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TWENTY-FOUR CREATIVE, INTERACTIVE STORY PROGRAMS FOR PRESCHOOLERS

ROB REID
Rob Reid is the very popular author of numerous books on children’s programming for ALA Editions. He has also written resources for Upstart Books and is the author of two picture books. In addition, he writes regular columns on programming and children’s literature for LibrarySparks magazine and has a column in Book Links magazine titled “Reid-Aloud Alert.” Rob is a senior lecturer at the University of Wisconsin–Eau Claire and conducts workshops across North America on ways to make literature come alive for children. Rob can be contacted through www.rapnrob.com.

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For Harris
## CONTENTS

Acknowledgments .................................................. xi  
Introduction ......................................................... xiii

### THE PROGRAMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Pages</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Let’s Act Like Animals</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Imagination</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>The Animal Book Club</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Reading</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>The Animal Talent Show</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Singing, Dancing, and Art</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Animal Countdown</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Numbers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>It’s Not Easy Being Green (or Red or Blue or Yellow)</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Colors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>It’s a Small World</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Tiny Animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Big and Tall</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Stories and Activities about Large Animals</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

www.alastore.ala.org
CHAPTER 8  Deep Down Underground ......................... 68
    Stories and Activities about Animals That Live below the Ground

CHAPTER 9  Way Up High ........................................ 77
    Stories and Activities about Animals in the Sky and Tall Trees

CHAPTER 10 Lost and Found ................................. 87
    Stories and Activities about Being Lost and Losing and Finding Things

CHAPTER 11 I’ve Got a BIG Problem ....................... 96
    Stories and Activities about Problem Solving

CHAPTER 12 Cool, Cool Water ............................... 106
    Stories and Activities about Animals That Live in and around Water
    (and Even Bathe in It!)

CHAPTER 13 Forest Friends ................................. 114
    Stories and Activities Set in the Woods

CHAPTER 14 Animal Buddies ............................... 122
    Stories and Activities about Unlikely Friends

CHAPTER 15 Weird and Wonderful Pets .................. 132
    Stories and Activities about Pets

CHAPTER 16 The Animal Elementary School ............. 141
    Stories and Activities about School

CHAPTER 17 Let’s Visit the Animals ....................... 151
    Stories and Activities about Field Trips

CHAPTER 18 Animals on the Move ......................... 160
    Stories and Activities about Transportation

CHAPTER 19 Animal Chefs ................................. 168
    Stories and Activities about Food

CHAPTER 20 Animals from Long Ago ....................... 178
    Stories and Activities about Prehistoric Animals
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Members of the Animal Kingdom, except for you, Wisconsin mosquitoes.
I was flipping through the shelves of new picture books at my local library when I was struck by the high number of books that featured animals. Granted, animals have always been popular with children and have been a staple in children’s books for decades. But I couldn’t get over the high percentage of titles featuring both realistic and anthropomorphic critters. One thing led to another, and I was off creating a new series of story program lesson plans featuring our four-legged, no-legged, winged, scaled, and feathered friends.

The preschool lesson plans (they also work well for K–2 grade levels) are in the style of my previous ALA Editions story programming books, such as *Family Storytime*, *More Family Storytimes*, *Something Musical Happened at the Library*, and *What’s Black and White and Reid All Over?* Each program is approximately thirty minutes in length and is composed of a mix of “newer” picture books (all published between 2010 and 2014) and “in-between” activities. I had a blast creating seventy new “in-between” activities—fingerplays and movement activities, songs and musical activities, chants, creative dramatics, and imagination exercises.

Please feel free to use these and all of the ideas in *Animal Shenanigans* in your own story programs.

And while you’re using them, have a howling, barking, clucking, roaring good time!
THE PROGRAMS
LET’S ACT LIKE ANIMALS
STORIES AND ACTIVITIES
ABOUT IMAGINATION

PROGRAM AT A GLANCE

★ Opening Picture Book: The Purple Kangaroo by Michael Ian Black and Peter Brown
★ Picture Book: I’m a Frog! by Mo Willems
★ Movement Activity: “Tiny Little Frogs” by Rob Reid
★ Picture Book / Movement Activity: It’s a Tiger! by David LaRochelle and Jeremy Tankard
★ Song: “Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part One” by Rob Reid
★ Picture Book: Ernest, the Moose Who Doesn’t Fit by Catherine Rayner
★ Musical Activity: “Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part Two” by Rob Reid
★ Closing Picture Book / Movement Activity: You Are a Lion! And Other Fun Yoga Poses by Taeeun Yoo
Opening Picture Book


A monkey talks directly to you, the reader, and brags, “I can read minds. It’s true. In fact, I can read YOUR mind.” The monkey asks you to think of something so spectacular “that nobody has ever thought of it in the entire history of thinking about things.” The monkey guesses that you are thinking of a purple kangaroo. Not only that, you are thinking of “a purple kangaroo looking for his best friend, a wild-eyed chinchilla named Señor Ernesto de Pantalones.” The monkey goes on to elaborate that you are thinking of the purple kangaroo wearing roller skates, juggling bananas, blowing a bubble-gum bubble out its nose, riding in a blimp, and flying to the moon. The book’s punch line is that if you, the reader, weren’t thinking of that before, you’re thinking of it now.

Picture Book

I’m a Frog! by Mo Willems. Illustrated by the author. Hyperion, 2013.

Piggie pretends that he is a frog and hops around while saying “Ribbit.” His friend Gerald is confused and then worried. “What if I become a frog? Hopping all day . . . Eating flies!” Piggie teaches Gerald about “pre-tend,” when someone acts like something he or she is not. Gerald responds with “And you can just do that?” Gerald refuses to act like a frog, instead preferring to act like a cow.
Movement Activity

“Tiny Little Frogs” by Rob Reid.

Tell everyone to imagine they are frogs. Start with everyone down in a “pre-hopping position,” similar to the image of Piggie on the cover of *I’m a Frog!* After the first verse, lead the kids into imagining themselves as other animals.

Tiny little frogs,
Jumping up and down, *(Jump up and down.)*
Making funny sounds, *(Make frog noises—“Ribbit,” “Croak,” etc.)*
Tiny little frogs.

Tiny little calves,
Leaping up and down, *(Move around on all fours in little bursts.)*
Making funny sounds, *(Moo.)*
Tiny little calves.

Tiny little ducklings,
Waddling all around, *(Waddle with arms tucked in as wings.)*
Making funny sounds, *(Quack.)*
Tiny little ducklings.
Tiny little owls,
Swooping all around, (Hold arms out as wings and glide around.)
Making funny sounds, (Hoot.)
Tiny little owls.

Tiny little monkeys,
Swinging all around, (Pretend to swing from overhead branches.)
Making funny sounds, (Make monkey noises like “Ooo-ooo.”)
Tiny little monkeys.

Tiny little mice,
Scurrying all around, (Back on all fours, make little darting movements.)
Making funny sounds, (Squeak.)
Tiny little mice.

Ask the children to use their imaginations and come up with other animals to act out in this rhyme pattern.

**Picture Book / Movement Activity**

*It’s a Tiger!* by David LaRochelle. Illustrated by Jeremy Tankard.

A child pretends that he (or she) is in the jungle “where the tall trees grow and the monkeys swing from vine to vine.” The child looks closer and realizes that he’s not looking at a monkey; it’s “a tiger! Run!” He leads us to a cave where we see shadows. One of the shadows turns out to be the tiger! We climb out of the cave and tiptoe past snakes. Unfortunately, one of the snakes turns out to be the tiger’s tail. We run once more and swing onto a pile of orange leaves. Yes, the leaves turn out to be a tiger. We get a ride on a boat but notice that the captain has a tail. “A TIGER! Not AGAIN!” We jump overboard and swim to an island. We open a treasure chest and, yes, find the tiger inside. We learn he doesn’t want to eat us. He wants us to rub his belly. The boy starts telling the tiger a different story. This one has us back in the jungle watching out for “A CROCODILE!”
STORYTELLING TIPS: Pause each time before you say the word “Tiger” and allow the children to yell it out. The narrator tells us to do a variety of things to get away from the tiger. Have the children mime those instructions as they occur in the story, even if they have to stand to do so. Examples include running (slap legs), ducking heads as everyone enters the cave, climbing a ladder out of the cave, tiptoeing past the snakes, swinging from a rope, climbing rocks, and swimming.

Song

“Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part One” by Rob Reid.

Sing to the tune of the traditional song “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.” The melody can be found on the Internet as well as the following children’s music recordings: I Found You by Caspar Babypants (Aurora Elephant Music, 2013), Rise and Shine by Raffi (Troubadour, 1982), and Wee Sing and Pretend by Pamela Beall and Susan Nipp (Price Stern Sloan, 2001). As you chant each verse, pause after the phrase “Tell me what you say” and let the kids fill in with the proper animal sound.

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Bee,
Tell me what you say: “Buzz!”

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Coyote,
Tell me what you say: “Howl!” (or “Yip! Yip!”)

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Dolphin,
Tell me what you say: “Eee! Eee! Eee!” (or “Click! Click! Click!”)
Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Donkey,
Tell me what you say: “Hee-haw!”

Use, use, use your mind,
In a special way,
Imagine that you are a Llama,
Tell me what you say: “_______!” (Make a pretend spit noise. Entirely optional, of course, but the kids will laugh.)

Ask your audience if they can add any other animals and their sounds to the song.

**Picture Book**


Ernest the moose is RATHER LARGE and does not fit on the pages of the book. “Luckily, Ernest is also a very determined moose. He’s not going to give up easily.” With the help of a little chipmunk, Ernest shifts, shuffles, and squeezes back and forth on the pages, but we still only see his middle. The chipmunk comes up with a creative idea, and the two grab some masking tape and paper. They finally finish their project. We learn they made a large foldout page at the very end of the book. “Ernest may be a RATHER LARGE moose . . . but now he has a RATHER LARGE book . . . and he fits in perfectly.”

**STORYTELLING TIPS:** As you read about Ernest’s efforts to fit on the pages, tighten your voice to show his struggles. When you begin to unfold the final pages, slow down and build up the excitement as we finally see Ernest’s entire body for the first time.
Musical Activity

“Use, Use, Use Your Mind, Part Two” by Rob Reid.

Sing to the tune of the traditional song, “Row, Row, Row Your Boat.”

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re an Alligator,
Show me how you move!
(Make alligator jaws out of arms, open and shut them.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Butterfly,
Show me how you move!
(Flap arms as you slowly move around the room.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Hummingbird,
Show me how you move!
(Flap arms very quickly as you dart around the room.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Lobster,
Show me how you move!
(Click thumbs on both hands as if they were claws.)

Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Turtle,
Show me how you move!
(Get on all fours, move slowly, stop and pull head into shoulders.)
Use, use, use your mind,
To a special groove,
Imagine you’re a Cheetah,
Show me how you move!

(Run around the room in a circle as fast as you can!)

Closing Picture Book / Movement Activity

You Are a Lion! And Other Fun Yoga Poses by Taeun Yoo. Illustrated by the author. Nancy Paulsen, 2012.

Children gather in a garden and perform a variety of yoga poses. When a child sits on his heels with his hands on his knees and tongue out, he is told to imagine he is a lion. Another child sits with feet together, holding her toes, and flapping her legs. She becomes a butterfly. Other yoga scenarios have the children imagine they are a dog, a snake, a frog, and a cat. The children also stand and reach. “You are a . . . / Mountain / Soaring up high / Solid and mighty / Touching the sky.” At the end, the children lie on their backs, relaxing in silence.

STORYTELLING TIPS: Have the children perform the same yoga poses along with the characters in the book. Read slowly and wait several seconds before moving on to the next exercise. At the end of the book, when your own audience is on their backs, quietly whisper, “Storytime is over for today.”

5 Fun Backup Picture Books


A rabbit opens a suitcase for a dog. The dog, who had wished for a bone, is surprised to find a cake lined with several bones. A toucan looks inside the suitcase and finds an entire jungle. A bear gets a bed
INDEX

Titles of fingerplays, songs, and poems are shown in quotes.
Titles of books and CDs are shown in italic.

10 Hungry Rabbits (Lobel), 38
999 Frogs Wake Up (Kimura), 32, 35

A
"AAHH! AAHH!" (Reid), 103–104
Again! (Gravett), 13, 18–19
Agee, Jon, 66–67
AH HA! (Mack), 96, 103
Allen, Jonathan, 21
Animal Songs (Tallman), 51, 59, 116, 134, 156, 200
"Animals Move" (Reid), 186, 191
The Ant and the Grasshopper (Emberley), 56
"The Ants Go Dancing" (Reid), 23, 26–27
Appelhans, Chris, 23, 24–25
Are the Dinosaurs Dead, Dad? (Middleton), 158
Arnold, Tedd, 159, 160, 164
Aronson, Billy, 104
Art & Max (Wiesner), 48
Ayto, Russell, 158

B
Baby Bear (Nelson), 87, 89–90
Baby Bear Counts One (Wolff), 32, 36–37
Baby Bear Sees Blue (Wolff), 40, 47
Babypants, Caspar, 7
Bailey at the Museum (Bliss), 158
Baker, Keith, 204, 207
Bandits (Wright), 96, 100
Barchas, Sarah, 44

“Alligator Is My Friend” (Reid), 122, 127–129
And Then It’s Spring (Fogliano), 74
Anderson, Derek, 167
“Animal Baths” (Reid), 107–108
“Animal Letters One through Nine” (Reid), 32, 35–36
“Animal Photo Poses” (Reid), 40, 48
“Animal Sirens” (Reid), 160, 162
“Animal Snores” (Reid), 213, 216

Barclay, Eric, 66
Bardhan-Quallen, Sudipta, 122, 129, 219
Bardoe, Cheryl, 185
Barnett, Mac, 32–33
Battut, Eric, 176
Be Quiet, Mike! (Patricelli), 192
Béal, Marjorie, 56
Beall, Pamela, 7, 26, 43, 59, 70, 89, 116, 134, 153, 156, 200, 208
Bear Has a Story to Tell (Stead), 114, 115–116
Bear’s Loose Tooth (Wilson), 119–120
Beaumont, Karen, 220
Bee, William, 68, 71
“A Bee Sat on My Nose,” 55
Bell, Cece, 160–161
Bendis, Keith, 20
Bennett, Elizabeth, 58, 63–64
Berger, Joe, 94–95
Berkner, Laurie, 44
Bernatene, Poly, 106, 108
Berne, Jennifer, 20
**Big and Small** (Bennett), 58, 63–64
**Big Bear’s Big Boat** (Bunting), 160, 162
**A Big Guy Took My Ball!** (Willems), 58–59
**Big Mean Mike** (Knudsen), 166
Bingham, Kelly, 23–24
Black, Michael Ian, 3–4
Blackaby, Susan, 210
Bliss, Harry, 158
Bloch, Serge, 139
Blue Chameleon (Gravett), 48
Boa’s Bad Birthday (Willis), 58, 61
**Bob’s Favorite Sing Along Songs** (McGrath), 112, 205
Bond, Felicia, 176
Bonwill, Ann, 195, 201
**Boom! Boom! Boom!** (Swenson), 213, 217
**Boot & Shoe** (Frazee), 85
**Bouncy Blue** (Mr. Eric and Mr. Michael), 26
Bowen, Anne, 140
Bow-Wow Wiggle-Waggle (DePalma), 193
“Bring a Friend to School” (Reid), 141, 142–143
Bromley, Nick, 96–97
Brontorina (Howe), 23, 25–26, 27
Brown, Marc, 11, 159
Brown, Peter, 3–4, 120, 122, 123
**Brownie Groundhog and the Wintry Surprise** (Blackaby), 210
Bryant, Laura J., 50, 54–55, 149
Buchman, Rachel, 44
**Bug Patrol** (Mortensen), 160, 161
**Build, Dogs, Build** (Horvath), 85
**Bully** (Seeger), 104
**Bunnies on Ice** (Wright), 211
Bunting, Eve, 160, 162
Burningham, John, 67
Buzzdeo, Toni, 151, 156

**C**
Cabrera, Jane, 186, 192
**Calvin Can’t Fly** (Berne), 20–21
**Can I Bring Woolly to the Library, Ms. Reeder?** (Grambling), 178–179
Carpenter, Nancy, 75, 160, 162
Carter, Abby, 140
Casanova, Mary, 132, 136, 204, 208, 212
Caterina and the Perfect Party (Kono), 122–123
Cecil, Randy, 23, 25–26
Chapman, Jane, 58, 63–64, 119, 175, 213, 214
Cheer Up, Mouse! (Henry), 120
**The Chicken Problem** (Oxley), 104
**Chicks Run Wild** (Bardhan-Quallen), 219
**Children Make Terrible Pets** (Brown), 120
Christelow, Eileen, 13, 17
Cinderelephant (Dodd), 202
City Dog, Country Frog (Willems), 122, 125
Clark, Leslie Ann, 77–78
Cleary, Mark, 58, 64
Cock-a-Doodle Dance! (Tricarico), 29–30
Cohen, Laurie, 56
Cohenour, Dana, 51
Cole, Henry, 39, 49
**Construction Kitties** (Sturges), 160–161
Conway, David, 195–196
Cookie the Walker (Monroe), 30
Cornelison, Sue, 150
Cornell, Kevin, 32–33
Count the Monkeys (Barnett), 32–33
“A Cow Is Driving a Car” (Reid), 186, 187–189
**The Cow Loves Cookies** (Wilson), 168, 169–170
**The Croakly Pokey!** (Long), 106, 111
**The Crocodile and the Scorpion** (Emberley), 66

D
Daly, Cathleen, 140
**Dana’s Best Sing & Play-A-Long Tunes** (Cohenour), 51
“Dance Like Snowflakes,” 204, 208
Davis, Jack E., 68, 69–70
Dean, James, 150
Deas, Rich, 29–30
**Deer Dancer** (Ray), 120
DePalma, Mary Newell, 193
Desmond, Jenni, 49
**Diary of a Wombat** (French), 74–75
“Dig-a-Dig-a-Dig-a-Dig-a” (Reid), 72
Digger Dog (Bee), 68, 71
Ding Dong! Gorilla! (Robinson), 96, 97–98
DiPucchio, Kelly, 139
Dodd, Emma, 202
**Dog Loves Books** (Yates), 21
“Dogs and Cats and Guinea Pigs” (Reid), 135–136
Dominguez, Angela, 203
Doodler, Todd H., 178, 181
Down by the Barn (Hillenbrand), 151, 152
Downing, Johnette, 50, 55–56
Dronzek, Laura, 219
Duck, Duck, Moose! (Bardhan-Quallen), 122, 129
Duck to the Rescue (Himmelman), 158
The Duckling Gets a Cookie!? (Willems), 175
Dunrea, Olivier, 204, 205–206
Durango, Julia, 166

E
Early Childhood Classics (Palmer), 166, 192
Egielski, Richard, 50–51
Ehler, Lois, 50, 54
Ely, Susan Middleton, 176–177
Emberley, Ed, 56, 66
Emberley, Rebecca, 56, 66
Ercolini, David, 50, 52–53
Ernest, the Moose Who Doesn’t Fit (Rayner), 3, 8
Ernst, Lisa Campbell, 168–169
Everyone Needs a Friend (Kolanovic), 129–130
Everyone Sleeps (Hall), 219

F
Falcon (Jessell), 85
Fancher, Lou, 113
“The Farm Animals Introduce Themselves” (Reid), 151, 153–154
Fish Had a Wish (Garland), 106, 110
“Five Little Alligators” (Reid), 98–99
“Five Little Fish Heading to School” (Reid), 145–146
“Five Little Hungry Birds” (Reid), 168, 171–172
“Five Little Monkeys Jumping Oh-So High” (Reid), 80–82
Five Little Monkeys Reading in Bed (Christelow), 13, 17
“Five Little Squirrels,” 118
“Five Tall Giraffes” (Hannafin and Woody), 58, 64–65
“Flap Your Wings” (Reid), 77, 83–84
The Flea (Cohen), 56
Fleming, Candace, 68, 72–73, 168, 171
Fleming, Denise, 68–69
Flight School (Judge), 85
Flip & Fin (Gill), 141, 145

Flora and the Flamingo (Idle), 23, 27–28
Flory, Neil, 58, 64
Fly Guy vs. the Flyswatter! (Arnold), 159
Fogliano, Julie, 74
Foley, Greg, 40, 41–42
Folgueira, Rodrigo, 106, 108
Foreman, Michael, 130
Forsythe, Matthew, 21
Found (Yoon), 87, 92, 94
Fox, Mem, 38–39
Frazier, Marla, 132, 135
French, Jackie, 74–75
Friends (Foreman), 130
Froodle (Portis), 186, 189

G
Garland, Michael, 106, 110
Gershator, Phillis, 40, 43, 114, 119
Gibson, Ginger Fogle-song, 186, 191
Gilbert Goldfish Wants a Pet (DiPucchio), 139
Gill, Timothy, 141, 145
The Gingerbread Girl Goes Animal Crackers (Ernst), 168–169
Go-Go Gorillas (Durango), 166
Goldie and the Three Hares (Palatini), 68, 69–70
“Goldilocks” (Reid), 200–201
Goldilocks and Just One Bear (Hodgkinson), 202
Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs (Willems), 195, 199
Good News, Bad News (Mack), 122, 126
Gorbachev, Valeri, 141, 143–144
Gore, Leonid, 22, 168, 174
Gorilla, Billy, 136
Grambling, Lois G., 178–179
Gravett, Emily, 13, 18, 48, 105
“Great Big Buffalo,” 141, 147–149
Great Big Hits (Sharon, Lois, and Bram), 153
The Great Fairy Tale Disaster (Conway), 195–196
Griswell, Kim T., 141, 143–144
Grumpy Goat (Helquist), 130
Guerlais, Gerald, 203
“Guess My Friend” (Reid), 125–126

H
Hall, Marcellus, 168, 169–170, 219
Hall, Michael, 40, 46–47
Halpern, Shari, 160–161
Hamburg, Jennifer, 12
*Hands Off My Honey!* (Chapman), 175
Hannafin, Colleen, 58, 64–65
Harper, Charise Mericle, 40–41
*Harry Goes to Dog School* (Menchin), 149
Haughton, Chris, 105
“Have You Seen My Worm” (Reid), 92–93
*Hedgehog’s Magic Tricks* (Paul), 30
*Hello Everybody* (Buchman), 44
Helquist, Brett, 130
Henkes, Kevin, 11
Henry, Jed, 120
*Hey, Rabbit!* (Ruzzier), 10
“Hey! Hey! Fly Guy!” (Reid), 164–165
“Hickory, Dickory, Dock, the Wolf Ran Up the Clock” (Reid), 195, 197
“Hide and Seek” (Reid), 34
*Hide & Seek* (Na), 32, 33–34
*Hiding Phil* (Barclay), 66
Hillenbrand, Will, 151, 152
Himmelman, John, 158
Hindley, Kate, 184
Hines, Anna Grossnickle, 178, 183
*Hippospotamus* (Willis), 66
Hodgkinson, Leigh, 202
Honestly, Red Riding Hood Was Rotten! (Shaskan), 203
Horáček, Petr, 95
Horvath, James, 85
*Hot Rod Hamster* (Lord), 167
*The House of 12 Bunnies* (Stills and Stills-Blott), 38
*How to Be a Cat* (McClure), 132, 137
*How to Teach a Slug to Read* (Pearson), 56
*How to Wash a Woolly Mammoth* (Robinson), 184
Howe, James, 23, 25–26
Hoyt, Ard, 132, 136, 204, 208, 212, 220
*Hugs from Pearl* (Schmid), 149
Huneck, Stephen, 86
“A Hungry Shark” (Reid), 168, 174–175
“I Know an Old Lady Who Had a Pet Fly” (Reid), 138–139
“I Spy Nature Trail,” 119
“I Spy Way Up High” (Reid), 79–80
*I Want My Hat Back* (Klassen), 94
Ichikawa, Satomi, 167
Idle, Molly, 23, 27–28
“If a Dinosaur Says ‘Roar’” (Reid), 178, 181–182
*If All the Animals Came Inside* (Pinder), 11
*If I Had a Pony* (Barchas), 44
*If I Had a Raptor* (O’Connor), 184
*If It’s Snowing and You Know It, Clap Your Paws!* (Norman), 204–205
“If Pigs Went to Pig School” (Reid), 141, 144–145
*If You Give a Dog a Donut* (Numeroff), 176
“I’m a Frog!” (Willems), 3, 4–5
“I’m a Shark” (Shea), 112
“I’m Big!” (McMullan), 178, 180
“I’m Not Reading!” (Allen), 21
“I’m Not Sleepy!” (Chapman), 213, 214
*Is Your Buffalo Ready for Kindergarten?* (Vernick and Jennewein), 141, 147
*It Is Night* (Rowand), 219
*It’s a Little Book* (Smith), 13, 19–20
“It’s a Tiger!” (LaRochelle), 3, 6
“It’s an Orange Aardvark” (Hall), 40, 46–47
*Itsy Bitsy Spider* (Egielski), 50–51

*J*
Jam & Honey (Morales), 50, 54–55
Jangles: A Big Fish Story (Shannon), 58, 61–63
“Jangles the Fish” (Reid), 62–63
Jenkins, Ward, 219
Jennewein, Daniel, 31, 141, 147
Jessell, Tim, 85
Johansson, Cecilia, 68, 71
Johnson, Steve, 113
Jones, Noah Z., 122, 129
Judge, Lita, 85, 114–115, 204, 209

*K*
Kasza, Keiko, 105
Kate & Pippin (Springett), 130–131
Kennedy, Anne, 151–152
Kennedy, Doug, 185
Kimmelman, Leslie, 195, 197
Kimura, Ken, 32, 35
King, Stephen Michael, 140
King of the Zoo (Perl), 151, 154
Kirk, Daniel, 39
Kitty Cat, Kitty Cat, Are You Going to School? (Martin and Sampson), 149
Klassen, Jon, 94, 106, 109
Klausmeier, Jesse, 13–14
Knudsen, Michelle, 166
Kolanovic, Dubravka, 129–130
Kono, Erin Eitter, 122–123
Kroll, Virginia, 186, 189–190

L
Lambert, Mary, 136
LaReau, Kara, 121
LaRochelle, David, 3, 6, 186–187
Larson, Deborah Jo, 113
Lee, Suzy, 13–14
Lehrhaupl, Adam, 21
LePlatt, Betsy, 186, 190
Lester, Mike, 57
Let’s Count Goats! (Fox), 38–39
Let’s Dance, Grandma! (McMullen), 30–31
Let’s Have a Tree Party (Martin), 86
Let’s Sing a Lullaby with the Brave Cowboy (Thomas), 213, 218
Lewin, Betsy, 193
Lewis, Kevin, 50, 52–53
“A Little Bear Cub Climbed Up a Tall Tree” (Reid), 37–38
Little Mouse (Murray), 11
Little Mouse’s Big Secret (Battut), 176
“Little Skunk’s Hole,” 70–71
Little White Rabbit (Henkes), 11
Litwin, Eric, 150
Lobel, Anita, 38, 87, 88
Logue, Mary, 213, 215–216
Long, Ethan, 77, 83, 106, 111, 193
Long, Loren, 87–88
Lord, Cynthia, 167
Lord, Leonie, 96, 97–98
Lost Cat (Mader), 94
Lucky Ducklings (Moore), 75

M
Mack, Jeff, 96, 103, 112, 122, 126
Mader, C. Roger, 94
Magoon, Scott, 121, 166
Manders, John, 86
Mante, Ben, 211
Marcus, Kimberly, 57
Maria Had a Little Llama (Dominguez), 203
Marino, Gianna, 77, 80
Mario Makes a Move (McElmurry), 114, 117
Martin, Bill Jr., 50, 54, 149
Martin, David, 86
“Mary Wore Her Red Dress” (Reid), 42–43
Mayer, Mercer, 185
McClure, Nikki, 132, 137
McCue, Lisa, 49
McDonald, Jill, 114, 119
McElmurry, Jill, 114, 117
McGrath, Bob, 112, 205
McMullen, Jim, 178, 180
McMullen, Kate, 178, 180
McMullen, Nigel, 30–31
Me Want Pet! (Sauer), 184
Meadows, Michelle, 220
Menchin, Scott, 149
Messner, Kate, 75
Middleton, Julie, 158
Millie and the Big Rescue (Steffensmeier), 77, 82
Miss Fox’s Class Earns a Field Trip (Spinelli), 151–152
Monkey Sing, Monkey Do (Lambert), 136
“Monkeys Reading in Bed” (Reid), 13, 18
Monroe, Chris, 30
Moo (LaRochelle), 186–187
Moo, Moo, Brown Cow, Have You Any Milk? (Gershator), 40, 43
Moore, Eva, 75
A Moose That Says Moo (Hamburg), 12
Morales, Melita, 50, 54–55
Morgan, Pierr, 76
Mortensen, Denise Dowling, 160–161
Mosier, Lisa, 211
Mosquito (Kroll), 186, 189–190
“The Mosquito Wave” (Reid), 186, 189–190
Mr. Duck Means Business (Sauer), 112
Mr. Eric and Mr. Michael, 26
Mr. Prickles (LaReau), 121
Munsinger, Lynn, 213–214
Murakami, Yasunari, 32, 35
Murga, Bethanie Deeney, 57
Rankin, Laura, 186, 191
Rawr! (Doodler), 178, 181
Ray, Mary Lyn, 120
Rayner, Catherine, 3, 8, 113
"Read a Book! Read a Book!" (Reid), 13, 14–16
Red Cat Blue Cat (Desmond), 49
Red Hat (Judge), 114–115
Red Sled (Judge), 204, 209
Reid, Rob
chants by, 14–16, 181–182, 189–190
creative dramatics by, 48, 144–145
fingerplays by, 18, 34, 51–52, 59–60,
  62–63, 80–82, 90–91, 98–99, 142–143,
  145–146, 197, 198–199, 201–202
imagination exercises by, 35–36, 174–175
movement activities by, 5–6, 25, 28–29,
  37–38, 53, 72, 73–74, 83–84, 92–93,
  100–102, 107–108, 109, 110–111,
  124–125, 127–129, 171–172, 179,
songs by, 7–10, 26–27, 42–43, 44–46, 89,
  116–117, 134–136, 138–139, 156–157,
  164–165
sound effects rhymes by, 20, 79–80,
  103–104, 153–154, 155, 162, 163, 170,
  187–189, 210, 215, 216
Reynolds, Adrian, 140
Ribbit! (Folgueira), 106, 108
Rickerty, Simon, 195, 201
Ride, Fly Guy, Ride! (Arnold), 160, 164
Rise and Shine (Raffi), 7, 166, 192
Robinson, Michelle, 96, 97–98, 184
Rockin’ the Schoolhouse (Gorilla), 136
Rohmann, Eric, 68, 72–73
Ross, Tony, 58, 61, 66
Roth, Kevin, 55, 138
Rowand, Phyllis, 219
Rufus Goes to School (Griswell), 141, 143–144
Ruzzier, Sergio, 10

S
Sally’s Great Balloon Adventure (Huneck), 86
Sampson, Michael, 149
Santat, Dan, 203
Sauer, Tammi, 112, 184
“The Sauropod” (Reid), 178, 180–181
Schaefer, Carole Lexa, 76
Scheffler, Axel, 211
Schmid, Paul, 132–133, 141–143, 149
Schwartz, Corey Rosen, 203
Scooter in the Outside (Bowen), 140
Scratch-Scratch a Perfect Match (Marcus), 57
Seeger, Laura Vaccaro, 104
Segovia, Carmen, 210
Seven Hungry Babies (Fleming), 168, 171
Shannon, David, 58, 61–63
Sharon, Lois, and Bram, 153
Shaskan, Stephen, 178, 182
Shaskan, Trisha Speed, 203
Shea, Bob, 112, 139, 184
The Short Giraffe (Flory), 58, 64
Siegel, Randy, 139
Sierra, Judy, 159
Silly Goose’s Big Story (Kasza), 105
Singable Songs for the Very Young (Raffi), 43
“Skunk” (Wheeler), 132, 133
Sleep Like a Tiger (Logue), 213, 215–216
Slonim, David, 56
“The Slow Motion Talent Show” (Reid), 23, 25
Small, David, 151, 156
Smith, Lane, 13, 19
Snippet the Early Riser (Murguia), 57
Solomon Crocodile (Rayner), 113
Some Cat! (Casanova), 132, 136
Sparky! (Offill), 23, 24–25
“Spider Here, Spider There” (Reid), 51–52
Spinelli, Eileen, 151–152
Springett, Isobel, 130–131
Springett, Martin, 130–131
Srinivasan, Divya, 113
Stead, Erin E., 74, 114, 115–116
Stead, Philip C., 114, 115–116
Steffensmeier, Alexander, 77, 82
Stein, David Ezra, 77, 78–79
Stills, Caroline, 38
Stills-Blott, Sarcia, 38
Stower, Adam, 160, 165
Stringer, Lauren, 120
Sturges, Judy Sue Goodwin, 160–161
Swenson, Jamie A., 213, 217

T
“The Talent Show ABC” (Reid), 28–29
Tallman, Susie, 51, 59, 116, 134, 156, 200
Tankard, Jeremy, 3, 6
Taylor, Eleanor, 166
Taylor, Thomas, 140
Teach Your Buffalo to Play Drums (Vernick), 31
Ten Little Caterpillars (Martin), 50, 54
Ten Things I Love about You (Kirk), 39
Terry, Will, 195, 197
That Is NOT a Good Idea! (Willems), 99–100
There Was an Old Lady Who Swallowed Some Bug (Downing), 50, 55–56
“This Funny Bug” (Reid), 53
This Is Not My Hat (Klassen), 106, 109
Thomas, Jan, 38–39, 213, 218
The Three Bully Goats (Kimmelman), 195, 197
“Three Little Billy Goats Trip Trap Trip” (Reid), 198–199
“The Three Little Kittens Weren’t the Only Ones to Lose Things” (Reid), 90–91
The Three Ninja Pigs (Schwartz), 203
The Three Triceratops Tuff (Shaskan), 178, 182
Thumpy Feet (Lewin), 193
“Tiny Little Frogs,” 3, 5–6
Tiptoe Joe (Gibson), 186, 191
Too Many Dinosaurs (Mayer), 185
Too Tall Houses (Marino), 77, 80
Travel Song Sing-Along (Roth), 55, 138
Tricarico, Christine, 29–30
“The Triceratops” (Reid), 178, 183
Truesdell, Sue, 12
Tug-of-War (Burningham), 67

U
The Ugly Duckling Dinosaur (Bardoe), 185
Underground (Fleming), 68–69
Up, Tall and High! (Long), 77, 83
Urbanovic, Jackie, 151, 154, 220
“Use, Use, Use Your Mind” (Reid), 3, 7–10
Utterly Otterly Night (Casanova), 212

V
Vernick, Audrey, 31, 141, 147
Vosough, Gene, 50–51

W
Walker, David, 176, 213, 217
Warnes, Tim, 175
Warning: Do Not Open This Book! (Lehrhaupt), 21
“The Watermelon,” 168, 173
The Watermelon Seed (Pizzoli), 168, 173
We Are in a Book! (Willems), 13, 16–17
Wee Sing and Pretend (Beall and Nipp), 7
Wee Sing Animals, Animals, Animals (Beall and Nipp), 43, 70, 89, 134, 156
Wee Sing Children’s Songs (Beall and Nipp), 153
Wee Sing Nursery Rhymes (Beall and Nipp), 59, 200
Wee Sing Silly Songs (Beall and Nipp), 26, 70
“We’re Going to Explore a Cave” (Reid), 73–74
“We’re Taking a Walk in the Woods” (Reid), 151, 156–157
Whaddaya Think of That (Berkner), 44
“What Did I See at the Pond?” (Reid), 110–111
Whatley, Bruce, 74–75
What’s Your Sound, Hound the Hound? (Willems), 194
Wheeler, Lisa, 132, 133, 137
The Wheels on the Bus (Cabrera), 186, 192
The Wheels on the Bus (Willis), 160, 165
“When Bears Wake Up” (Reid), 213, 217–218
“While We Sleep” (Reid), 213, 215
“Who Eats Corn?” (Reid), 168, 170
Who’s in the Forest? (Gershator), 114, 119
Who’s There? (Schaefer), 76
Wiesner, David, 48
Wild about You! (Sierra), 159
Willems, Mo, 4–5, 16, 58–59, 99–100, 106–107, 125, 175, 194, 199
Williamson, Melanie, 195–196
Willis, Jeanne, 58, 61, 66, 160, 165
Wilson, Karma, 119–120, 168, 169–170
Wilson, Marsha, 39
“Winter Noises” (Reid), 204, 210
Wohnoutka, Mike, 186–187
Wolf Won’t Bite! (Gravett), 105
Wolff, Ashley, 32, 36–37, 40, 47
The Wonderful Book (Gore), 22
Woodruff, Liza, 204–205
Woods, Noah, 95
Woody, B. Squat, 58, 64–65
“The Woolly Mammoth” (Reid), 178, 179
Worms for Lunch? (Gore), 168, 174
Wright, Johanna, 96, 100, 211
Y
Yates, Louise, 21
Yelchin, Eugene, 168, 171
Yoo, Taeeun, 3, 10
Yoon, Salina, 87, 92, 94, 131
You Are a Lion! (Yoo), 3, 10
You Will Be My Friend! (Brown), 122, 123
You’re Wearing That to School? (Plourde), 150

Z
Z Is for Moose (Bingham), 23–24
Zagarenski, Pamela, 213, 215–216
Zelinsky, Paul O., 23–24
Ziefert, Harriet, 94, 95
“The Zoo Animals Introduce Themselves” (Reid), 151, 155