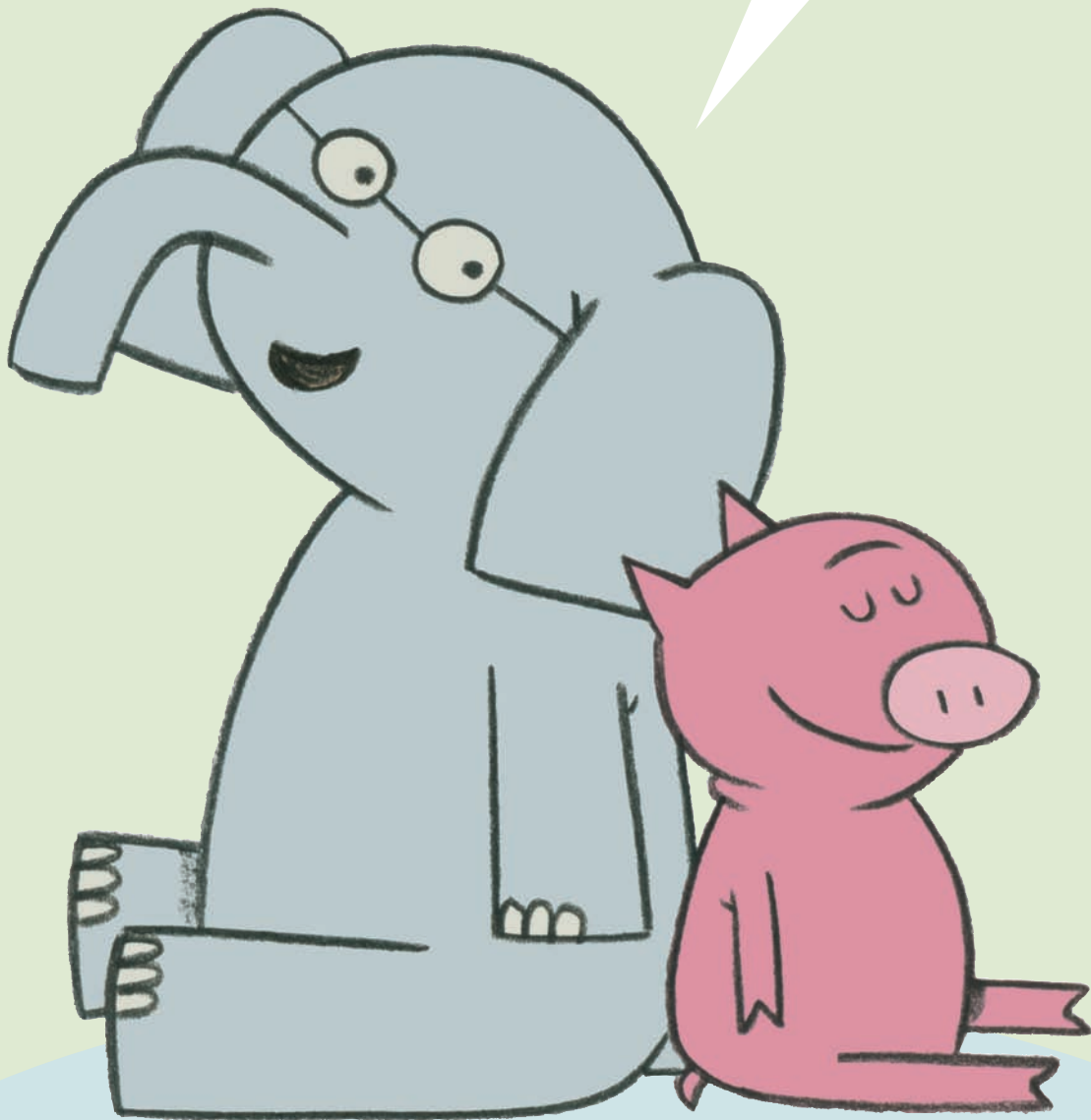


# The World of Elephant & Piggie



**A Teaching Guide for Mo Willems's Elephant & Piggie Books**

## Dear Teachers:

Here they go again. The two characters created by Mo Willems—Elephant & Piggie—are back for more exciting adventures that your students are going to love.

At least, Mo thinks they're exciting. Okay, fine.

The books are sort of hilarious, and charming (I suppose), and they speak directly to kids. Piggie is an optimistic pig, and Elephant (otherwise known as Gerald) is a cautious, pessimistic elephant.

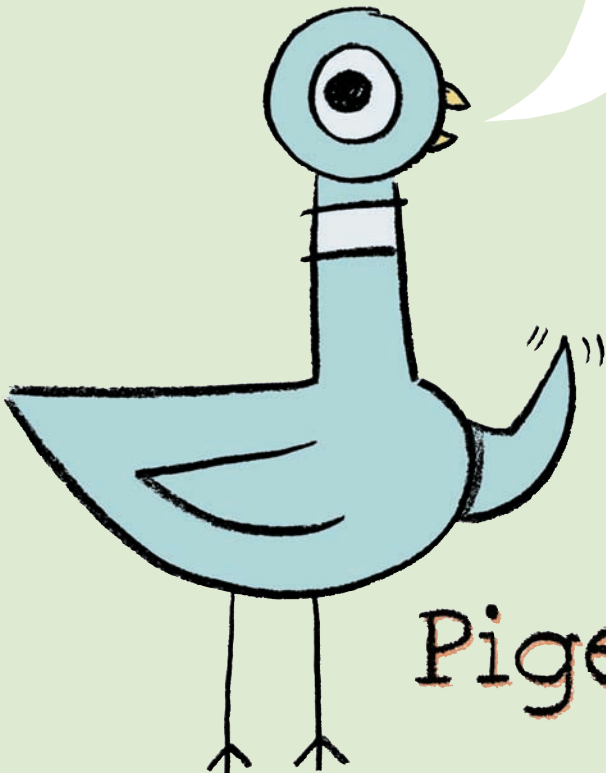
Sure, go ahead. Like them. *Love* them! But whatever you do, please—don't let them drive the bus!

Sincerely,

Pigeon

(and all the little birdies at Hyperion Books for Children)

P.S.: Don't forget to check out *my* Web site  
[www.pigeonpresents.com](http://www.pigeonpresents.com)  
(you'll find them there, too).



Pigeon  
Presents.com

# Acclaim for the Elephant & Piggie Series

★ “[A]ll the snappy pacing and wry humor readers have come to expect of the Geisel Medal-winning series, with a valuable lesson in friendship and flexibility tucked inside.”  
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

★ “These masterful mini-dramas will delight and amuse easy-reader and picture-book audiences, alike.”  
— *School Library Journal* (starred review)

★ “Accessible, appealing, and full of authentic emotions about what makes friendships tick, these titles will put a contemporary shine on easy reader collections”  
— *Booklist* (starred review)

★ “The masterful combination of early-reader convention and sly wit make this pair of pals one to celebrate.”  
— *Kirkus Reviews* (starred review)

2008 Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal (*There Is a Bird On Your Head!*)  
2009 Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal (*Are You Ready to Play Outside?*)



# About the Elephant & Piggie Books

Mo Willems presents Elephant & Piggie's friendship in thirteen delightful early reader books:

- *Today I Will Fly!* is the funny introduction to these characters. Piggie is determined to fly, but Gerald the elephant knows that's impossible—right?
- In *My Friend Is Sad*, Gerald is down in the dumps. Piggie is determined to cheer him up by dressing as a cowboy, a clown, and even a robot! But what does it take to make a sad elephant happy? The answer will make even pessimistic elephants smile.
- In *Pigs Make Me Sneeze!*, Gerald believes he is allergic to his best friend! Will he have to stay away from Piggie forever?
- In *Elephants Cannot Dance!*, Piggie tries to teach Gerald some new moves. But will Gerald teach Piggie something even more important?
- In *Watch Me Throw the Ball!*, Gerald is determined to teach Piggie that ball-throwing is serious business . . . but Piggie is just as determined to have serious fun.
- In *Are You Ready to Play Outside?*, Piggie can't wait to go play in the sunshine. But will a rainy day ruin all the fun?
- In *I Love My New Toy!*, Piggie can't wait to show Gerald her brand-new toy. But will an accidentally broken toy accidentally break a friendship?
- In *I Will Surprise My Friend!*, Gerald and Piggie want to play a game and surprise each other—but the biggest surprise is the one they least expect.
- In *I Am Invited to a Party!*, Piggie is invited to her very first party. But what will she wear? Gerald, the party expert, knows just how to help . . . or does he?
- In *There Is a Bird on Your Head!*, Gerald discovers that there is something worse than a bird on your head—two birds on your head! Can Piggie help her best friend?
- In *I Am Going!*, Elephant is distraught when he thinks Piggie is going away for good!
- In *Can I Play Too?*, Elephant and Piggie learn that there's always room for one more friend to participate, even if it means finding new ways to play the game.
- In *We Are in a Book!*, Gerald and Piggie discover the joy of being read. But what will happen when the book ends?

# Using Elephant & Piggie in the Classroom

## Character Counts!

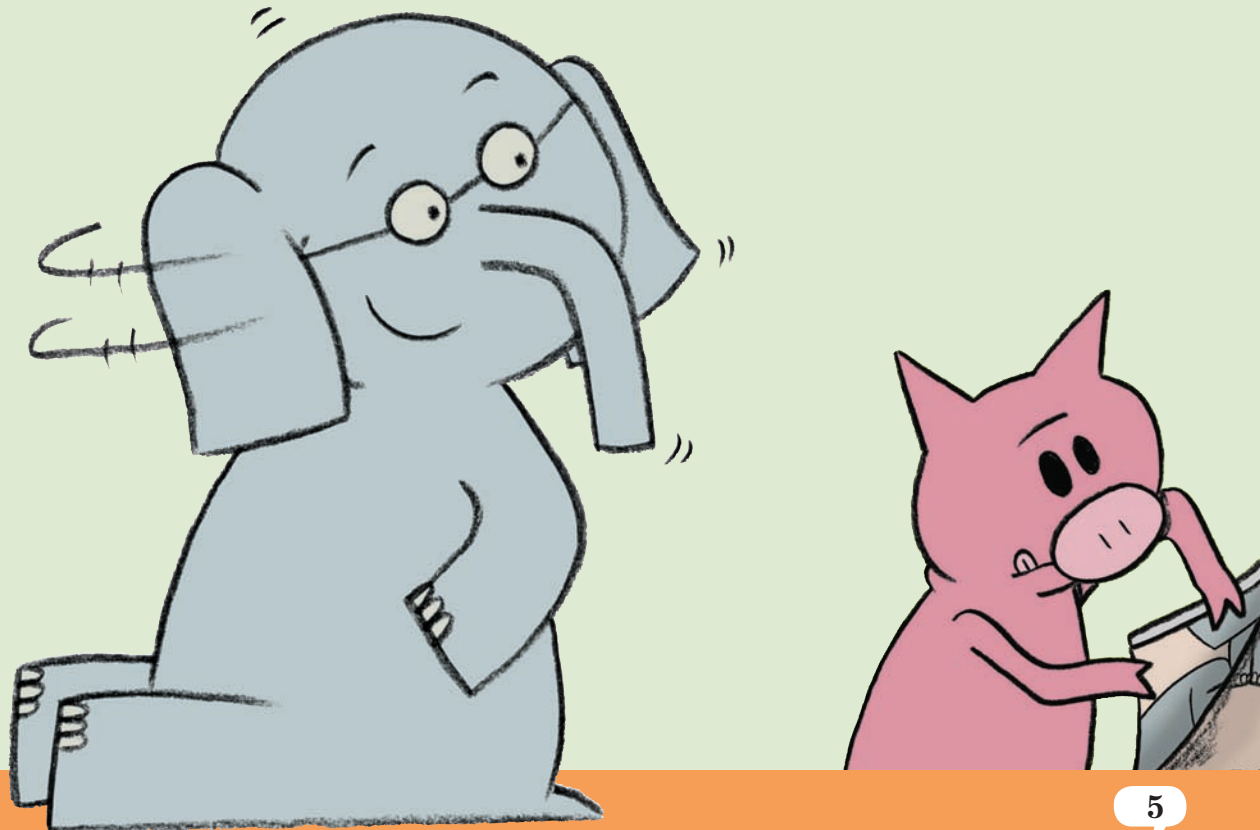
Character education is a hallmark of teaching young children right from wrong. The Elephant & Piggie books offer an organic way to share these critical lessons by using the experiences and choices of these two friends to model appropriate behavior. For each character trait, share one of the suggested Elephant & Piggie books and ask students to consider the choices the pair makes to determine if their actions and attitude exhibit appropriate character-building behavior.

## Teaching Respect

*Be respectful of others; follow the Golden Rule • Be tolerant of differences • Use good manners, not bad language • Be considerate of the feelings of others • Don't threaten, hit, or hurt anyone • Deal peacefully with anger, insults, and disagreements*

As a pre-reading activity, discuss what it means to show someone respect. As a whole class, create a list of what showing respect looks like. Next, read aloud *Today I Will Fly!* After reading, have students decide if they believe Gerald was respectful of Piggie's dream of flying. Have them return to their list of respect and write down the behaviors that Gerald exhibited that showed he respected his friend's dreams.

**Extension Activity:** Using legal sized paper, have students divide the paper into cells and create an original story featuring two friends of their creation, paying special attention to making sure the characters demonstrate respect for themselves and each other.



## Teaching Fairness

*Play by the rules • Take turns and share • Be open-minded; listen to others • Don't take advantage of others • Don't blame others carelessly*

As a pre-reading activity, have students draw a picture of their favorite toy and list five reasons it is so special. Discuss what it means to be fair. Next, read aloud and share the illustrations in *I Love My New Toy!* After reading, have students consider Piggie's reaction to Gerald breaking her new toy.

*Ask them:*

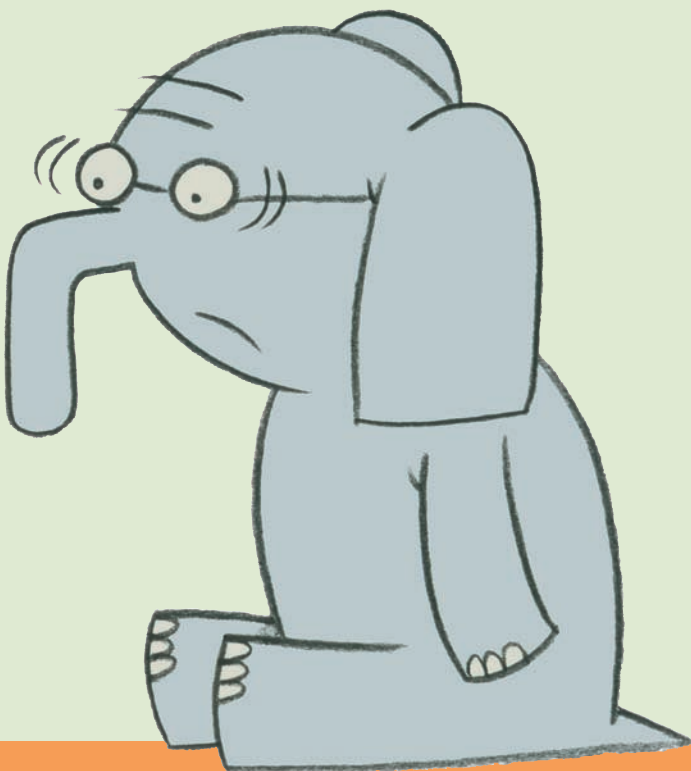
- Was it fair for Piggie to get angry with Gerald for breaking her new toy?
- Whose fault was it that the toy was broken?
- Did Gerald have a reason to be mad at Piggie as well?
- What other lessons can be learned from their decision to play tag instead of with the new toy?

**Extension Activity:** In small groups, have students write a letter to Elephant or Piggie, explaining what they believe it means to be fair. Be sure to have them offer suggestions to the pair about specific things they can do.



## Teaching Caring and Compassion

*Be kind • Be compassionate and show you care • Express gratitude • Forgive others • Help people in need*



As a pre-reading activity, explain what it means to be a caring and compassionate individual. Next, have students brainstorm all the ways they can show kindness and compassion for others. Show and share the book's title, *My Friend Is Sad*. Have them predict all the reasons that either Elephant or Piggie might be unhappy. Read the book to the class. Finally, have students consider Gerald's reason for his sadness. What does this demonstrate to readers about his character?

**Extension Activity:** After discussing ways we can show compassion, have students create "Get Well Soon" cards to be distributed to a local children's hospital or create original art to be displayed for residents at a local nursing home.

## Teaching Responsibility

*Do what you are supposed to do • Persevere: keep on trying! • Always do your best • Use self-control • Be self-disciplined • Think before you act—consider the consequences • Be accountable for your choices*

As a pre-reading activity, ask students to consider a time when having hurt feelings caused them to lose self-control and be unkind to others (to model this brainstorming, share an example from your own life). Next, read *I Am Going!* Have students consider the reasons Gerald tries to make Piggie sad by telling her, “Then I will go, too!” Is he right to behave this way? Why or why not? What could he have done instead? As a group, create an action plan outlining the choices an individual could make to show they are responsible.

**Extension Activity:** In trying to persuade Piggie to stay throughout the story, Elephant talks about all of the fun times they’ve had together, including skipping and playing Ping-Pong. Have the kids make a list of the top five favorite things they like to do with their best friend and share it with the group.

## Teaching Trustworthiness

*Be honest • Don't deceive, cheat, or steal • Be reliable—do what you say you'll do • Have the courage to do the right thing • Build a good reputation • Be loyal—stand by your family, friends, and country*

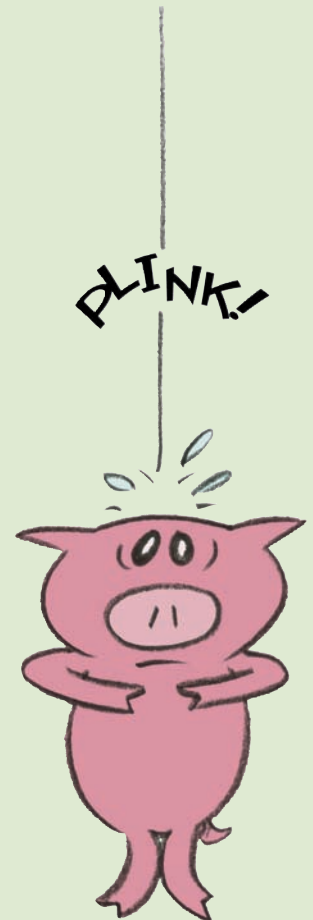
As a pre-reading activity, explain to students what trustworthiness is, making sure to use age-appropriate synonyms. Next, read *Are You Ready to Play Outside?* After reading, have students make a list of all the ways Gerald proves himself to be a loyal friend.

**Extension Activity:** Have students consider a friend who is honest and loyal and allow students to share an example of what their friend has done to demonstrate this character trait. Alternatively, offer students the chance to share an experience when they demonstrated this trait as well.

## Teaching Citizenship

*Do your share to make your school and community better • Cooperate • Get involved in community affairs • Stay informed; vote • Be a good neighbor • Obey laws and rules • Respect authority • Protect the environment*

As a culminating activity to using the Elephant & Piggie books to develop and model positive character traits, have students create a Classroom Declaration Page listing all the behaviors they promise to exhibit to make them a superior citizen of the classroom and school.



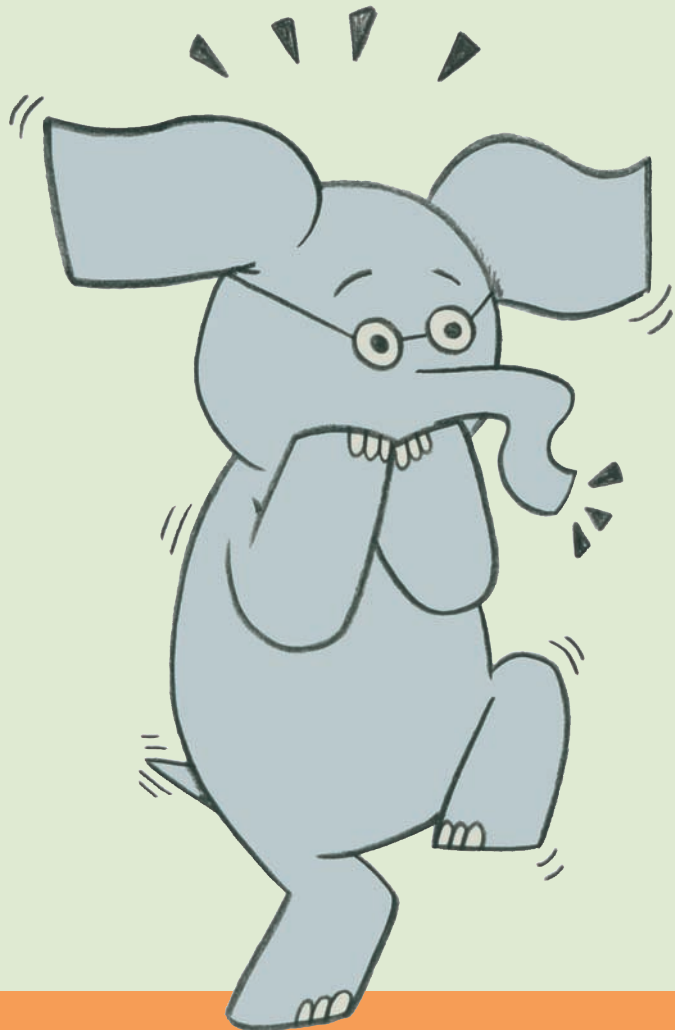
# Pre-Reading/Prediction Activity— PICTURE IT!

## Purpose

To confirm and revise predictions about what will be found in an Elephant & Piggie book based on the book's illustrations.

## Directions

- 1 Divide the class into pairs.
- 2 Distribute a copy of an illustration from an Elephant & Piggie book to each group. Have the group study the picture and discuss what they think happened immediately before and after the moment shown in the image.
- 3 After giving students time to plan, have groups improvise a scene that would “bookend” the action in the illustration. Have students consider what happened in the story that led up to the moment shown and consider what happens immediately following this image. Next, have each group “freeze” in the middle of their scene imitating the action in the image.
- 4 After each group “performs” his scene, read an Elephant & Piggie book and have students explore the importance of illustrations. How would the story be different without the pictures? In what ways does it enhance the story?





# Post-Reading Activity—CONNECT IT!

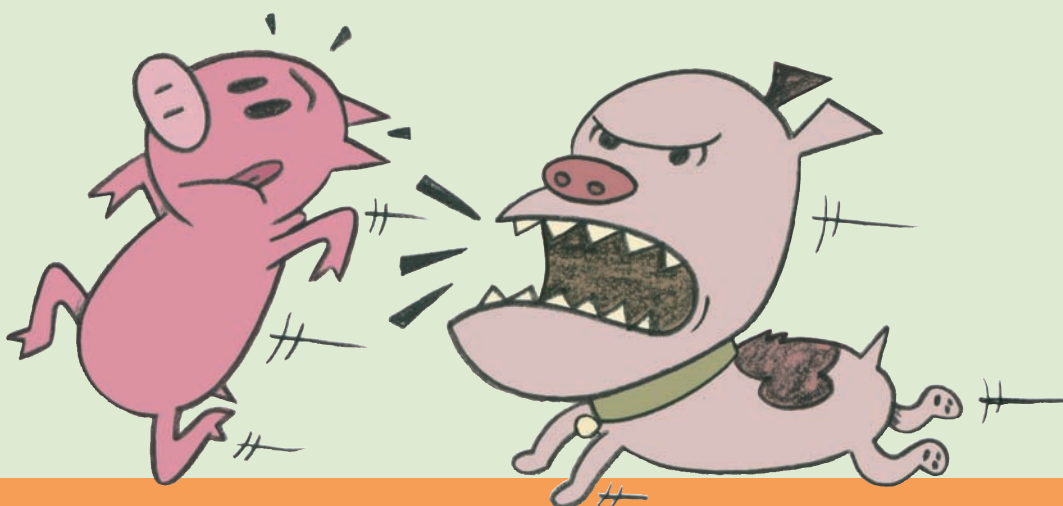
## Purpose

Students make connections between characters or simple events in an *Elephant & Piggie* book with people and events in their lives.

## Directions

After reading an *Elephant & Piggie* book, ask students to complete the chart considering the ways in which the story relates to their life and the world at large.

As I read <i>Elephant &amp; Piggie</i> , I observed . . .	As I read <i>Elephant &amp; Piggie</i> , I wondered . . .
Sensory Descriptions in <i>Elephant &amp; Piggie</i> (smell, hear, touch, sight, taste) include . . .	This story is like me because . . .



# More Activities Across the Curriculum

## Health

In *Pigs Make Me Sneeze!*, Elephant can't stop sneezing and is worried that he's allergic to Piggie. Ultimately, the doctor determines that Gerald simply has a cold. Using library resources and the Internet, have students research why humans and animals get colds. Have them create a chart listing common symptoms of colds, as well as a chart listing the preventive steps that can be taken to avoid getting sick.

## Physical Education

In *Elephants Cannot Dance!*, Elephant unknowingly creates his own dance. Have students learn some common line dances such as the Macarena, the Cotton-Eyed Joe, and the Bunny Hop and perform them for another class. Alternatively, place students in small groups and have them create an original dance. After allowing them to stand up and show off their moves, allow them to teach their new dance to the class.

## Math

In *Watch Me Throw the Ball!*, Piggie temporarily convinces herself that she has thrown a ball around the world. Have students guess how far they believe that distance is. Take the estimates and find the average of the classes predictions. Next, using library resources and the Internet, have students research the distance a ball would have to travel to go all the way around the world. After determining the actual distance, take students outside to see how far they can throw a ball.

## Science

In *Are You Ready to Play Outside?*, Piggie's day is temporarily ruined when her playdate with Gerald is interrupted by rain. Help students learn more about weather by investigating weather patterns. After researching the weather predictions for the week ahead, place students in pairs and have them role play as meteorologists giving a weather report. As an extension activity, record the "weather report" and allow students to use props and costumes.

## Nature

In *There Is a Bird on Your Head!*, Gerald has to temporarily endure a family of birds who select him as host for their nest. Have students consider different types of birds and nesting patterns. Make sure they can answer the following: Who is chiefly responsible for building the nest? Where are some of the typical places that birds nest? Who is the primary caretaker for the eggs? After discovering some basic information about nesting patterns, take students out for a nature walk to see if any birds' nests can be discovered. Upon the return to the classroom, ask students to share what they have learned about birds and nesting patterns.

## Art

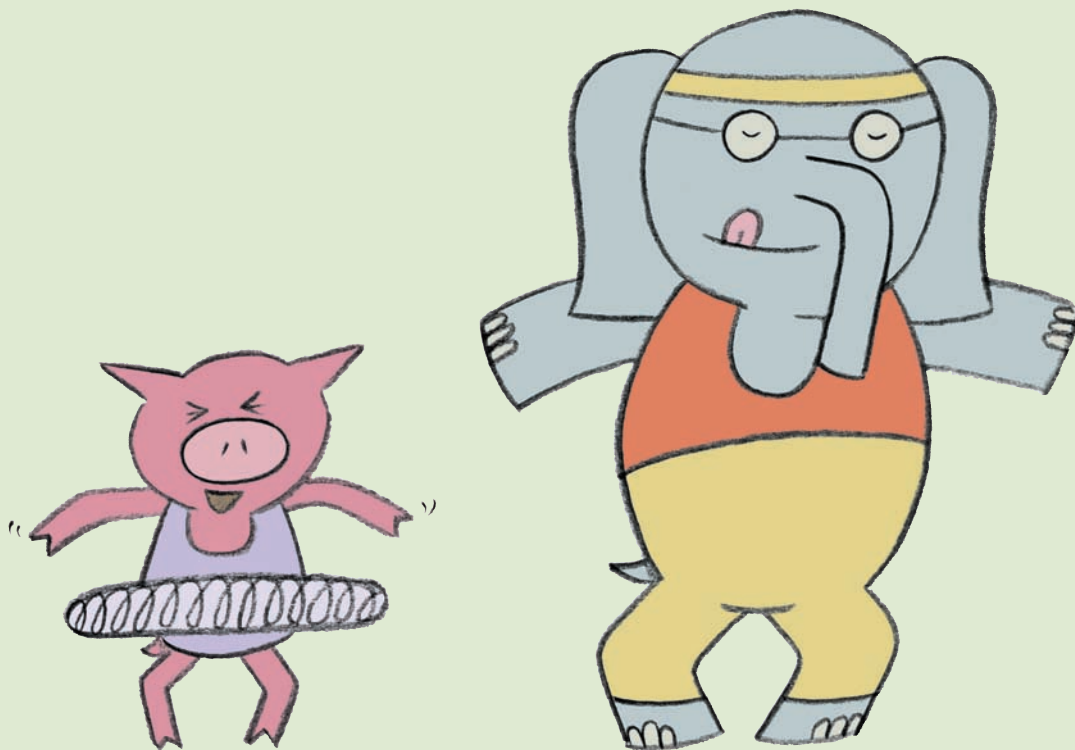
In *I Will Surprise My Friend!*, Elephant and Piggie desire to surprise each other, which leads to some unexpected, yet comical consequences. Ask students to consider a special friend (or family member) to whom they would like to bestow a special surprise gift. Using a variety of craft items (papers, stickers, ribbon, etc.) offer them a chance to create a gift for this friend. Make sure they include a homemade card for their friend describing what they are giving them and why they have chosen to create this gift for them.

## Language Arts

In *I Am Invited to a Party!*, Gerald offers Piggie extensive advice on proper party attire and models party behavior. Have students envision their dream party. What would it look like? Where would it be? What would people wear? What types of food would be served? After brainstorming, have them create a Party Guide Handbook detailing the key elements to make their dream party a success.

## Creative Writing

In *Can I Play Too?*, Elephant and Piggie learn that if they want to include a new friend in their playtime, they will have to rethink how they play the game. Ask students to consider a time when they have gone out of their way to include someone who might be feeling isolated or alone. Why did they feel it was important to try to include this individual? What was the result of their kindness? Next, have students write a step-by-step guide to their peers on the reasons why reaching out to others is so important. Be sure to have them include the benefits they receive from this exchange as well.





## About the Author

**Mo Willems** is a *New York Times* #1 best-selling author and illustrator who started his career on *Sesame Street*, where he garnered six Emmy Awards for his writing, before changing the face of children's literature with his groundbreaking picture books. Mo has been awarded a Caldecott Honor on three occasions (for *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, and *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*), and his acclaimed Elephant & Piggie early-reader series received the Theodor Seuss Geisel Medal in 2008 and 2009.

## A Conversation with Mo Willems

### 1 What inspired you to create *Early Readers* in addition to your picture books?

After hearing a few authors say, "Picture Books are hard, but *Early Readers* are harder" I just had to try my hand at them.

Picture Books have no real language limitation and can engage young minds so fully that when children are ready for "easy readers" the subject matter can suddenly appear dull by comparison.

So, my primary goal was to create stories that were as funny and exciting as possible, despite their being early readers.

### 2 Do you use a simpler art style in your *Elephant & Piggie* books and your picture books?

The simpler the drawing, the more expressive it can be. The idea is to focus on the words and the body language of the characters. Everything else is superfluous.

I designed *Elephant & Piggie* less as book illustrations than as designs for animation. They're structured as a series of overlapping circles, which allows them to stretch and squash with greater ease than, say, *The Pigeon* or *Edwina the Dinosaur*.

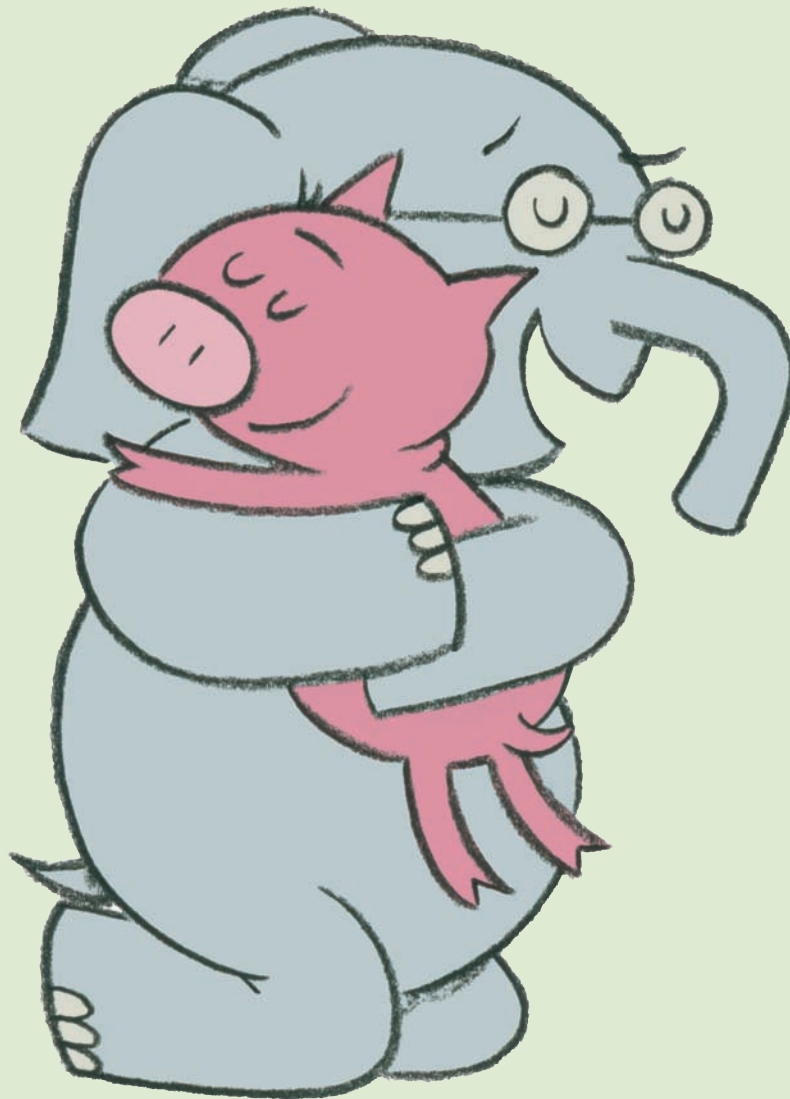
If I'm going to make a bunch of books with these guys, I need to know they can do a bunch of things.

**3 And how did you decide which animal should have which character traits (optimist vs. pessimist; adventurous vs. cautious)?**

The characters determine who they are. I merely spend time doodling them until their personalities make themselves known.

**4 How important is the theme of friendship in communicating with young readers?**

Friendship is not a child issue; it is a people issue. Since children are, in fact, people, it seemed an appropriate topic for a few funny stories.



# Collect all of the Elephant & Piggie books!



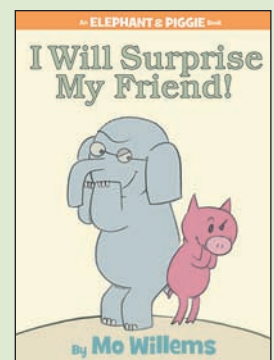
**I Am Going!**  
978-1-4231-1990-6



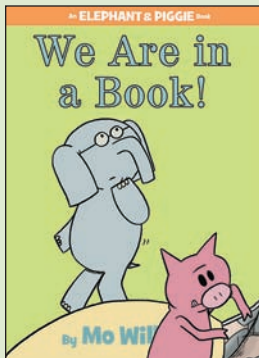
**Pigs Make Me Sneeze!**  
978-1-4231-1411-6



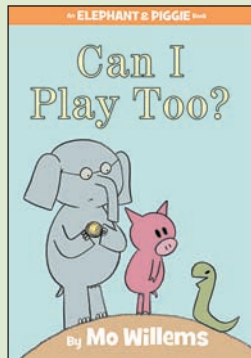
**I Love My New Toy!**  
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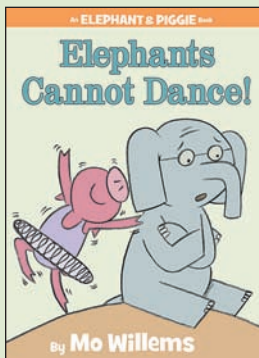
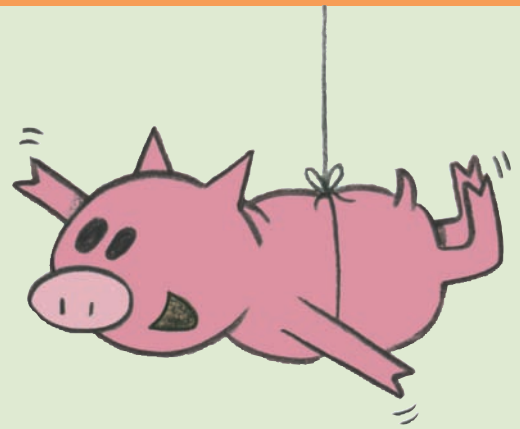
**I Will Surprise  
My Friend!**  
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**We Are in a Book!**  
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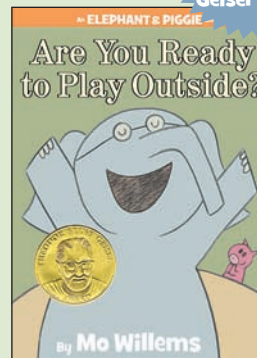
**Can I Play Too?**  
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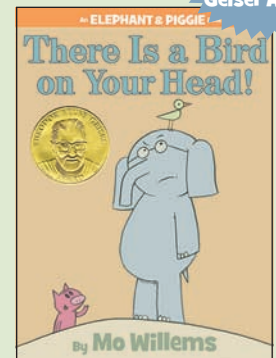
**Elephants Cannot Dance!**  
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**Watch Me Throw the Ball!**  
978-1-4231-1348-5



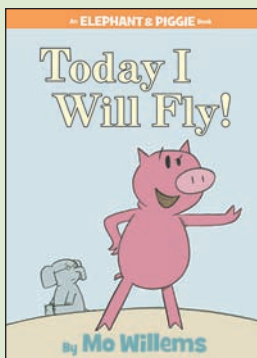
**Are You Ready to Play Outside?**  
978-1-4231-1347-8



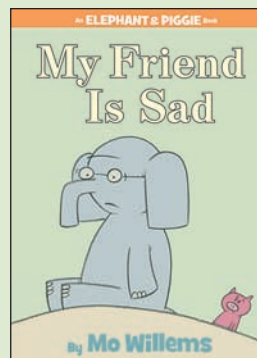
**There Is a Bird on Your Head!**  
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**I Am Invited to a Party!**  
978-1-4231-0687-6



**Today I Will Fly!**  
978-1-4231-0295-3



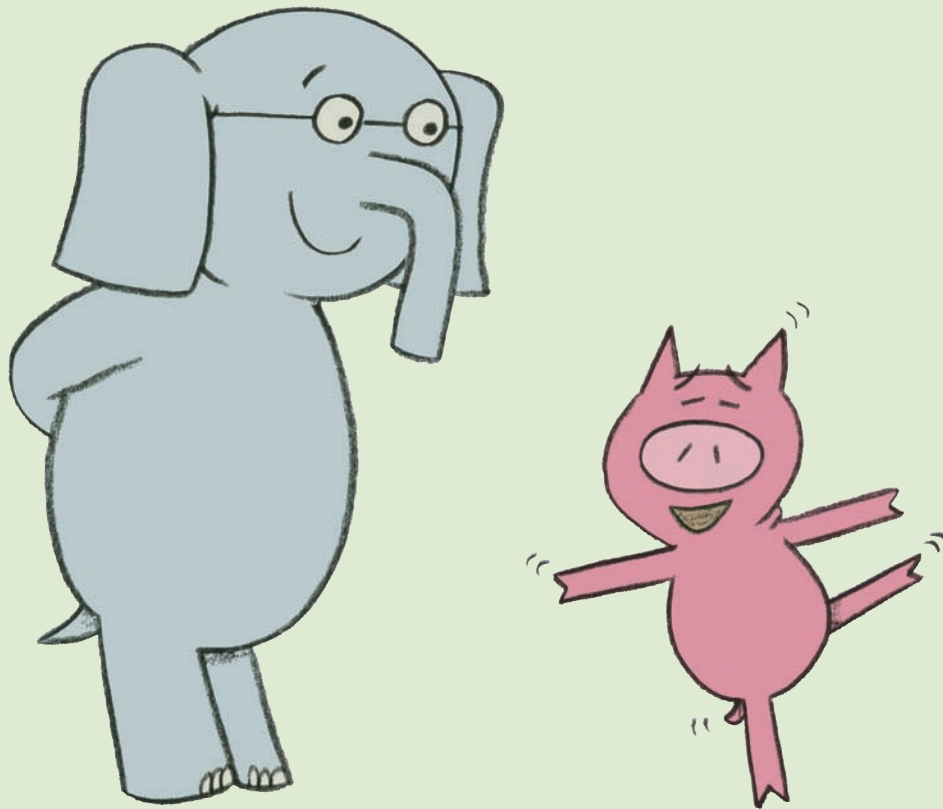
**My Friend Is Sad**  
978-1-4231-0297-7

Winner of the 2009 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award

Winner of the 2008 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award

This guide was created by Rose Brock, a school librarian and doctoral candidate at Texas Woman's University, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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