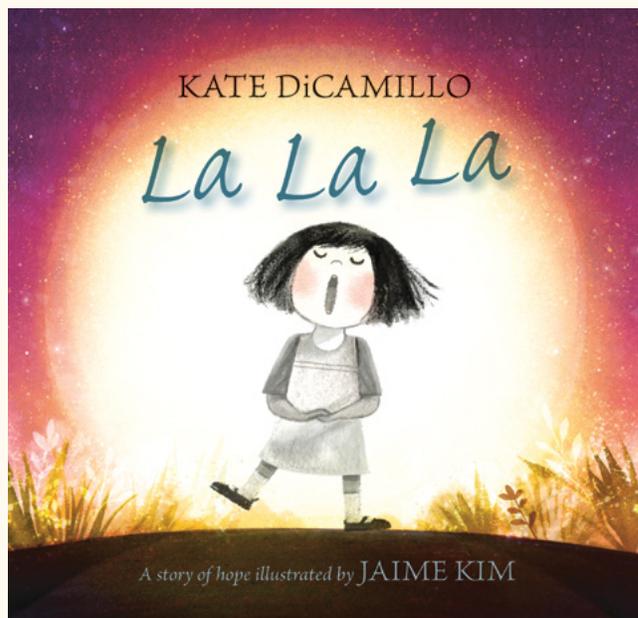


# Using Wordless Picture Books in the Classroom

Featuring *La La La: A Story of Hope*  
by KATE DiCAMILLO illustrated by JAIME KIM

## About the Book

A little girl stands alone and sings, but hears no response. Gathering her courage and her curiosity, she skips farther out into the world, singing away to the trees and the pond and the reeds — but no song comes back to her. Day passes into night, and the girl dares to venture into the darkness toward the light of the moon, becoming more insistent in her singing, climbing as high as she can, but still there is silence in return. Dejected, she falls asleep on the ground, only to be awakened by an amazing sound. . . . She has been heard. At last. Every child who has ever longed for a friend or tried repeatedly to make a friend will find a kindred spirit in this little girl. Kate DiCamillo's brilliantly simple narrative, almost without words, and Jaime Kim's captivatingly expressive illustrations bring this endearing character to life and invite readers to join her quest as they share their own experiences of searching for a friend.



HC: 978-0-7636-5833-5 • \$17.99 (\$21.99 CAN)

## Why Wordless Books?

Wordless books, rather than a departure from “real” reading, are an invaluable resource for emergent readers and writers. Here are just a few of their many benefits:

- They increase children’s understanding that stories have a beginning, a middle, and an end.
- They enable children to develop proficiency in oral language as they tell the stories they see in the images.
- They increase children’s vocabularies as they use new words to describe pictures.
- They help children develop vital visual literacy skills as they begin to interpret and evaluate pictures, notice details, and understand the messages contained in facial expressions and body language. These are important skills in a world where more information than ever is presented on TVs, phones, and computer screens.
- They are less intimidating to reluctant readers than books with a lot of text, enabling them to participate with the stronger readers in the class.
- They enable all children to participate and gain confidence, even English language learners who can tell the story in their own words or even their first language.
- They help develop children’s imaginations as they expand the story depicted in the illustrations.
- They enable parents who are not proficient in English to read to their children at home by telling the stories in their first language.

Engaging in these reading behaviors empowers children to consider themselves successful readers.

## Common Core Connections

Notes throughout this guide correlate some discussion and activities to specific Common Core Language Arts Standards. Although they are not repeated in each instance, several of the standards apply to more than one discussion topic or activity. For more information on specific standards for your state and grade level, visit the Common Core website at [www.corestandards.org](http://www.corestandards.org).

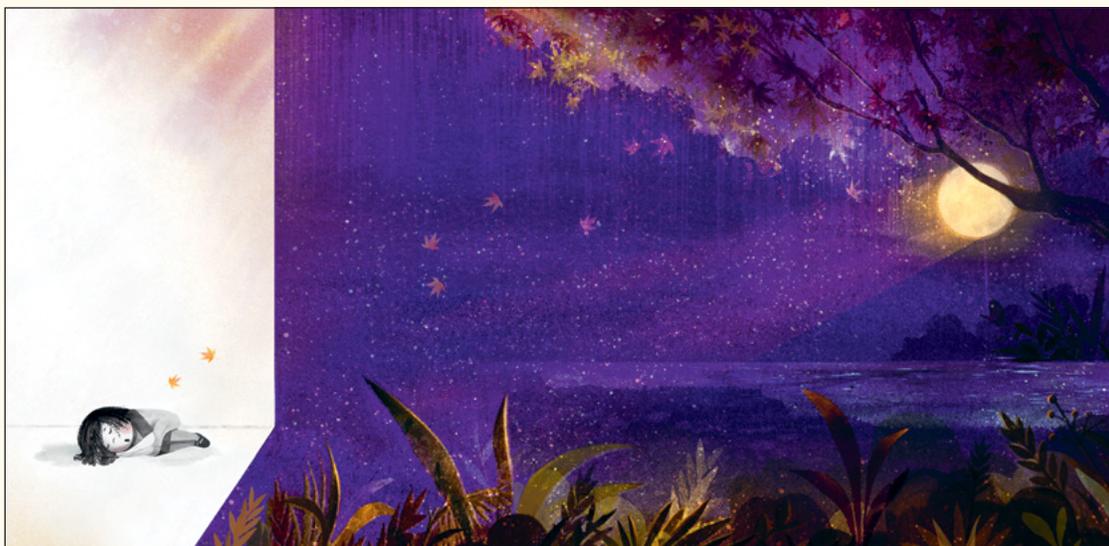
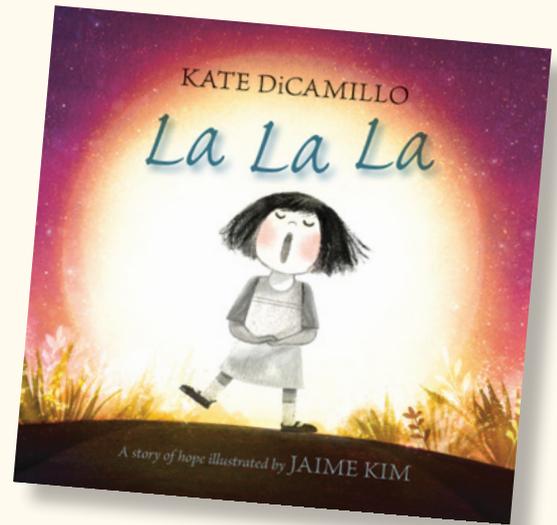
The language arts activities in this guide are intended to accommodate the learning needs of most students from preschool through the primary grades as they grow in their ability to read and write. It is important to keep in mind that children will continue to read throughout their lives only if they consider reading a pleasurable activity. It is best, then, to emphasize the delight that comes from reading a good story and to begin by providing time for children to view and enjoy the entire book before engaging in a detailed study.

## Pre-Reading Discussion

Hold the book at the children's eye level so everyone can see it easily. Provide ample time for the children to focus on the cover and form an overall impression of the book. Then talk about the cover, asking questions such as:

1. How are the title and the picture of the girl connected?
2. What is the girl doing?
3. Why is she raising one leg in the air?
4. How do you think she is feeling?
5. What evidence does the cover image provide for your answers?
6. What do you think this story will be about? Why?
7. What does the word *hope* mean?

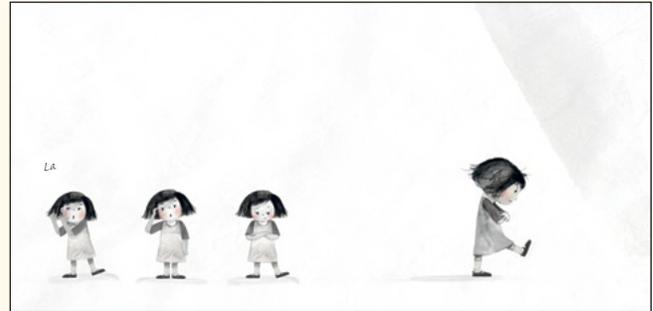
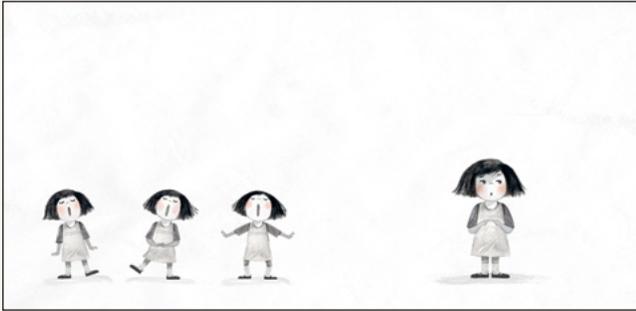
Following this discussion, go through the entire book without comment, pausing on each page to allow time for the children to observe the scene and the girl's actions. Ask the class to think about what the girl is doing and how she is feeling as the story plays out. Allow as much time as is necessary for the class to take in the story as a whole and follow the girl's movements before opening the discussion.



## Post-Reading Discussion

1. Begin by asking the children to help tell the story as they recall it from the book. The aim here is to have a common frame of reference on which the class can build subsequent discussion. Focus on visual cues and details during that discussion. Allow sufficient time for the children to elaborate on one another's ideas.

**Speaking and Listening: Comprehension and Collaboration SL.2.1.B: Build on others' talk in conversations by linking their comments to the remarks of others.**

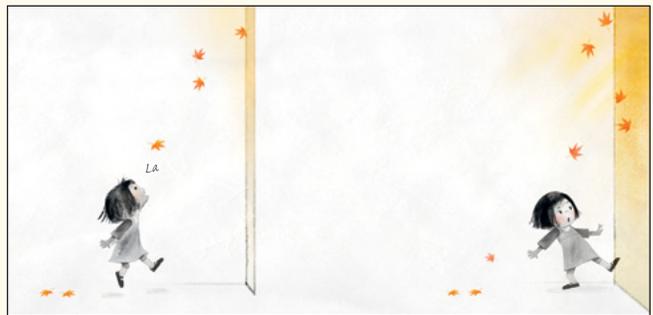


2. Turn to the second and third spreads (shown above). Ask students questions such as, What is the girl doing? (Most stories involve a conflict — a problem the main character must solve — and a resolution of that conflict. Make certain at this point that the children realize the girl's problem is that she is lonely and is singing to elicit a response, to make a friend. This quest for a friend is the theme of the story and the reason for her actions and reactions.) What happens when she holds her hands to her ears, and how does it make her feel? How do you know? Have them compare her raised leg in the first two pictures on spread two with her raised leg in the last image on spread three. What is the difference? How do they know this?

**Reading: Literature: Integration of Knowledge and Ideas RL.1.7: Use illustrations and details in a story to describe its characters, setting, or events.**

3. As a group, study the following four spreads (shown below) where the girl sees the leaves and goes outside to the tree. Ask students how the girl seems now. What details do they see in the pictures that tell them this? Have them examine the girl's eyes, mouth, and body postures for clues and look at the letters that represent the girl's song. How do they change? Why?

**Reading: Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.1.3: Describe characters, settings, and major events in a story, using key details.**



4. After the girl runs past the pond and even searches in the reeds for a friend, ask students what she is thinking and feeling. How do they know this? We know she is not going to give up her search for a friend. Why? What would they do?

**Reading: Literature: Key Ideas and Details RL.2.3:** Describe how characters in a story respond to major events and challenges.

5. Ask what the illustrator does to tell us day is turning to night. What makes the girl venture out into the dark by herself? Why does the illustrator show a close-up of the girl enclosed in a small box? Why do your students think the illustrator makes her appear so tiny in the purplish circles of light on the spread after she raises her arms and sings “La La”?

6. The girl runs to get a ladder to climb as high as she can — close to the moon — to find a friend. Ask students questions such as, Could she really do this? Why do you think the author and illustrator put this in the story?

7. Discouraged, the girl finally falls asleep. She awakes hearing a sound. What does the illustrator do with color that shows how the girl feels now?

8. Have your class think about the girl at the beginning of the story and compare her to the girl at the end of the story. How has she changed? Why?

**Reading: Literature: Craft and Structure RL.2.5:** Describe the overall structure of a story, including describing how the beginning introduces the story and the ending concludes the action.

9. Why do your students think the girl decided to sing? Ask them to talk about times when singing or listening to music helped them when they were feeling lonely or afraid. Has singing or music ever helped them meet a friend? Have them talk about times they enjoyed music with a friend.

**Speaking and Listening: Presentation of Knowledge and Ideas SL.2.4:** Tell a story or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking audibly in coherent sentences; **SL.3.4:** Report on a topic or text, tell a story, or recount an experience with appropriate facts and relevant, descriptive details, speaking clearly at an understandable pace.

10. Ask your students, Have you ever been lonely and in need of a friend? Tell us some things you did to try to make a friend. Did they work? Why?



## Author and Illustrator Discussion

Point out the names of the author and illustrator on the cover and ask questions like these:

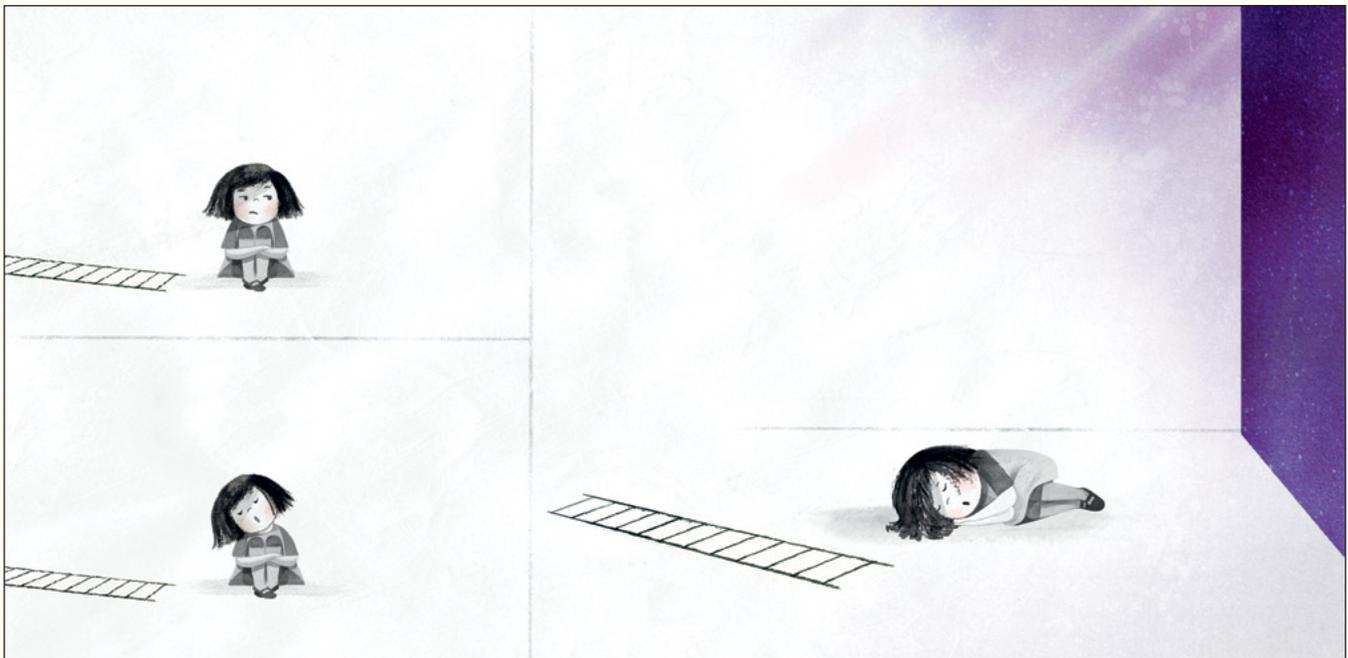
1. What does an author do to create a story?
2. What does an illustrator do to create a story?
3. How can a writer write a story if there are no words?

**Reading: Literature: Craft and Structure RL.K.6:** With prompting and support, name the author and illustrator of a story and define the role of each in telling the story.

Then read Kate DiCamillo’s note at the end of the book.

## Activities

1. Make a large chart with three columns labeled *Beginning*, *Middle*, and *End*. Ask the children what parts of the story belong in each column. Write their responses on the chart and hang it in the classroom for reference during your study.
2. The illustrator of *La La La* gave us many clues about how the girl was feeling throughout the story through her facial expressions and what she was doing with her body. When we interact with other people, it is important to listen not only to what they are telling us with words, but also to what they are saying with their faces and bodies. It helps us understand and get along with them better. Ask for volunteers to demonstrate different feelings with facial expressions and body postures: happy, sad, fearful, excited, etc. The children might also enjoy contributing to a chart of labeled outline drawings of facial expressions. Another possibility is to show images of facial expressions from the Internet and ask the children to determine how each person is feeling.
3. The girl in *La La La* is lonely and reaches out to make a friend. Ask your class what the difference is between being lonely and spending time alone. What are the advantages of spending time alone occasionally? Make a list together of some enjoyable activities a person can do by him- or herself.
4. Finding a friend is at the heart of *La La La*. Ask students to each make a list of the qualities a good friend should have, then combine the lists into a chart entitled "A Good Friend Is ..."
5. Have your students role-play different situations: making friends with a shy person, with a person sitting alone at lunch or alone at recess, with a person in a wheelchair, and with a child who has just moved to their neighborhood or school.

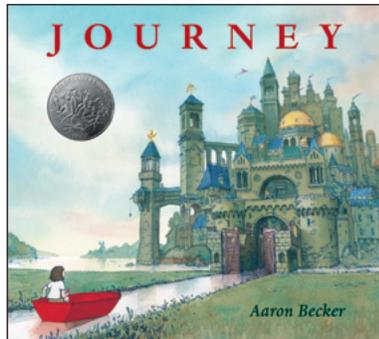


6. Sometimes we hesitate or are afraid to make friends with someone who looks different from us. Read *Mirror* together. This incredible book is wordless, except for an introduction in Arabic and English. The stories in the separate sections are meant to be read simultaneously. Readers view the activities of two boys, one from Australia and the other from Morocco, from daybreak to evening. While there are certainly cultural differences, the class will see that inwardly, the boys are very much alike. As the author states, when we look at a stranger or someone who appears to be different, “inwardly we are so alike, it could be each other we see when we look in a mirror.” After reading the book, ask the class for suggestions for overcoming fear and making friends with someone who is different.
- 6a. Very young children can learn a similar lesson in *Owl Bat Bat Owl*, which helps readers see how two different families put aside their fears to become friends.
7. A discussion of bullying is important when talking about friendship. Begin by asking students what it means to bully someone. Have they ever been bullied? Witnessed someone being bullied? Been asked or pressured by a person or group to join them in bullying a classmate? What have they done in these situations? Make a list with the class of safe actions they can take when they witness or are the victims of bullying.
8. We have seen how being alert to details in illustrations helps us understand the story and its characters better. The wordless books for older students *Welcome to Mamoko* and *The World of Mamoko in the Year 3000* specifically instruct readers, “Use Your Eyes!” In the former, a series of problems could prevent the many characters in the story from attending a carnival that evening. Readers must find objects and follow every character’s adventures on each busy spread to determine what happens. In the latter, readers must once again follow many different characters to discover what the future holds for Mamoko. Because both books require very close attention to detail, it is best to divide students into groups and provide each group with one of the books to facilitate careful observation. What is each character doing and experiencing? To extend the activity, ask each group to write a story for one or more characters. They should be able to provide justification for the events in their stories by citing specific details in the illustrations. If two groups work with the same book, it would be interesting for them to compare their stories.
- Writing: Text Types and Purposes W.K.3:** Use a combination of drawing, dictating, and writing to narrate a single event or several loosely linked events, tell about the events in the order in which they occurred, and provide a reaction to what happened; W.1.3: Write narratives in which they recount two or more appropriately sequenced events, include some details regarding what happened, use temporal words to signal event order, and provide some sense of closure.
- 8a. Younger students can sharpen their observational skills by figuring out which animals appear and disappear and how they change in the very humorous *Now You See Me, Now You Don’t*.



# Additional Wordless Books to Share with Your Students

The Journey trilogy by Aaron Becker is a wonderful example of wordless picture books. You can find Aaron Becker's "Guide to Reading a Wordless Book" on the Candlewick website for more reading suggestions.

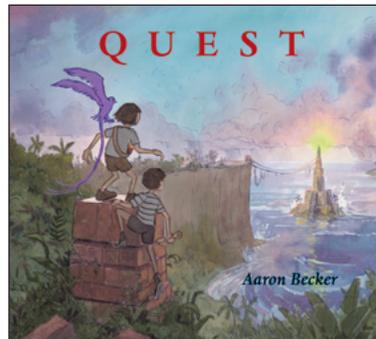


HC: 978-0-7636-6053-6

## *Journey*

Follow a girl on an elaborate flight of fancy in a wondrously illustrated wordless picture book about self-determination—and unexpected friendship.

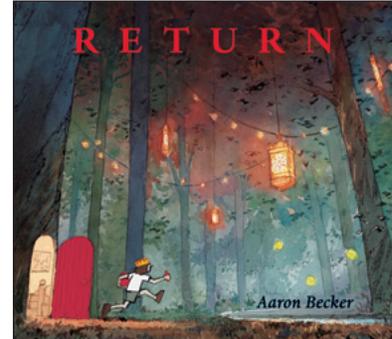
A CALDECOTT HONOR BOOK



HC: 978-0-7636-6595-1

## *Quest*

Two children are caught up in a quest to rescue the king and his kingdom from darkness while illuminating the furthest reaches of their imagination.



HC: 978-0-7636-7730-5

## *Return*

Failing to get the attention of her busy father, a lonely girl turns back to a fantastic world for friendship and adventure. Unbeknownst to her, he follows!

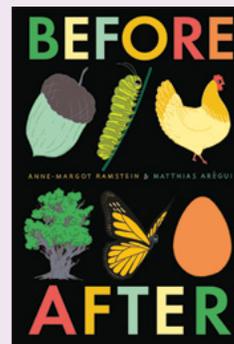


HC: 978-0-7636-9010-6

## *Bee & Me*

Ages 2–5

A little girl befriends a bee that takes her on a journey of discovery, revealing an action that every child can take to aid in conservation.

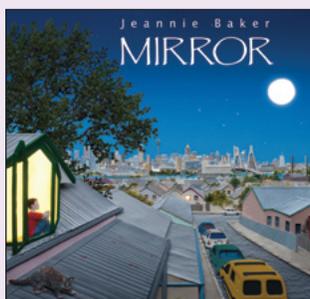


HC: 978-0-7636-7621-6

## *Before After*

Ages 4–8

In this clever, visually enchanting volume, a cow can result in both a bottle of milk and a painting of a cow, and an ape in a jungle may become an urban King Kong.

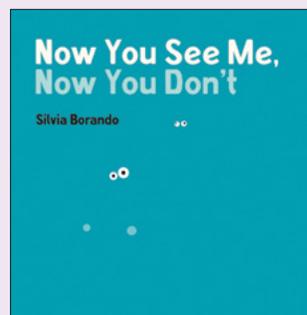


HC: 978-0-7636-4848-0

## *Mirror*

Ages 5–9

This innovative, two-in-one picture book follows a parallel day in the life of two families: one from Australia and one from Morocco.



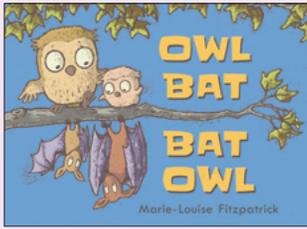
HC: 978-0-7636-8782-3

## *Now You See Me, Now You Don't*

Ages 2–5

A menagerie of colorful animals can be found within this stylish book, but pay attention! When the background color changes with each turn of the page, a different animal (almost) vanishes—and another seems to appear on every spread.

# Additional Wordless Books to Share with Your Students

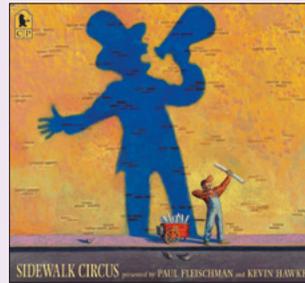


HC: 978-0-7636-9161-5

## *Owl Bat Bat Owl*

Ages 3–7

When a bat family moves onto a branch occupied by an owl and her owlets, the two families are fearful of each other until a stormy night brings them together.

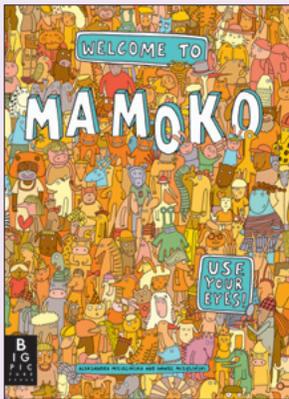


PB: 978-0-7636-2795-9

## *Sidewalk Circus*

Ages 5–9

The Garibaldi Circus is coming soon, but readers with sharp eyes will see the circus performers hidden in places along the sidewalk.

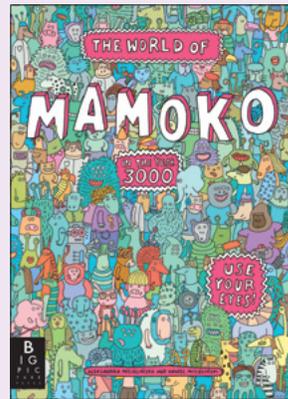


HC: 978-0-7636-6891-4

## *Welcome to Mamoko*

Ages 5–8

Follow the adventures of Mamoko's quirky cast of characters and uncover their kaleidoscope of stories.

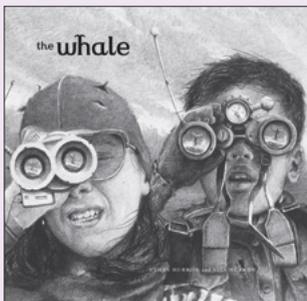


HC: 978-0-7636-7125-9

## *The World of Mamoko in the Year 3000*

Ages 5–8

What does the future hold for Mamoko in the year 3000? Readers become storytellers as they use their eyes to uncover the cosmos of characters on every page.



HC: 978-0-7636-7965-1

## *The Whale*

Ages 4–8

When their boats collide, two young whale watchers, one with a camera, the other with sound-recording equipment, pool their resources in order to find proof that a mythical spotted whale exists.



HC: 978-0-7636-8107-4

## *The White Book*

Ages 2–5

Roller in hand, a boy starts to paint a blank wall. Each time he changes colors, animals appear and disappear.

This guide was written by Marianne Saccardi, author of *Books That Teach Kids to Write* and *Creativity and Children's Literature: New Ways to Encourage Divergent Thinking*. She is a children's literature and early literacy consultant who works with teachers in professional development sessions.