Picture Book Bibliography

Betsy Damon

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* [Press Here](#_top) by Herve Tullet
  + Ages 2-up. Great book to demonstrate the importance of consistency and predictability. Young kids think there is magic going on as you “press here” or “blow” and the next page “shows” the effect of your actions. – Betsy Damon.
  + "Without so much as a single tab to pull or flap to turn, this might be the most interactive picture book of the year."—*Booklist*
  + Starred Review. Tullet's brilliant creation proves that books need not lose out to electronic wizardry; his colorful dots perform every bit as engagingly as any on the screen of an iPad. "Ready?" the voiceover-style narration asks on the first page; it shows a yellow dot on a plain white background. "Press here and turn the page," it instructs. When the page is turned, there's a second yellow dot beside the first one. "Great!" it says. "Now press the yellow dot again." A third yellow dot appears beside the first two. "Perfect," the narrator continues. "Rub the dot on the left... gently." On the next page, voila!—that dot is now red. "Well done!" the book congratulates. The fun continues as the dots proliferate, travel around the page, grow and shrink in response to commands to clap, shake, or tilt the book, etc. The joy is in the tacit agreement between artist and reader that what's happening is magic. Shh! Don't tell. All ages. (Apr.) – *Publishers Weekly*. (c) Copyright PWxyz, LLC. All rights reserved.

* [The Book with No Pictures](#_top) by B.J. Novak
  + Ages 5-8. This book makes reading fun as Novak shares the unwritten rule of reading aloud: “you have to read the words exactly as they are written no matter what!” and proceeds to have the reader say some very off the wall, comical phrases like “BooBoo Butt” – Betsy Damon.
  + The actor (and writer, producer, and director) has penned his first picture book, but can it be called a picture book when there are no pictures? Entering the field of unique interactive books begging to be opened, including Hervé Tullet's Press Here (Chronicle, 2011) and Adam Lehrhaupt's Warning: Do Not Open This Book! (S. & S., 2013), this title will instantly intrigue children. Upon opening the book, readers are drawn in ("Here is how books work: everything the words say, the person reading the book has to say. No matter what."). What follows is an uproariously raucous time, with readers being forced to utter nonsense words ("blork," "bluurf") and phrases that will have young listeners in stitches ("And my head is made of blueberry pizza."). Admittedly, there are no illustrations, but Novak has employed the use of various sizes of black typeface with expansive white space and color to highlight some of the text. This book is sure to be a crowd-pleaser, and it's perfect for one-on-one sharing with a parent or caregiver. Expect requests for repeated readings.—Michele Shaw, Quail Run Elementary School, San Ramon, CA – *School Library Journal*, 09/01/2014
  + This book may not have pictures, but it's sure to inspire lots of conversations—and laughs. Television writer, actor and comedian Novak delivers a rare find, indeed: a very good celebrity picture book. It doesn't even seem fair to call it such, since it has nothing to do with his Emmy Award-winning writing for The Office or the fame his broader career has afforded him. The jacket flap even eschews a glossy photo, instead saying "B.J. has brown hair and blue eyes," in order to keep with the book's central conceit. What this book does have is text, and it's presented through artful typography that visually conveys its changing tone to guide oral readings. Furthermore, the text implies (or rather, demands) a shared reading transaction, in which an adult is compelled to read the text aloud, no matter how "COMPLETELY RIDICULOUS" it is. Employing direct address, it pleads with the implied child listener to allow him or her to stop reading. Nonsense words, silly words to be sung and even a smattering of potty talk for good measure all coalesce in riotous read-aloud fare. Although the closing pages beg the implied child reader to "please please please please / please / choose a book with pictures" for subsequent reading, it's likely that this request will be ignored. A riotously fresh take on breaking the fourth wall. (Picture book. 3-8) – *Kirkus Reviews*, 07/16/2014

* [The Very Inappropriate Word](#_top) by Jim Tobin
  + Ages 5-8. While never actually sharing the very inappropriate word with the audience, Tobin provides another take on how to stop kids from saying that word (or any inappropriate word they may be obsessed with) and gets kids to think about why the teacher in the book responded in the manner she did while most adults will provide punishment as a method to deter inappropriate word use. – Betsy Damon.
  + Michael is a word hound. He sees and hears words that he likes and collects them—literally—in a box under his bed. As illustrated by Coverly, these dialog bubbles are adorned with legs (scram), stretched wide (elastic), broken to pieces (smithereens), and more. One day on the school bus, Michael hears a large, hairy, green word—something akin to “@#\*!” He is told it’s “inappropriate,” but “there is also something about it that he kind of likes.” Tobin’s depiction of the bad word literally being passed around from student to student is an inspired idea, and it does look rather fun ejecting that big green monstrosity out into the world. Michael gets caught, of course, but his clever teacher sics him on the school library in search of new spelling words, and once he has collected two wagon loads of cool new ones—nimbus, vibrato, putrid, dragster, aerodynamic—he loses track of good old @#\*! Until, well, someone else digs it up. Exaggerated cartoony fun on a mostly untouched topic—it’s pretty @#\*! good. Grades K-2. --Daniel Kraus – *Booklist*
  + Michael collects words. He enjoys finding new ones on signs, on TV, at baseball practice, and at school. The humorous ink and watercolor cartoon illustrations represent the words graphically-"sudsy" appears in a soap bubble, "slugger" on a baseball, etc., and help to illuminate their meanings. Michael happily collects the words until the day he hears a new one on the school bus. It is depicted as an angry-looking scribbled mess with symbols instead of letters. Michael picks up the word to add it to his collection. His older sister, however, says, "Michael! That is a very inappropriate word!" Unsure, he asks his friend what "inappropriate" means. When "Bad!" is the answer, Michael hides the word in his pocket. Suddenly aware, he hears it in more places. He cannot resist showing it to his friends at school. His kind teacher redirects him to the library and gives him the job of finding different new words. Using stacks of books with well-known titles, Michael happily gathers fascinating words such as "vibrato," "shenanigans," and "nimbus." His collection grows so large, he eventually loses track of the very inappropriate term. The only problem with this book will be in trying to keep children from sharing their own inappropriate words. For a fun storytime, pair this title with Audrey Wood's Elbert's Bad Word (Harcourt, 1988).-Lucinda Snyder Whitehurst, St. Christopher's School, Richmond, VAα(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. – *School Library Journal*

* [Baby Bear Counts One](#_top) by Ashley Wolff
  + Ages 2-6. Listeners learn about counting and about how bears and other creatures that share a habitat with the bears prepare for winter. – Betsy Damon.
  + First seen in Baby Bear Sees Blue (S & S, 2012), the curious cub returns in this fall-themed counting book. Mama Bear gently answers Baby Bear's questions about who is making a noise as he counts different animals gathering food, migrating, or dashing through the woods and fields in preparation for winter. Each spread includes onomatopoeic words to suggest the animal to both children and the bear. Wolff's stunning linoleum block and watercolor illustrations are suffused with autumn light and color, and the creatures appear to swim, fly, and jump off the pages. Extreme close-ups are juxtaposed with larger framing illustrations that celebrate the season, the creatures portrayed, and the playful bear. Successful as a counting book, an autumnal celebration, and a cozy book to share either one-on-one or in a group, this title will be warmly welcomed in all libraries.–Marge Loch-Wouters, La Crosse Public Library, WIα(c) Copyright 2013. Library Journals LLC, a wholly owned subsidiary of Media Source, Inc. No redistribution permitted. – *School Library Journal*.
  + This follow-up to Baby Bear Sees Blue (2012) finds Mama and her cub on the cusp of winter. Baby Bear is curious about the sounds he hears around him, asking Mama questions like “Mama, who woke me?” After each inquiry, a page turn reveals the source of the ruckus: woodland folk who are busy preparing for the upcoming season. A woodpecker hunts a beetle (1 woodpecker, Baby Bear counts), 2 squirrels gather nuts, 3 beavers (“Whap! Whap! Whap!”) find sticks, and so on. When Baby Bear gets to 10, it’s snowflakes he is counting, and that means it’s time for Mama and baby to hibernate. As with the first book, Wolff gently introduces the natural world and seasons to toddlers, who will find plenty to explore in the double-page spreads, as frogs leap into ponds, and birds perch in tree branches. The linoleum block illustrations, hand colored with watercolor, present fall in all its spectacular glory, and the warmth between Mama and her child shines through. Ideal for both one-on-one and group sharing. Preschool-Kindergarten. --Ann Kelley – *Booklist*.
* [Henry Hikes to Fitchburg](#_top) by D.B. Johnson
  + Ages 4-8. This text provides young readers/listeners with access to Henry David Thoreau’s ideas from one passage of Walden and exposes kids to the truth about economy – money takes work which takes time – and opens the debate of whether time could be spent in more fulfilling ways than earning money. – Betsy Damon.
  + "This splendid book works on several levels. Johnson’s adaptation of a paragraph taken from Thoreau’s Walden illuminates the contrast between materialistic and naturalistic view of life without ranting or preaching. . . . [The illustrations] demonstrate Johnson’s virtuosic control of his craft" —Booklist, starred review Booklist, ALA, Starred Review
  + A nicely realized retelling of a short passage from Henry Thoreau's Walden. Henry and his friend decide to go to Fitchburg, a town 30 miles away. "I'll walk," says Henry, but his friend decides to work for the money for a train ticket and see who gets there first. Each subsequent spread marks their progress: "Henry's friend cleaned out Mrs. Thoreau's chicken house. 10 cents./Henry crossed a swamp and found a bird's nest in the grass. 12 miles to Fitchburg." The friend arrives first, barely. "'The train was faster,' he said." "I know," Henry smiled, "I stopped for blackberries." Johnson makes this philosophical musing accessible to children, who will recognize a structural parallel to "The Tortoise and the Hare." The author quotes Thoreau's original anecdote in his endnote. The two friends are depicted as 19th-century bears in the geometric, warm-toned, pencil-and-paint illustrations. Each picture is solidly composed, and although the perspectives may seem somewhat stiff and distracting up close, they work remarkably better from a short distance. The layout and steady pace, as well, make this suitable for storytime. The somewhat open-ended resolution could allow for classroom debate, and is also simply a good ending to a good story. *Nina Lindsay, Oakland Public Library, CA*Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc. – *School Library Journal*.
* [All the Places to Love](#_top) by Patricia MacLachlan
  + Ages 4-8. Watch as Eli comes to learn about all the places in the valley that his family loves, develops his own attachment to a special place, and shares everything he’s learned with his new baby sister. – Betsy Damon.
  + An earnest, tender family portrait that parents will want to share with their children, especially when a new baby is due. MacLachlan conjures up an idyllic rural backdrop and introduces the members of a close-knit, extended family whose devotion to one another is part and parcel of their love for the rolling hills and woods that encircle them. Within this sanctuary, baby Eli is born, grows into childhood, and learns to cherish the people and places around him, eventually passing on what he has discovered to his little sister, Sylvie: "All the places to love are here . . . no matter where you may live." MacLachlan's lyrical narrative fixes the setting, lovely and quiet, while it tugs at the heartstrings. Wimmer's radiant, full-page paintings, a few so realistically detailed they look like color photographs, take us to the stream, across the fields, and into the barn, where Eli, with his grandfather, awaits the birth of baby Sylvie. But it's a flawless world that's pictured--not a real one. There's not a speck of dirt on Eli's nose, or a thunderstorm to break the peace. Still, both text and art will captivate parents longing for an affirmation of tradition and stability, and the heartwarming story will enchant children and grownups who understand the world as a safe and beautiful haven, filled with affection. For them, this loving book will be something to treasure. *Stephanie Zvirin – Booklist.*
  + An author whose powerful portrayals of families are often entwined with love for a home place weaves these familiar strands into a lyrical celebration of bonding with both. Beginning when his grandmother wraps him, at birth, ``in a blanket made from the wool of her sheep,'' Eli describes his grandparents' and parents' joy in him and his in their farm, where all their names are carved on a barn rafter. As Eli grows, he explores the countryside; the book ends as he plans to share favorite places with a new baby sister. The quiet narrative is so intensely felt that it commands attention. Wimmer, who illustrated Burleigh's Flight (1991), depicts the traditional farm in a romantically realistic style, catching the exhilaration of belonging in an idyllic landscape or the exquisitely observed details of a particular turtle, or of a well-loved face, with equal skill. A book that courts sentimentality, but is so well crafted and essentially honest that it escapes it. (Picture book. 4-8) -- *Copyright ©1994, Kirkus Associates, LP. All rights reserved. – Kirkus Review.*
* [One](#_top) by Kathryn Otoshi
  + Ages 4-up. Kids can learn about how to deal with bullying while having fun with colors and numbers. “Counting” is more than just 1,2,3! – Betsy Damon.
  + This is a deceptively simple color and counting book that turns into a lesson on bullying. Whenever they meet, Blue is picked on by Red: "Red is HOT. Blue is NOT." The other colors like Blue but are intimidated by the bluster so they say nothing, and soon Red is bossing everyone around. But then One comes. It is funny and brave and confronts Red: "If someone is mean and picks on me, I, for One, stand up and say, No." All the other colors follow One's lead and become numbers too. Yellow is two, Green, three, etc. Red begins to feel left out and tries to bully Blue, but Blue ignores him and changes to Six: "Red can be really HOT,' he says, but Blue can be super COOL.'" The rest of the numbers stick up for Blue, but offer Red the opportunity to join in the counting, and all ends well. The book is well designed with bright colored circles and numbers on stark white pages accompanied by black print. The text is very simple but meaningful, and the moral is subtly told. Red is not ostracized but included in the game, and the essential point of one person making a difference is emphasized by the ending: "Sometimes it just takes One." This is an offering with great potential for use with the very young in a variety of ways.—*Judith Constantinides, formerly at East Baton Rouge Parish Main Library, LA*   
    Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. – *School Library Journal*.
  + \*Starred Review\* There are many stories about bullies, but few have looked at the subject in such an attractive, original way. Using round splashes of watercolors as their personas, Otoshi introduces a group of colors. Quiet Blue likes looking at the sky. The other colors have their own characteristics: Orange is outgoing; Green is bright; Purple is regal. Red, though, is a hothead and likes to tease: “Red is hot. Blue is not.” Blue feels bad, and though the other colors comfort him, they’re afraid of Red. In a dramatic and effective spread, Red, feeling mean, grows into a bigger, ever-angrier ball. Enter One. The sturdy numeral wins over the other colors with laughter, making Red even madder, but when he tries his bullying ways on One, One stands up to him. The other colors follow, turning Red into a small ball. He is rolling away when Blue gracefully offers him a chance to be counted. The use of colors and numbers gives the story a much-needed universality, and there is a visceral power in the “strength-in-numbers” gambit (although it should be noted that it can work for ill as well as good). Otoshi cleverly offers a way to talk to very young children about the subject of bullying, even as she helps put their imaginations to work on solutions. Preschool-Grade 1. --Ilene Cooper – *Booklist*.
* [Crow Call](#_top) by Lois Lowry
  + Ages 8-12. On an early November day on a back porch of a house in Maine, a scent triggered a memory of a day in 1946 or 1945 when Lois Lowry was exploring the relationship with her father who had been away at war for so long that he had become a stranger to her. Originally published as a magazine article for adults back in December of 1975, Lowry was contacted by a children’s book publisher who invited her to submit a novel for children. Thirty-five books later, in 2007-8, Lowry was contacted by a children’s book editor after hearing her speak about that story and was asked if it could be turned into a children’s picture book. This book shares a day of reconnecting between a young girl and her military father over an experience of hunting that increases the discomfort for the young girl as her father becomes “Daddy” again while, anxiously, she helps with the hunt. – Betsy Damon.
  + Starred Review. Kindergarten-Grade 4—Based on the reminiscence of a day in 1945, Lowry's nostalgic story has appeal that will resonate with 21st-century children. Lizzie's father has just returned from serving in World War II and she's a bit shy even though she's excited about spending the day with him. They are going to hunt crows that are eating the farmers' crops. The eight-year-old is warmly dressed in a man's plaid wool shirt that she had admired in a store window and her father bought for her even though it comes down to her knees. After an early diner breakfast of her favorite cherry pie, they head toward the woods. Being in charge of the crow call, a whistle intended to lure prey to the hunter, Lizzie is impressed with the number of birds she entices, yet feels uncomfortable because they are about to be killed. However, her father never raises his rifle; he simply enjoys watching his enthralled daughter and the multitude of birds that have heeded her call. Remarkable, atmospheric illustrations reveal the subdued, cool autumn colors of crunchy dried grass, softly hued sky, and dark leafless trees. The memory of a treasured day spent with a special person will resonate with readers everywhere.—*Maryann H. Owen, Racine Public Library, WI* END – *School Library Journal*.
* [The Wolves are Back](#_top) by Jean Craighead George
  + Ages 5-up. Demonstrates the web of life concept as kids are shown how many other creatures are affected when one species, the wolf, is removed for the area and then returns. – Betsy Damon.
  + \*Starred Review\* In 1995, wolves were reintroduced to Yellowstone Park—first time they had been part of the park’s ecosystem for many years. Although George follows one wolf’s growth from pup to adult, the emphasis here is not as much on the wolves and their habits, but on how their presence has changed the ecosystem and returned its natural balance. In just one example, the wolves drove the elk herds to seek refuge higher in the hills, causing the valley grasses to grow taller, allowing for the return of the Vesper sparrow, which uses the grasses for food and nests. George writes about each of the changes caused by the wolves’ return in simple, rhythmic, informative prose. Adding to the book’s appeal are Minor’s finely detailed illustrations, featuring spectacularly rendered animals in the foreground of the bold, western landscapes. Together the words and pictures make for a highly effective and enjoyable explanation of how the presence of one animal can profoundly affect an ecosystem. Match this with Dorothy Hinshaw Patent’s When the Wolves Returned (2008). Grades 3-5. --Todd Morning – *Booklist.*
  + "The wolves are back!" So begins this poignant and thought-provoking tale tracing the interconnectedness of nature and the far-reaching effects that occur when one aspect of a particular ecosystem is disrupted, in this case, the wolf population. By 1926, there were no more wolves in the 48 states—"rangers, hunters, and ranchers were told to shoot every wolf they saw. They did."—and the ecological balance was disrupted. Wolves were re-introduced to Yellowstone National Park in 1995, and as their numbers grew, balance returned. Moving deftly between the past and present, and set against the backdrop of Wendell Minor's wonderful panoramic paintings, Jean Craighead George's text (Dutton, 2008) beautifully demonstrates the effects of the presence and absence of wolves on the delicate ecosystem. "The vast elk herd had eaten the grasses the little bird needed for food and nesting material. When the wolves returned, they frightened the elk into the mountains. The grasses grew tall. The sparrows raised babies and sang. The wolves were back." Minor's engaging and lively reading is accompanied by excellent sound effects, including fluttering bird wings, songbirds, trampling bison, croaking frogs, and the stirring and plaintive howling of wolves. An excellent purchase for schools and libraries for units on wildlife protection and ecology—*Mary N. Oluonye, Shaker Heights Public Library, OH* – *School Library Journal*.
* [I Wanna Iguana](#_top) by Karen Kaufman Orloff
  + Ages 4-8. Through a series of persuasive notes, the main character advocates for himself with his mother in an attempt to convince her that he should be able to take his friend’s iguana when his friend moves away. – Betsy Damon.
  + This funny story is told through an amusing exchange of notes, as Alex tries to convince his seemingly unshakable mother that he should be allowed to adopt a friend's baby iguana ("If I don't take it, he goes to Stinky and Stinky's dog, Lurch, will eat it. You don't want that to happen, do you?"). The boy pulls out all the stops in his arguments: iguanas are quiet (so are tarantulas, Mom counters); the reptile could be kept on the dresser (they grow to over six feet, Mom replies); the iguana could be the brother he's always wanted (you already have a brother, Mom reminds him). Featuring his signature cartoon characters, Catrow's illustrations provide a hilarious extension of the text. Alex, with his unruly red cowlicks and kewpie-doll shape, is totally disarming, as is the iguana, which makes imaginative appearances strumming a guitar on a bike, sporting tiny swim trunks, and reading in bed. The tale is perfect for reader's-theater presentations and could also be used effectively as a writing prompt for older children. It will make even the most serious youngsters giggle.*–Lee Bock, Glenbrook Elementary School, Pulaski, WI* Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. – *School Library Journal*.
  + In an exchange of letters that are sure to bring smiles to both parents and kids, Alex tries to persuade his mother to allow him to keep his friend Mikey's baby iguana as a pet after Mikey moves. The arguments go back and forth. Alex extols its cuteness and promises to care for the iguana, while his mother counters with how the cuteness won't last as the iguana grows to six feet in length, impossible to keep in his room. She also reminds him of his previous carelessness with pets. All the exchanges ring true to the situation. Finally Alex accepts his mother's offer of a "trial basis" to see if he can keep the promises he has made. The bliss on his face as he finds the iguana in his room make it evident how happy he is that his persistence has been rewarded. Catrow clearly has fun depicting in watercolors with pencil the scenes illustrating Alex's current desires, like sharing his bath with the iguana, as well as the future realities, like what to do with the full-grown pet. His cartoon-like characters express their emotions with exaggerated gestures sure to set off giggles. And pear-shaped Alex with his soulful eyes and wispy hair would make a really huggable doll. 2004, GP Putnam's Sons, Ages 4 to 8. —Ken Marantz and Sylvia Marantz – *Children’s Literature*.
* [Two Cool Cows](#_top) by Toby Speed
  + Ages 3-up. A family favorite with fun sounds and cute story about two cool cows and the kids from the farm they live on. – Betsy Damon.
  + Those wanting to know why the cow jumped over the moon will find some tweakingly twisted answers in this nonsensical story. "Two cool, too cool" cows from the Huckabuck farm are looking for fresh grass, and they jump to the moon to find it. The moon is cool, too-with cows aplenty beating bongo drums and doing the bunny hop. But the two cool cows are wearing new "black button-back boots" belonging to the four Huckabuck kids, who call them home for milking time. The kids are pleased: Kate plays the fiddle, little Doug laughs and Daisy runs off with Spoon. Speed (Hattie Baked a Wedding Cake) gleefully and rhythmically subverts the nursery classic. And Root (Those Bottles!; Wan Hu Is in the Stars, reviewed below) plays along zestily, coloring the Huckabuck farm with quiet, pastel tints and the moon with rich, jazzy tones-some of which "return" with the cows. A rewarding romp. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. – *Publishers Weekly*.
  + Speed offers a lively twist on a familiar nursery rhyme. Seeking greener pastures and bovine camaraderie, two cows from the Huckabuck Farm don the four Huckabuck kids' new black boots and leap to the moon. At its best, the text sways and swings with the excitement of the animals' summer-night frolics. Unfortunately, the rhythm flags at points and sinks to the ordinary. The double-page paintings, however, never let readers down. The cool cows with their sunglasses and button-back boots jump and prance, run and dance, and never lose an ounce of energy. Practice reading this aloud to maximize the rhythm, and you'll be able to give young listeners a whole new perspective on the expeditions of cows that jump over (or to) the moon.?Kathy Piehl, Mankato State University, MN. Copyright 1995 Reed Business Information, Inc. – *School Library Journal*.