

# THE WORLD OF GREG PIZZOLI!



This guide is aligned with the Common Core State Standards College and Career Readiness (CCR)  
Anchor Standards for Literature, Writing, Language, and Speaking and Listening,  
and provides grade level–specific standards for English Language Arts.

**EDUCATOR'S GUIDE**

Disney • HYPERION BOOKS

## Praise for Greg Pizzoli

### The Watermelon Seed

- ★ “It’s an expert debut.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“With a sharp graphic sensibility, vibrant design, and adept characterization, Pizzoli spins the simple premise into a sweet confection, ripe with broad humor.”  
—*Booklist Online*

- ★ “Children will love this hilarious book. . . . The story has broad appeal, making it a great first purchase.”  
—*School Library Journal*, starred review

“Pizzoli legitimizes childish anxieties but also slyly exaggerates each worry to highlight the humor.”  
—*New York Times*

Winner of the 2014 Theodor Seuss Geisel Award

### Number One Sam

“This will zoom off shelves.”  
—*Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books*

“Pizzoli’s follow-up to the 2014 Geisel Award–winning *The Watermelon Seed*. . . pull[s] off a far more emotional feat than you’d expect.”  
—*Booklist*

“Pizzoli’s talent with color, easy-to-read words, and humor is something to behold. . . . This one does it all.”  
—*Horn Book*

- ★ “[A] class act.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

“Pizzoli’s zingy ice-pop colors and dramatically varied page compositions take home the blue ribbon.”  
—*New York Times*

### Templeton Gets His Wish

“Cheerful entertainment, with just a touch of snark.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*

“Templeton . . . conveys intense emotion with a few simple lines and very bright colors, as his tale reflects the endearing aspects of a small child’s struggles to behave.”  
—*Booklist*

“Templeton is a celebration of independence, and of our complex feelings about those we love.”  
—*Horn Book*

### Good Night Owl

“Entertaining bedtime drama that works equally well for new readers and for sharing aloud.”  
—*Horn Book*

“A funny tale about stress and an ever upping ante, with a comforting end.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

Theodor Seuss Geisel Honors Recipient

### The 12 Days of Christmas

“Pizzoli is the going expert at making the simplest of characters expressive—and it pays off in a raucous but sweet finale.”  
—*Booklist*

“An irresistible read-aloud.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*

### This Story Is for You

“Fabulous on the eye.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

### The Book Hog

“The characters’ expressions are amusing, the straightforward sentences are well structured, and it all works together to truly create a book that readers will be eager to hog.”  
—*Booklist*

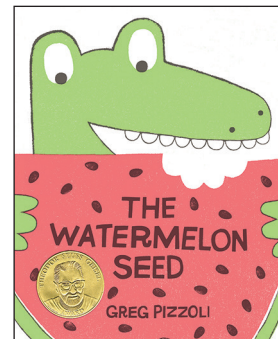
“The good-natured celebration of books, reading, and libraries will charm fellow bibliophiles, and the author’s fans will enjoy making another anthropomorphic animal friend.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*

## About the Books

### The Watermelon Seed

With perfect comic pacing, Greg Pizzoli introduces us to one funny crocodile who has one big fear: swallowing a watermelon seed. What will he do when his greatest fear is realized? Will vines sprout out his ears? Will his skin turn pink? This crocodile has a wild imagination that kids will love.

With bold color and a beautiful sense of design, Greg Pizzoli's picture book debut takes this familiar childhood worry and gives us a true gem.

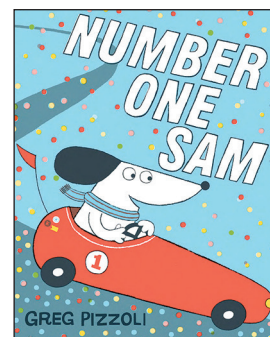


### Number One Sam

*They're off!*

Sam is the best race-car driver in history—he is number one at every race!

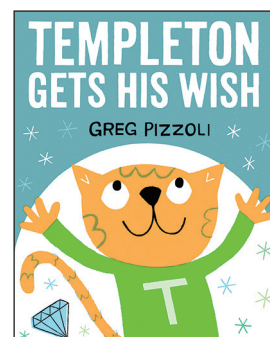
But when his best friend, Maggie, shows that she has racing talent of her own, Sam doesn't know how to handle coming in second place. Will he learn what it truly means to be a winner?



### Templeton Gets His Wish

Templeton the cat doesn't like his parents telling him to clean up, and he *really* doesn't like when his brothers steal his toys. So, he makes a wish on a magic diamond, and his family disappears!

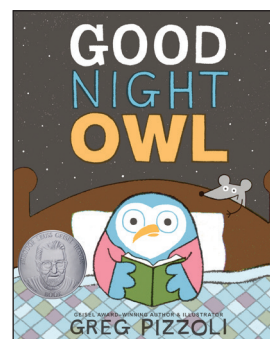
At first, Templeton is over the moon. He's free to lounge and play all day, and he never has to take a bath. But being alone might not always be as fun as he'd thought. Will another wish on the magic diamond get Templeton what he really wants?



### Good Night Owl

Owl is ready for bed. But as soon as he settles in, he hears a strange noise. He'll never get to sleep unless he can figure out what's going on!

He looks everywhere—in his cupboard, underneath the floorboards—even in his walls. But while he's busy tearing his house apart, he doesn't notice one tiny, squeaky, mouse-shaped detail. . . . Will Owl ever get a good night's sleep?



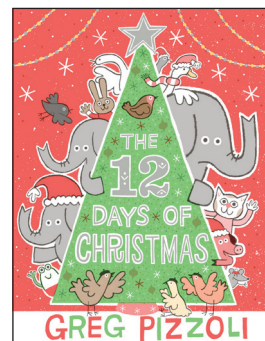
## About the Books *(continued)*

### The 12 Days of Christmas

Elephant is delighted to get a gift, but as the twelve days of Christmas continue, presents pile higher and higher!

A partridge in a pear tree? Cute! But soon, her dad despairs. Two turtle doves? THREE French hens?! And just what are they supposed to do with ten lords a-leaping?

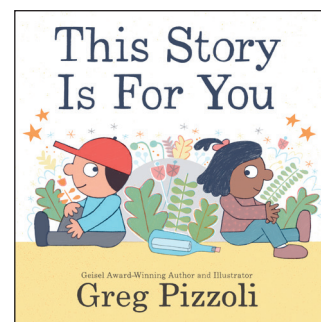
Kids will love each silly spread in this raucous take on the classic carol that is perfect for reading aloud around the fireplace.



### This Story Is for You

A simple “It’s nice to know you” holds so much power in this tender picture book by acclaimed author-illustrator Greg Pizzoli. Finding value in others as a matter of course, the narrator accepts and appreciates difference as the foundation of a lifelong friendship. *This Story Is for You* celebrates moments of kindness throughout, from the small to the grand in a heartwarming tale of human connection.

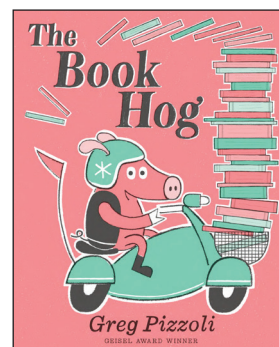
The warm, comforting text shares the tone of a Ruth Krauss classic and is balanced by Greg’s energetic color palette and signature visual humor. This book is sure to be a special read for parents, children, and their friends for years to come.



### The Book Hog

The Book Hog loves books—the way they look, the way they feel, the way they smell—and he’ll grab whatever he can find. There’s only one problem: He can’t read! But when a kind librarian invites him to join for storytime, this literature-loving pig discovers the treasure that books really are.

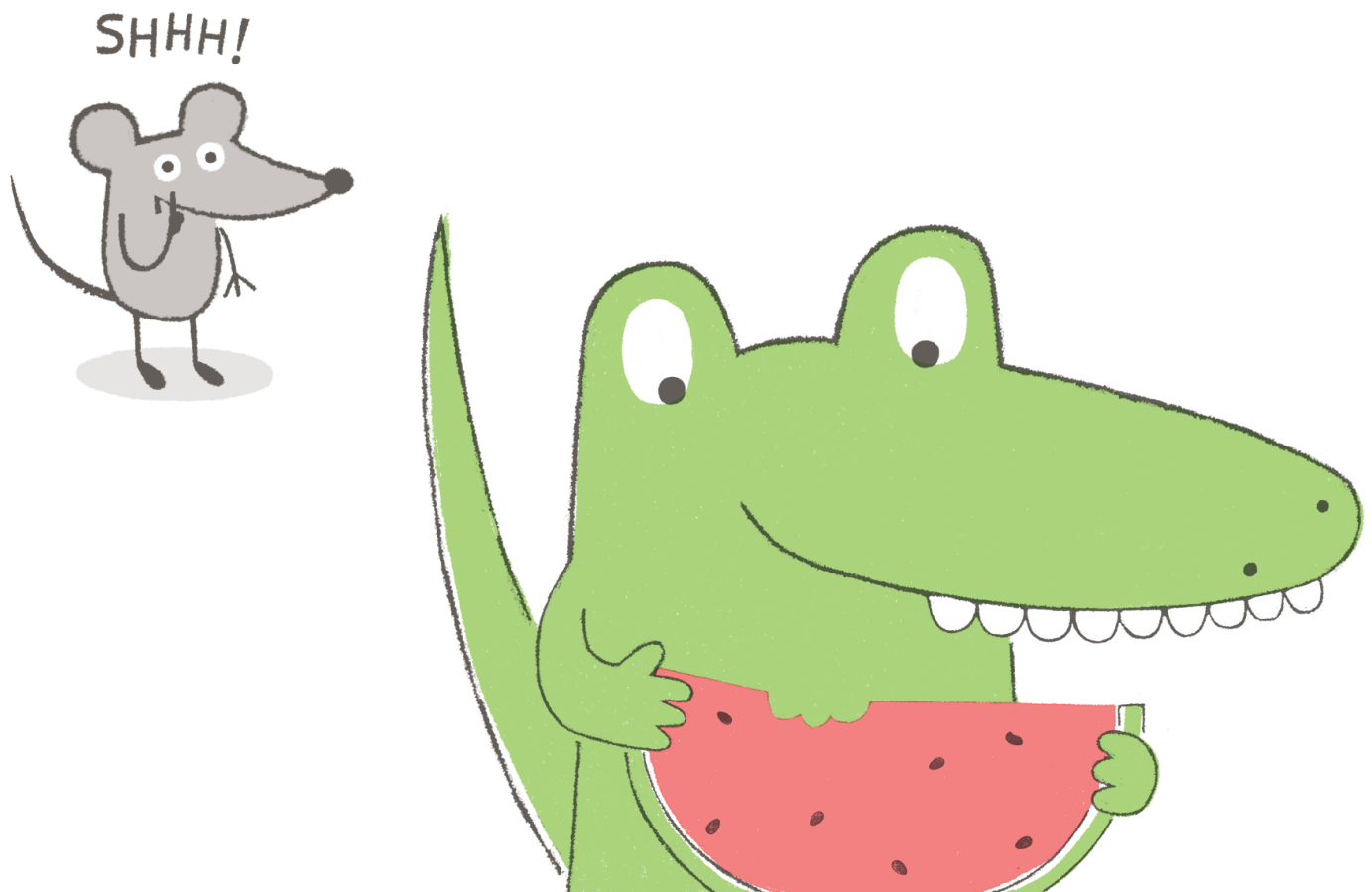
Geisel medalist Greg Pizzoli presents a new character who is sure to steal your heart in this picture book full of humorous charm and vivid illustrations.



## Pre-Reading Discussion Questions

Use the following discussion questions to guide your reading of the works of Greg Pizzoli.

- 1 What's the silliest thing you've ever been afraid of? What are the things you are most afraid of?  
How do you make yourself feel better?
- 2 Do you remember the last time a friend did something nice for you? What did they do to make you feel special?  
How did you respond?
- 3 What can you do to make a friend feel important?
- 4 If you had one wish, what would it be?
- 5 How do you deal with your family when they annoy or frustrate you?
- 6 What's the best way to handle being disappointed about not getting your way?
- 7 Do you believe there is such a thing as too many gifts? What do you do to take care of yourself when you feel overwhelmed?
- 8 What are the some of the ways you can make a friend feel important and unique?
- 9 Is there something you like to collect? What is it about your collectible that you find special?
- 10 Why are books so important? What books are your favorites?





## Classroom Extension Activities

After sharing a Greg Pizzoli book with your class, use the following classroom activities to extend your students' learning.

### Perfect Pals: Create a Friendship Handbook

In *Number One Sam*, though his best friend, Maggie, is important to him, readers witness Sam struggling with his racing loss to her. How does discovering the five baby chicks make Sam come to realize what's really important? Reread the story and answer the following: Even though he places last in the race, why are all his friends cheering him on at the finish line? What is it about his actions that inspire them? What lesson do you think Sam learns from this?

After discussing, ask students to consider their own actions and a time when they put a friend before themselves. Have them consider—what makes a good friend? After brainstorming, have each student create a Friendship Handbook detailing and listing the qualities and behaviors of good friends.

### Wishing Well

In *Templeton Gets His Wish*, Templeton gets the wish of a lifetime—a few days of independence from his family. After discussing what they learned from his choices, ask students to consider what they'd wish for if they had a magic diamond. Encourage them to “wish well”—what could they do to help others with their wishes?



## Fact or Fiction: Researching Old Wives' Tales

In *The Watermelon Seed*, Crocodile fears he will begin to grow a watermelon in his stomach after swallowing a seed. Explain to students that an old wives' tale is a superstition or traditional belief that is regarded as unscientific or incorrect but is often shared within families or cultures. Put students in small groups and help them conduct some basic research about other well-known old wives' tales. Once they've learned more, encourage them to interview family members to see how many tales they are familiar with. After they've gathered information, give students a chance to share their new knowledge with their classmates.

## Gifts That Keep on Giving

In *The 12 Days of Christmas*, an illustrated version of the classic yuletide song, big elephant grows overwhelmed (and a bit frustrated) by the gifts bestowed upon his little elephant, begging the question "Is there a such a thing as too many gifts?" In your opinion, what are the best kinds of gifts for family and friends? Have students brainstorm about what their special people could really use and create certificates or a coupon book with tickets redeemable for gifts like "a hug" or "playing a game together."

## One and Only You

*This Story Is for You* highlights and celebrates the qualities that make people unique, as well as the staying power of friendship, as well as choosing and sharing kindness with others. Using paper plates and string, have students create a long necklace with their names in the center of the paper plate. After moving and hanging the necklace plates around their backs, ask students to move around the room and add positive affirmations and unique qualities they see in each other to the plates of their classmates.

## Read-in at the Library!

In *The Book Hog*, a story-loving pig adores everything about books (he also acquires and enjoys them everywhere and anywhere, including a giggle-inducing location), and he loves using his senses to explore the books he hoards. Despite his genuine enthusiasm for all kinds of stories, he has an embarrassing secret—he can't read until he seeks assistance from a kind and patient librarian he meets during a storytime at the library. With your class, discuss the very best places to read and explore books. Set up a visit to the library for storytime with the librarian, and after, offer young readers a chance to participate in a silent read-in where stacks of books are explored.

## Write All About It!

Using the works of Greg Pizzoli as inspiration, have students write, connect, and create as they reflect on their personal experiences in the following ways:

- *Number One Sam* Journal Entry: After sharing *Number One Sam* with your class, ask students to make a list of things they are good at doing. Of those, which do they enjoy doing most? Why is that?
- *Templeton Gets His Wish* Journal Entry: After sharing *Templeton Gets His Wish* with your class, share the following writing prompt: Write about a time when you did something you later regretted. What was it you did? Were there consequences for your actions? What did you learn from this experience?
- *The Watermelon Seed* Journal Entry: After sharing *The Watermelon Seed* with your class, have students create their own old wives' tale and accompany it with original illustrations.
- *Good Night Owl* Journal Entry: After sharing *Good Night Owl* with your class, share the following writing prompt: What does it mean to overreact? Reflecting on your actions and those of your family, can you think of a time when you or someone you loved overreacted? What did they or you do? How was the issue resolved? Did you or they learn anything from the experience?
- *The 12 Days of Christmas* Journal Entry: After sharing *The 12 Days of Christmas*, ask students to reflect on the story and respond to the following: When is it better to give than receive? Why is it important to understand and pay attention to what others need? Even though it is natural to want lots of gifts, what can be the drawbacks to receiving too many things? What are some alternatives to giving and receiving "stuff"?
- *This Story Is for You* Journal Entry: After reading *This Story Is for You* with your class, ask them to consider and respond to the following: What does kindness look like? Discuss a time when you demonstrated kindness to a friend. How do you think that made them feel? How did it make you feel?
- *The Book Hog* Journal Entry: After reading *The Book Hog*, ask students to consider how the Book Hog overcomes the challenge of not being able to read and have them reflect on something they'd like to learn to do but are currently unable to. Next, have them draft a written step-by-step plan focusing on what they want to accomplish and who they can turn to for help so they can ultimately be successful in achieving their goal.

## Extended Journaling Activity: Fear-Free

*Good Night Owl*, *Templeton Gets His Wish*, *Number One Sam*, and *The Watermelon Seed* all show readers that being afraid is a very natural feeling. Reread these books and make a list of the emotions that are evident based on the images of the characters. After discussion, share a personal experience where fear temporarily handicapped you. After offering your story (and how you overcame your apprehensions), ask students to reflect on a time when they were afraid to try something new (examples could include starting school, sleeping without a night-light, trying out for a sport, etc.). Have them consider this fearful experience and what made them afraid, and finally, what happened when they chose to try to overcome their fear. Allow students a few minutes to reflect before journaling and sharing their story. To enrich this activity, have students draw illustrations of the experience after completing their story.



# Reader's Theater for The World of Greg Pizzoli

## Purpose

To demonstrate an understanding of text structure by retelling and sequencing a story.

## Directions

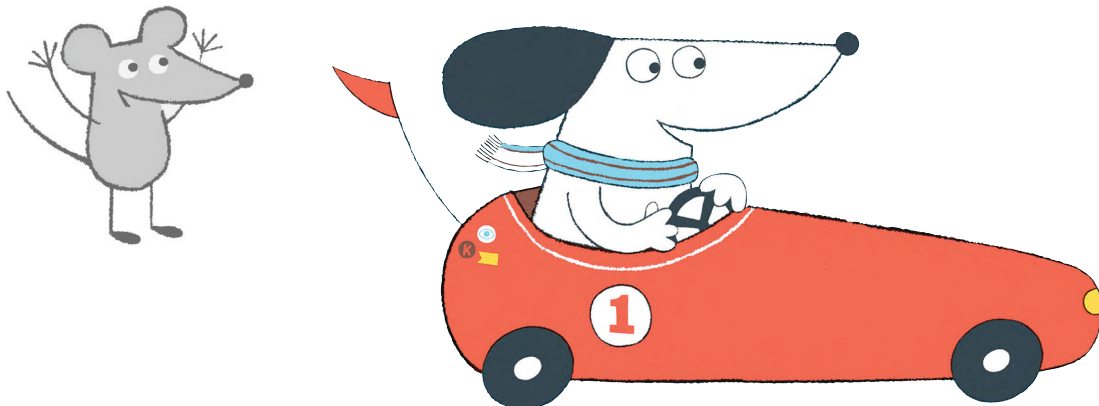
- 1 Using the cover art and title as a starting point, have students make predictions about the book.  
(Ask: What do you think this book is about?)
- 2 Read *Good Night Owl*, *Templeton Gets His Wish*, *Number One Sam*, *The Watermelon Seed*, *The 12 Days of Christmas*, *This Story Is For You*, or *The Book Hog* to the class. Following the reading of the story, have students complete a story analysis graphic organizer or a SWBS chart as a way to make observations about the characters, setting, conflict, and plot.
- 3 To enhance understanding, take a well-known story and model writing a reader's theater script as a whole-class activity. After discussing dialogue and performance, divide the class into small groups that will create an original script using the selected Greg Pizzoli book as inspiration.
- 4 Next, allow students ample time to practice, and be sure to conference with each group to answer or clarify any questions they may have.
- 5 Finally, it is showtime! Groups will perform for other teams of students. For additional fun, consider filming each performance to share with the whole class.

## Enrichment activity

Allow students to create costumes, props, and sets for the final reader's theater performance. Although reader's theater does not usually employ such devices, the use of costumes and sets affords early elementary students a better understanding of the story.

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.K.1, RL.K.2, RL.K.3, RL.K.4, RL.K.5, RL.K.6, RL.K.7, RL.K.9, RL.K.10*

*CCSS.ELA-Literacy.RL.1.1, RL.1.2, RL.1.3, RL.1.4, RL.1.5, RL.1.6, RL.1.7, RL.1.9, RL.1.10*





## About the Author

**Greg Pizzoli** is an author, illustrator, and screen printer from Philadelphia. His first picture book, *The Watermelon Seed*, received the Theodor Seuss Geisel Award. When not writing brief autobiographies, he can be found in his studio or teaching at the University of the Arts, where he also received his MFA. Visit him at [www.gregpizzoli.com](http://www.gregpizzoli.com).

## Conversation with Greg Pizzoli

### What has inspired your picture books?

This question is never easy to answer because so much about life—the joys, the disappointments, the mediocrity of existence—it’s all inspiring and finds its way into my sketchbooks. And I love picture books: I love the paper, the smell of the ink, the connection between reader and audience as they are read aloud—as an artist, picture books are my favorite thing to make.

And I tend to not want to examine things as I’m making them, so I don’t often think about why a certain character is acting this way, or wants this or that. The characters are there, and I build a book around them. I feel as though my job is to understand and convey the emotions of the characters, but not to create them. That might sound weird—but that’s how it feels.

After making a few books, I can look back and see commonalities between all of the characters. They all exude a certain type of anxiety, and they all deal with that anxiety in their own way. Kroc fears the seed in his stomach, Sam fears failure, Templeton has to come to terms with the realities of family dynamics, and Owl wishes to control that which can’t be seen. Again, I don’t think about those commonalities as I’m working on the books, but looking back at them as a group, I would say that it seems clear I want my books to speak to kids who feel that something is not quite right—something is a little off with the world—and so I want to tell them a story about a character who feels the same way—and I want to make them laugh.

### When you are creating a story, what comes first—the words or the pictures? Which is more satisfying for you—writing or drawing?

Typically the words come first, although they are often inspired by a doodle of a character in my sketchbook. But typically, text comes first, and I usually get that pretty close to done before I start sketching in earnest. I like to say a lot with the pictures, and not have the text say TOO much, so I am often thinking about what the pictures will “say” as I am writing the text. I think of drawing as a kind of writing, and I don’t really separate them in the process of making a book. It’s all connected.

**Your characters capture the emotional qualities of young children so authentically. How do you channel that in your work so well?**

Thank you, I appreciate that. I'm not sure. I was a kid for much of my life, and I don't think I ever forgot what that felt like. I was raised by a single mom, and my little sister didn't come around until I was seven, so I had a lot of time to myself as a kid. I was always reading, drawing, or playing games, and I think I have held on to that sense of wonder that kids who are alone a lot have to maintain just to keep themselves interested in the world around them. I think I also just try to be honest with kids, and not talk down to them, which is surprisingly common in a lot of kids' books. I never liked adults who pinched my cheeks or told me how "polite" I was as a kid, and I never want to be like them. I'd rather try to laugh at the absurdity of it all.

**In what ways do you think young readers benefit from meeting characters like Owl, Templeton, Sam, and Kroc?**

Sorry if once again I seem cagey with my answers, but I just don't think in those terms. I suppose they would benefit first and foremost by having a laugh, or maybe digging the drawings, but I have never once written a book with the intention that this would teach this one thing or help kids to understand this other thing. *The Watermelon Seed*, for example, isn't meant to instruct kids that swallowing a watermelon seed is okay. It's supposed to be funny. I just make books that I think are honest and funny, and I have been lucky in that a lot of kids (and some parents, teachers, and librarians) have found them entertaining.

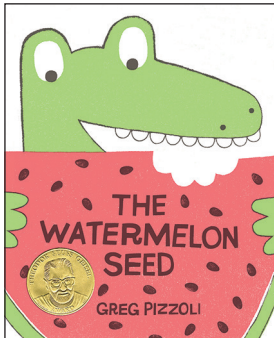
The one thing I am conscious of when choosing the words for the stories is to keep the language "simple" enough for emerging readers to begin to read the stories themselves. I've gotten several letters from kids and parents, telling me that *Number One Sam*, or *Templeton Gets His Wish*, or *The Watermelon Seed* was a game-changing book for them in their path to reading. That's incredibly meaningful to me, and I strive to make books that are simple enough to be read by emerging readers, and complex enough to warrant many returns.



This guide was created by Dr. Rose Brock, an assistant professor in the Library Science Department in the College of Education at Sam Houston State University. Dr. Brock holds a PhD in Library Science, specializing in children's and young adult literature.

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# Collect all of the Greg Pizzoli books!



## The Watermelon Seed

*Hardcover*

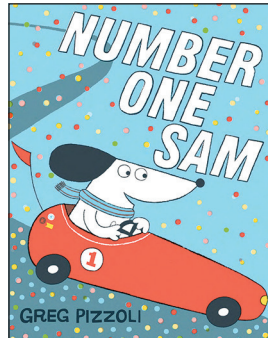
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\$16.99

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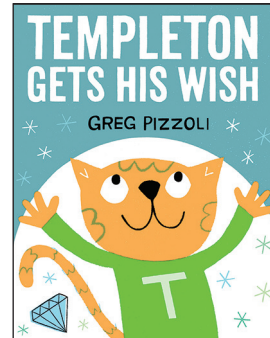


## Number One Sam

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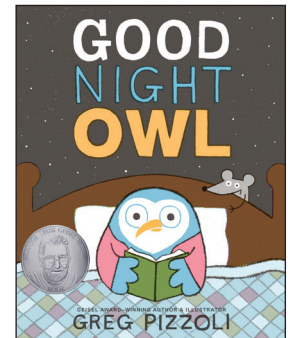


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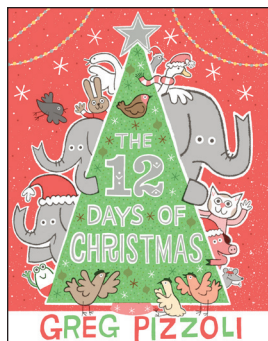
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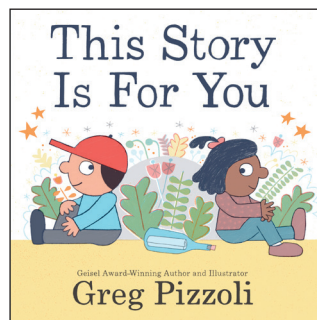
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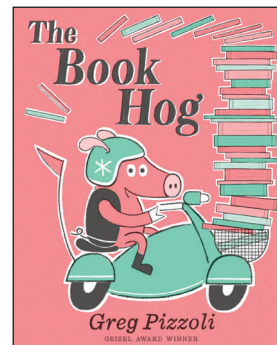


## This Story Is for You

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## The Book Hog

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