell said they were going to vamoose to the valley.
As they started to vacate their resting spot,
Vernell noticed vibrant violet plants.
Vicky divulged that it was a variety of violets.
The colors were so vivid even Viola could view them.
Vicky invited them to visit the violets on their way back.
Vernell and Viola thanked Vicky the Viper
and set out on their voyage again.
They crossed over a vast area
and were about to give up their voyage,
When Vernell yelled, "Voila,
The Valley of Vanilla."
Viola and Vernell decided they needed a new habitat.
They lived happily ever after in the
Vanilla Valley of Venezuela.

[insert picture of vampire bat and vulture in a field of violets]

W

Winifred Walrus and William Whale were wallowing in the water
When Winifred said she knew where a wonderful waterfall was.
William welcomed the whole waterfall idea.
Winifred led the way to warmer waters.
The waterway led to the waterfall.
The Walrus and the Whale wasted the whole day
watching the waltzing water,
wading in the white-capped waves,
and wandering through the wall of water.
Both wondered what it would be like
when they went back to the ocean without the waterfall.
Without warning, the wind picked up.
It whipped through the waterway and
sent waves into the waterfall.
William and Winifred watched the weather wreak their watery haven.
They realized the only way out was
to work their way through the waves.
William wrestled his way through the waterway
with Winifred in the wake behind him.
When they reached the open water,
the weather was not as wild.
The Whale and the Walrus who had wondered
what it would be like to watch the waterfall everyday
decided where they were was just as wonderful,
not as wild,
and what more could a Whale and a Walrus want?

[insert the picture of a whale and walrus playing under a waterfall.]

X

Xespes the Xenop was extremely lonely.
He wanted to have an extra special friend.
You see, Xespes was a rainforest bird,
not just any bird, but one about to become extinct.
Imagine then how extraordinary it was
when Xespes came upon another Xenop.
This was quite unexpected and
Xespes could barely contain his excitement.
Xenack felt the exact same way.
They exchanged names
and expressed their interest in extending their friendship.
They explored together until they were exhausted.
When the other animals saw Xenack,
they expected Xespes to be close by.
Xespes and Xenack had found
exactly what they wanted in each other
an exceptional friend.

[insert picture of two xenops flying through the air, holding each others wings.]

Y

Yak Yvonne was yearning for some yucca.
The yogurt she'd found was yummy,
but she really had a yen for yucca.
She wandered until she found a yam,
but it wasn't the yucca she yearned for.
Yesterday, Yvonne had heard a rumor,
there was yucca in the yard over yonder.
Yes, she would wander over yonder
When she got to the yard,
Yvonne wanted to yell, "Yahoo!"
For yes, over yonder was the yucca.
The Yak made her way to the yucca,
but before she could take a bite of the yummy yucca,
Yasmine Yellowjacket stung the yak.
Yvonne yelled a loud yowling ouch.
Yasmine was now yapping bout her yucca.
The yucca she had protected in this yard for a year.
Yvonne yelled back at her,
"Your yard, your yucca.
Do you know how long I've been yearning for yucca?"
"Yes," said Yasmine, "but is it yours?"
Yvonne said, "No, but I was told yesterday that this yucca,
which was yonder in this yard was yummy."
"You'll eat my yucca then have a yen for more.
Yet you still have not answered, Is it yours?
Besides, I have a secret.
This yucca is yellow."
Yvonne did indeed now notice how yellow the yucca was.
Yasmine told Yvonne, "It is not yet yummy."
The Yellowjacket explained, "It is too young.
It would taste yucky and give you a stomach ache."
Yvonne realized she would not be getting
the yucca for which she yearned
Because, yes, it was too young and
wouldn't fill her yen for yucca,
but would instead taste yucky.

[insert picture a yak talking to a yellowjacket beside a yucca plant.)

Z

Zoe the Zebra was from Zambia.
Zoe was always a little zany.
One day as she was zooming past Zachary zorilla,
with her ziggedy zaggedy necklace of zinnias,
she noticed a patch of zoysia near Zachary.
When she approached Zachary,
he was meditating,
for he practiced Zen.
Zachary asked Zoe if she would join him,
but she just wanted to know about the zoysia.
After explaining to Zoe that the zoysia was a gift,
Zach asked Zoe again to learn the art of Zen.
Her zeal for Zen was less than zestful.
She tried for what seemed a zillion times,
But she felt nothing,
zip,
zero,
zilch.
So before she zoomed off with her zinnias,
she told Zachary, "I hope you reach your zenith through Zen."

ZEE END.

[insert picture of zebra with zinnias around her neck trying to meditate with one eye open.]

Garden of Giggings

(The following story poems are all envisioned as picture books with 1-2 stanzas on each page. For the purpose of my work in this compilation, though not recommended for actual children's literature writing, I am including a brief set of illustration notes. As each of my shorter works is seen in picture book form, this should help each reader to obtain a clearer picture of my meaning in the stories after being read.)

Why Think?

Mrs. Primproper was quite the teacher,
Actually she was more like a preacher.

Each day of the long school week,
She'd teach us the path we should seek.

These are a few of her favorite lines,
She must have told us a hundred times.

You've got to train,
Train your brain.

She always said
To use your head.

Everyday, exercise your noodle,
And you'll learn quite an oodle.

When you use that noggin of yours,
It will open quite a few doors.

The more you apply it, you will find,
The better it is for your mind.

But the most important one of which she spoke,
I tell you it really is no joke.

She'd clear her throat and loudly say,
As if she spoke from far away.

IF YOU DON'T USE IT,
YOU'LL SURELY LOSE IT.

I've searched in my room and under the bed
But how can I search without my head?

I can't see my head you see
You couldn't either if you were me.

[A teacher is standing in front of the room lecturing the children, while they of course, are not listening. The focus is on one particular child who is completely distracted. When the teacher does her final line, he is far away in his own world. Finally he is looking for his head, but the reader cannot see his head, only his body until the last stanza, when we see he has head, but cannot see it.]

The Superman Story

Superman has nothing on me.
I'm as fearless
as he can be.

My cape is on, I approach the stair,
I close my eyes,
and I declare.

"If he can do it, so can I,
I've got to find out
if I can fly."

Boy, it looks like a long way down,
But, I still begin
the short countdown.

Superman has nothing on me,
Here I go,
One, two, three.

It didn't work out exactly right,
I broke my arm,
And gave my mom a fright.

The doctor said, "You've quite a boy there."
My mother replied, "There will be no more
Jumping off the stair."

I learned my lesson well I'd say
Superman won't be
there to save the day.

So, I won't jump off the stair
But my little brother sure will enjoy
having a new cape to wear.

[insert a picture of a boy handing his cape to his younger brother.]

My Birthday is Coming!

My birthday, my birthday
It's not that far away.
Yes, it's almost here,
The most wonderful day.

Another year gone by,
How much older I am,
And better looking and smarter,
Why, thank you, yes ma'am.

Just a reminder
In case you forgot.
My birthday is coming,
I'm kidding you not.

I'm older and wiser
Beyond my young age,
So much I've accomplished
In the last 300 plus days.

Oh, did I tell you,
It's drawing quite near.
The day I was born
Is almost right here.

In the last year I went through
Quite a rough phase,
I've learned so much
It should be on the front page.

I've learned the writing,
Reading, and Rithmetic too.
Hard to believe all in one year,
But learned it I did, it's certainly true.

As you can tell,
I've not much to say,
But I hope you remember
Next week's my birthday.

[This particular story combines some of the aspects of poetry with the story and involves many pictures of the child counting down the days in various ways and the reader can visualize the excitement of the child throughout the whole story.]

The Yellow and Blue Marble

Teacher, oh no,
My lucky marble is missing.
Do you hear me it's gone,
Are you even listening?

It's yellow and blue
With a swirl in the middle.
I've had it since
I was quite little.

I can't take my test
This afternoon,
Unless I find it
And find it real soon.

I've looked in my desk,
And in my pencil case.
As a matter of fact,
I've looked all over this place.

I know what happened,
I know that it's true.
My beautiful marble
Was stolen by Drew.

He's always been jealous
Of the design
And always been furious
That it is mine.

Teacher, oh, Teacher
What shall I do?
Please help me out,
And give me a clue.

I must keep looking
And searching for it?
No matter what,
I shouldn't quit?

Oh, there it is
Right here on the ground.
All I really had to do
Was look around.

[The young boy in this story is pestering his teacher. Pictures of what the marble looks like, the boy's messy desk and Drew looking sneaky flash across the pages. For the last stanza, his teacher is standing next to him right next to his own desk, where the marble is lying under his chair.]

My Name

Why couldn't my parents name me
something quite plain?

Oh, I don't know,
something like Jane.

Like Mary or Kathy,
or Linda, or Paula Sue,
if I were named Rebecca,
that would even do.

But no, they had to pick
a name deliberately unique,
not Janet or Laura,
or even Monique.

They had to use
their creative mind,
and come up with a name,
no one else would find.

You probably think
I'm overreacting.
You may not believe
it's really a big thing.

But you would
definitely understand,
if like me you were named
Princess Preciously Grand.

[This girl obviously doesn't like her name and sees everyone else as having a better name. Visually, she is just seeing the girls in her class, but they all seem to look better than her for various reason, until the end when we see her and realize she has a style all her own. She is the interesting individual]

The Tale of Nigel Nillings and his Night Fright

It really is quite unbelievably true
But it has probably happened even to you.

Little Nigel Nillings hadn't a fright
Well, except that one thing . . . the night.

It happened when he was quite small
Not even yet grown to 3 feet at all.

Nigel was lying under the sheets in his bed
The covers were tucked all the way to his head.

He thought he heard a sound from inside his toy chest
But before he could yell, scream, or protest.

He knew he heard it again only louder this time
So quietly, very quietly down did he climb.

From under his covers and down to the floor
That noise was going to disturb him no more.

He got to the chest and threw up the lid
And onto the floor his red truck slid.

He looked up and down and all around
And do you know what that little boy found?

He found absolutely nothing, nada, and zip
Nigel just knew he'd been given the slip.

So he searched some more and then even more
Nigel looked everywhere even his junk drawer.

The only thing left for him to do
Was to ask the advice of someone who knew.

He went to seek the help of another
Who should he ask? But of course! His mother.

Nigel blurted out his fantastic tale
Sure his mother heard every detail

After listening intently to every word
Reassuring her son she had really heard.

She paused a moment to think
Then looked at him and gave him a wink.

She'd come up with a very good plan
Giving him a hug, she then began,

"Whenever it becomes the time for night
You can turn on your own little light.

Now Nigel Nillings has nothing to fear
It all has become perfectly clear.

He sleeps with his nightlight on so bright
With nothing to cause him fear or fright.

[This child doesn't actually hear noises, but in his mind, he believes he is hearing something because it is so dark and he can't see in the dark. It is really about the fear anyone can have in the dark. Nigel looks for ways to do it himself first, then gradually decides to ask his mother for help. In the end, his gets a nightlight and he is no longer afraid.]

What Do You Have to Be So Happy About?

I see you are smiling
and happy and glad.

Do you know I am not sad,
I am very very mad?

I don't know why you are so happy.
What do you have to be happy about?

Did you get a big cake,
and get to eat the whole thing?

Did you get a shiny new bike,
or a skateboard to ride?

Did your mom make dinner of
cheeseburgers and fries?

Is your brother so cool,
he has a club and let you in?

Was your sister nice to you
in front of her friends?

Did you get a good grade
on a test you thought you'd failed?

Did you beat the next level
on your video game?

Was there mud in your yard
and you made a great pie?

Is your dog happy to see you
after school every day?

Was there a frog on your porch
you could keep for a pet?

Did your grandparents send you a toy
instead of underwear for your birthday?

None of this seems to be the reason,
so why are you so happy?

What is there to be happy about?
Please share with me.

Oh, I see.

You're happy we're friends!
Well I can see why,
I can be quite an interesting guy.

[The little boy in this piece is obviously in a bad mood but he brightens when he finds out he has a friend. Each stanza is easily illustratable with the things children enjoy.]

Just 'cause

Today is the worst day of my life
And I will tell you exactly why.

Today, my toothbrush dropped in the toilet

Just 'cause

I was juggling it with the toothpaste.

Today, I had to wear dress pants and a tie

Just 'cause

It was picture day at school.

Today, I didn't do good on my test

Just 'cause

I couldn't spell a bunch of words.

Today, I got partnered with a girl for my project

Just 'cause

I was busy drawing and not paying attention.

Today, my baseball card collection fell in a puddle

Just 'cause

I was showing it to Johnny after it rained.

Today, I got grounded for a week

Just 'cause

I stopped at Joey's for two hours.

Today, we had brussel sprouts for dinner

Just 'cause

They're good for you.

Today, my cat Dodger wouldn't come near me

Just 'cause

I stepped on her tail and blamed it on her.

Today, I had to take a bath

Just 'cause

My mom says I'm dirty.

Today, we didn't get to finish my bedtime story
Just 'cause
We ran out of time.

Tomorrow will be better
Just 'cause
My mom says it can't get any worse.

[This little boy is just really having a rough day and nothing is going right. Each stanza can be illustrated by emphasizing the first line. Nothing seems to get better, but his mom points out a new hope for the next day.]

There Was an Old Lady . . .

There was an old lady
who put on her shoe,

When she put on her shoe,
she disturbed the mouse,

When she disturbed the mouse,
the mouse ran out,

When the mouse ran out,
the lady screamed and ran about,

When the lady screamed and ran about,
it woke up the cat,

When the cat woke up,
she spied the mouse,

When she spied the mouse,
the cat lept up and gave chase,

When the cat lept up and gave chase,
it woke the dog,

When it woke the dog,
the dog looked up,

When the dog looked up,
he saw the game,

When he saw the game,
he decided to join,

When he decided to join,
the cat got scared,

When the cat got scared,
she ran out of the house,

When she ran out of the house,
the cat ran into the chicken coop,

When the cat ran into the chicken coop,
the hens went wild,

When the hens went wild,
they flew out of the coop,

When they flew out of the coop,
they flew into the barn,

When they flew into the barn,
it upset the goats,

When it upset the goats,
they started b-bleating and bucking,

When they started b-bleating and bucking,
the horses began neighing and leaving their stalls,

When the horses left their stall,
everyone stopped to look around,

There was fur and feathers
all over the ground,

But the little mouse was
nowhere to be found,

The yard was a mess,
the house and the barn too,

All because there was
an old lady who put on her shoe.

[For this story, each stanza would be a page that would display the craziness of the situation. One such picture might be the mouse being chased by the cat being chased by the dog.]

Appendix A

A Recommended List of My Favorite Books

Picture Books

Cannon, Janell. Crickwing. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 2000.

---. Pinduli. Orlando: Harcourt, 2004.

Carle, Eric. The Grouchy Ladybug. New York: HarperCollins, 1996, c1977.

Christelow, Eileen. Five Little Monkeys series. New York: Clarion Books, 1989.

DiTerlizzi, Tony. Ted. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2001.

Kellogg, Steven. Aster Aardvark's Alphabet Adventures. New York: Morrow Junior Books, 1987.

LeSieg, Theo. I Wish That I Had Duck Feet. New York: Beginner Books: division of Random House. Inc., 1965.

Lobel, Arnold. Giant John. New York: Harper, 1964.

McKissack, Patricia C. Ma Dear's Aprons. New York: Aladdin, 1997.

Munsch, Robert. We Share Everything. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1999.

Rappaport, Doreen. Martin's Big Words: The Life of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. New York: Scholastic, Inc, 2001.

Raschka, Chris. Yo! Yes? New York: Orchard Books, 1993.

- Sanders, Martha. Alexander and the Magic Mouse. New York: American Heritage press, 1969.
- Seuss, Dr. And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street. New York: Random House, [1989], 1937.
- . Did I Ever Tell You How Lucky You Are? New York: Random House, 1973.
- . The Lorax. New York: Random House, 1971.
- . Oh, the Thinks You Can Think! New York: Beginner Books-Random House. Inc., 1975.
- Sendak, Maurice. In the Night Kitchen. New York: Harper, 1970.
- Viorst, Judith. Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1972.
- Waddell, Martin and Angela Barrett. The Hidden House. New York: Philomel Books, 1990.
- Yaccarino, Dan. Unlovable. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001.
- Yolen, Jane. How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight? New York: Blue Sky Press, 2000.

Books for Older Children

Blume, Judy. Tales of a Fourth Grade Nothing.

Creech, Sharon. Ruby Holler. New York: Harper Trophy, 2002.

Colfer, Eoin. Artemis Fowl. New York: Hyperion Books for Children, 2001.

Danziger, Paula. Amber Brown series. New York: Putnam, 1994.

Estes, Eleanor. The Hundred Dresses. San Diego: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1944.

Gipson, Fred. Old Yeller. New York: HarperCollins Publisher, Inc., 1956

Holt, Kimberly Willis. Dancing in Cadillac Light. New York: Puffin Books, 2001.

---. When Zachary Beaver Came to Town. New York: Hold, 1999.

Jacques, Brian. Redwall. New York: Putnam, 1986.

Konisburg, E.L. From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler. Boston: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1989.

Leedy, Loreen and Pat Street. There's a Frog in my Throat. New York: Holiday House, 2003.

L'Engle, Madeline. AWrinkle in Time. New York: Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 1962.

Lowry, Lois. Anastasia Krupnik series. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1979.

Silverstein, Shel. Runny Babbit. New York: HarperCollins Publishers, 2005.

Spinelli, Jerry. Maniac Magee. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1990.

Wiles, Deborah. Love, Ruby Lavender. San Diego: Gulliver Books Harcourt, Inc., 2001.

Yolen, Jane. Briar Rose. New York: Tor Fantasy, 1992.

---. Not One Damsel in Distress: World Folktales for Strong Girls. New York:
Silver Whistle Harcourt, Inc., 2000.

Poetry

Hall, Donald, ed. The Oxford Illustrated Book of American Children's Poems.

New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Prelutsky, Jack. The New Kid on the Block Poems. New York: Greenwillow

Books, 1984.

Silverstein, Shel. Where the Sidewalk Ends. New York: Harper, 1974.

Viorst, Judith. Sad Underwear: And Other Complications More Poems For

Children and Their Parents by Judith Viorst. New York: Atheneum Books
for Young Readers, 1995.

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- DiTerlizzi, Tony. Ted. New York: Simon and Schuster Books for Young Readers, 2001.
- Lobel, Arnold. Giant John. New York: Harper, 1964.
- Rudman, Masha Kbakow. Children's Literature: Resource for the Classroom. Norwood, MA: Christopher-Gordon Publishers, Inc., 1989.
- Russell, David L. Literature for Children: A Short Introduction. Third Edition, New York: Longman, 1997.
- Seuss, Dr. And to Think That I Saw it on Mulberry Street. New York: Random House, [1989], 1937.
- Viorst, Judith. Alexander and the Terrible, Horrible, No Good, Very Bad Day. New York: Scholastic, Inc., 1972.
- Yaccarino, Dan. Unlovable. New York: Henry Holt & Co., 2001.
- Yolen, Jane. How Do Dinosaurs Say Goodnight? New York: Blue Sky Press, 2000.
- . Writing Books for Children. Boston: The Writer Inc., 1973.