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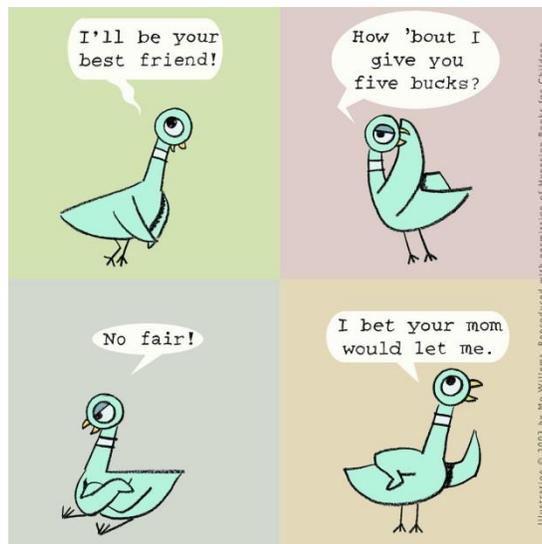
The Art and Whimsy of Mo Willems March 18 – September 25, 2016 Selected PR Images

Knuffle Bunny, A Cautionary Tale
Published illustration for “As soon as Trixie’s mommy opened the door, she asked, “Where is Knuffle Bunny?”, © 2004 by Mo Willems. Hyperion Books for Children, 2004. Digital print 13 3/4 x 29 13/16 in. Reproduced with permission of Hyperion Books for Children.



Set in Park Slope, Brooklyn, where Willems lived with his family—and loosely recounting an episode from his own parenting—this spread from *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale* (Hyperion, 2004) shows Dad’s return from the laundromat without daughter Trixie’s stuffed animal, Knuffle Bunny. Willems took photos of the neighborhood to create the backgrounds in the Knuffle Bunny trilogy; depicted landmarks include Prospect Park, PS 107, and Grand Army Plaza.

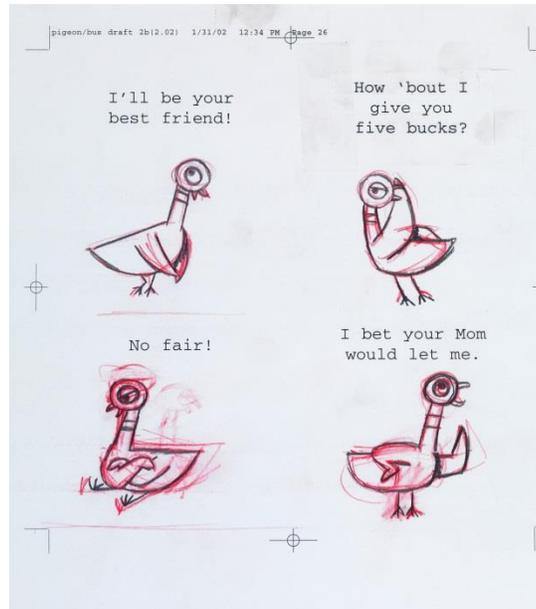
Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!
Published illustration for “I’ll be your best friend! / How ‘bout I give you five bucks? / No fair! / I bet your mom would let me.”, © 2003 by Mo Willems. Hyperion Books for Children, 2003. Digital print 9 x 9 in. Reproduced with permission of Hyperion Books for Children.



Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Preliminary sketch for "I'll be your best friend!", © 2003 by Mo Willems.

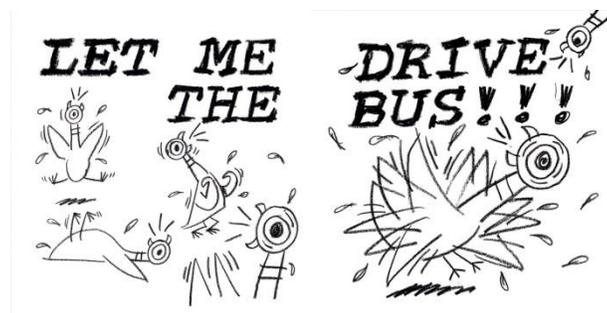
Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.
Graphite, red colored pencil, printed
and pasted text on paper
11 x 8 ½ in.



These illustrations from Willems' first children's book, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* (Hyperion, 2003), provide insight into Willems' basic working process, which stems from his training and early career in animation. He begins drawing with blue pencil and makes corrections in red. The preliminary sketch reveals Willems' quest for just the right gesture and expression—particularly conveyed in the eyes. Willems then translates the line illustration, with changes, into the final digital color rendition.

Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Final illustration for "LET ME DRIVE THE BUS!!!", © 2003 by Mo Willems.
Hyperion Books for Children, 2003.
Aquarelle watercolor pencil on paper
10 x 10 in.



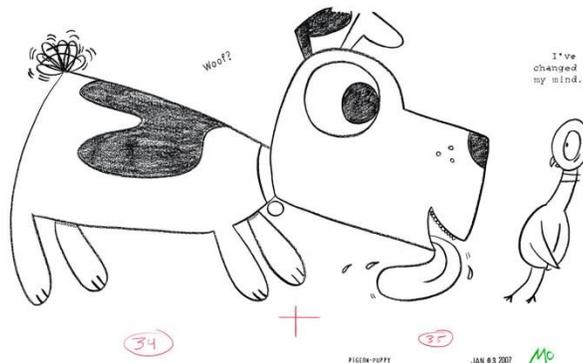
This finished line illustration for a spread in *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* shows Willems' love of typography and expressive lettering. Here, the bold text reinforces the Pigeon's tantrum when he finds that his pleas to drive a bus are not getting him anywhere. Both the Pigeon's gestures and his eye variations convey the emotional crescendo, culminating in furious flapping and a crazed, spiraling pupil. Expressive lettering also facilitates dramatic read-aloud sessions.

The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?
 Final illustration for
 “Nooooooooooooooooooooooooooooo!”,
 © 2012 by Mo Willems.
 Hyperion Books for Children, 2012.
 Aquarelle watercolor pencil on paper
 8 3/4 x 17 5/8 in.



The Pigeon’s chutzpah doesn’t necessarily yield results, especially when it comes to getting the many things he wants. Duckling, a foil to Pigeon’s bombast, gets a cookie by asking politely in *The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?* (Hyperion, 2012). Pigeon, who is often told “no,” is driven topsy-turvy when recounting all the ways he doesn’t get what he wants, and his thundering “NO”—with 27 “O’s”—upends both Duckling and cookie. Here again, the power of the lettering helps convey the power of the moment.

The Pigeon Wants a Puppy!
 Final illustration for “I’ve changed my mind.”, © 2008 by Mo Willems.
 Hyperion Books for Children, 2008.
 Aquarelle watercolor pencil and red colored pencil on paper
 13 x 21 in.



In *The Pigeon Wants a Puppy!* (Hyperion, 2008) Willems zeroes in on the essence of a child’s yearning. Pigeon’s plaintive, inexorable pleading for a puppy works. Clearly, he has miscalculated, and Willems conveys his change of heart in the bird’s slightly recoiling stance, the pinhole pupil of his eye, and the tiny, seemingly fragile lettering. Throughout his work, Willems achieves a masterful balance between too much and too little.

Cat the Cat, Who Is That?

Final illustration for "Blarggie!
Blarggie!", © 2010 by Mo Willems.
Balzer + Bray, an imprint of
HarperCollins Publishers, 2010.
Ink brush on paper
13 15/16 x 16 15/16 in.



26 JUL 06 2008 MP CAT THE CAT

In 2008 Willems began a new series featuring Cat the Cat. Geared to the beginning reader, the books' repetition and limited vocabularies are key ingredients. Willems compensates for textual restrictions by using bold and dynamic graphics, uncluttered settings, and an irrepressible sense of humor.

Leonardo the Terrible Monster

Preliminary sketch for "Leonardo
researched until he found the
perfect candidate.", © 2005 by Mo
Willems.
Hyperion Books for Children, 2005.
Blue colored pencil and graphite on
vellum
13 3/8 x 15 7/8 in.



The protagonist of *Leonardo the Terrible Monster* (Hyperion, 2005) believes he is a terrible failure as a monster because he is incapable of scaring anyone. Desperate, Leonardo researches and identifies his most likely prospect. In this early drawing, Leonardo's horns are quite large. For the final drawing, Willems shrunk them in size to underscore Leonardo's lack of physical intimidation.

Edwina the Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct
Final illustration for Edwina baking cookies, © 2006 by Mo Willems.
Hyperion Books for Children, 2006.
Charcoal pencil on vellum
9 x 12 in.

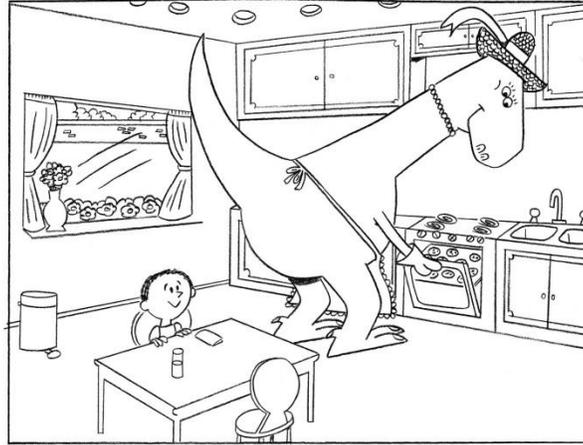
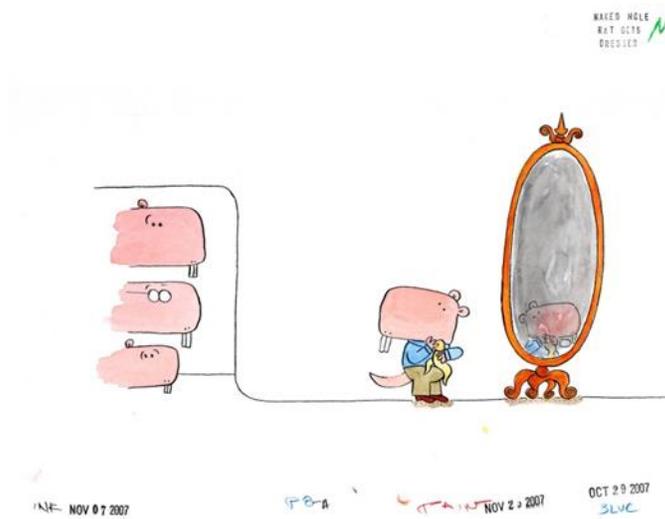


Illustration © 2006 by Mo Willems

Willems' stories often map behavioral ideals through a wonderfully wacky lens. *Edwina, the Dinosaur Who Didn't Know She Was Extinct* (Hyperion, 2006) is a story about overcoming hostility and sparking friendship. Edwina is the consummate do-gooder. Reginald von Hoobie Doobie, the school know-it-all, is bent on proving to everyone that dinosaurs (that is, Edwina) are extinct. Yet Edwina's persistently generous nature enchants everyone, and ultimately Reginald. In this closing illustration, she bakes him her signature chocolate-chip cookies.

Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed
Final illustration for "Hello," © 2009
by Mo Willems.
Hyperion Books for Children, 2009.
Ink and watercolor on paper
8 1/2 x 11 in.



Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed (Hyperion, 2009) addresses identity exploration and unorthodoxy. Naked Mole Rats don't wear clothes, but Wilbur enjoys dressing up. The mole rat community ostracizes Wilbur until the patriarch mole rat recognizes it as a harmless matter of personal choice. The art for this book is done in watercolor in a single layer, a departure from Willems' animation approach of working in multiple layers.

Mo Willems with Pigeon
Photo by Marty Umans.



After a successful stint with *Sesame Street*, where he garnered numerous awards for his writing, Willems decided to shift his focus to children's books. In 1999 he made a pilgrimage to Oxford University (where Dr. Seuss had done graduate work) in search of inspiration. There he encountered an irrepressible pigeon who kept showing up in his sketchbooks, and it became the protagonist of his first book, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* Since then, the Pigeon has called the shots; Willems knows he is one character who will never retire.

Mo Willems
Photo by Jo Chattman.



