

The World of Kevin Henkes



“It doesn’t matter if you’re the most popular kid in class when you’re lost in a book. Or if you’re the smartest. Or the best basketball player. . . .
What matters is the book and the world it brings you.”

—Kevin Henkes





Kevin Henkes



Photo © by Michelle Corpora

Kevin Henkes was born in 1960 in Racine, Wisconsin, and during his childhood often visited the local art museum—the Charles A. Wustum Museum of Fine Arts. Henkes was greatly inspired by these visits and by reading his favorite books. As a young child, he pored over books and was intrigued by their authors and illustrators but says, “I never imagined that one day I would be one myself.”

In his senior year of high school a public librarian introduced him to Barbara Bader’s *American Picturebooks from Noah’s Ark to The Beast Within*. “It was the first serious book about picture books, written for adults, that I had ever read,” Henkes says, and he felt encouraged and emboldened by it.

Henkes began college at the University of Wisconsin at Madison, choosing to go there in large part because of the School of Education’s Cooperative Children’s Book Center (CCBC). At the CCBC, Henkes learned about the history and future trajectory of children’s literature. The July after his freshman year Henkes set off for New York, a ranked list of his favorite publishers in hand. His first choice was Greenwillow Books, headed at the time by its founder, Susan Hirschman. Hirschman signed him up on the spot, and Henkes took the fall semester off to work on a book dummy. The result was Henkes’s first published picture book, *All Alone* (1981).

In 1986, Henkes’s picture book profile grew a bit larger, thanks to the birth of some little mice in *A Weekend with Wendell*. Thirteen books featuring these mouse characters would follow, including the 1994 Caldecott Honor Book *Owen*, but the most famous of them is *Lilly’s Purple Plastic Purse*. With the release of that book in 1996, Henkes gave the world of children’s literature a memorable new addition to its roster of cherished characters. At the same time, another star was born: Henkes himself was firmly established as an outstanding and inimitable contributor to the canon of children’s literature.

In addition to his thirty-four picture books, Henkes has published ten novels. *Words of Stone* is especially meaningful to Henkes because this book was his first to elicit letters from older children and adults. His novel *Olive’s Ocean* won the Newbery Honor in 2003.

Indeed, the impact that Henkes has made in his impressive career was made official when the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, selected him to deliver the prestigious May Hill Arbutnot Lecture in 2007. This is an honor given to “an individual who has made significant contributions to the field of children’s literature.”



Kitten's First Full Moon

Caldecott Medal Winner

ALA Notable Children's Book

Publishers Weekly Best Book

Charlotte Zolotow Award

New York Times Best Illustrated Book

School Library Journal Best Book

Bulletin Blue Ribbon (*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*)

ALA Booklist Editors' Choice

New York Public Library, One Hundred Titles for Reading and Sharing

Texas 2X2 Reading List



Tr 0-06-058828-4 • \$15.99 (\$19.99)

Lb 0-06-058829-2 • \$16.89 (\$25.89)

Sp 0-06-087223-3 • \$16.99 (\$22.99)

About the Book

When she sees her first full moon, Kitten thinks it's a little bowl of milk in the sky and she wants it. She jumps at it, chases it, and climbs a tall tree all the way to the top . . . but she still can't reach it. Poor Kitten! The engaging heroine of this Caldecott winner is drawn with fluid, soft black ink outlines against a silvery nighttime backdrop of gouache and pencil.

Themes

Indefatigable Kitten is a role model for all ages—taking chances, picking herself up when she fails, trying out new strategies to get what she wants, and figuring out when enough is enough.



Getting Ready

You can introduce this book solely through its pictures by taking a Picture Walk, an effective and fun pre-reading strategy. First, read the title aloud and ask children to look at the cover and predict what they think might happen in the story. Then say, "First, I am going to show you the pictures, one by one, without reading the story. I'd like you to examine each picture carefully and tell me what you think is happening in the story." As you turn the pages, children will be brimming over with comments about what Kitten is doing and what she will do next.

Then, start at the beginning again and read the story aloud. Children can see whether their interpretation of the pictures came close to the actual text. Ask them to pay attention to Kitten's facial expressions. How do they show what Kitten is thinking or feeling? Children will want to try out those expressions, too.

Questions for Discussion

- Why do you think Kevin Henkes decided to illustrate the book in shades of black, silvery gray, and white? Why are there no other colors?

- Look at Kitten’s face. Can you tell what she is thinking or feeling from her expressions?
- Think about the book’s theme, or what the story is about, way down deep. What is the story telling us about life?

ACTIVITIES

Act It Out

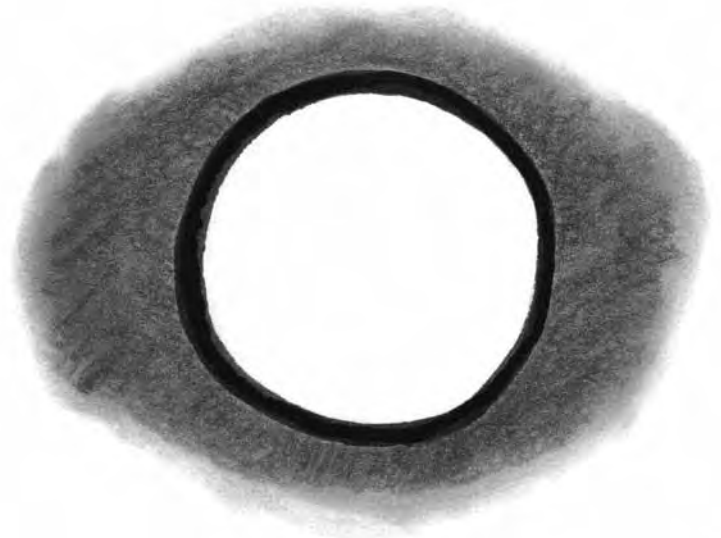
Here is a story just waiting to be acted out in narrative pantomime. For this creative drama exercise, first read the book aloud. Children will join in on the two repeated refrains, “Poor Kitten!” and “Still, there was the little bowl of milk, just waiting.” Next, have them stand, find an unoccupied space near you, and, as you read the story again, they can each become Kitten as she tries doggedly for that elusive bowl of milk. They can lick, jump, tumble, run, climb, leap, lap up milk, and, finally, fall asleep. Lucky Kittens. Simple creative drama exercises like this allow children not just to hear, read, and see a story—they can become the story; they live the story and understand it from the inside out.

Looking at the Pictures: Shades of Gray

The pictures use as a base the milk-colored off-white page, while the white cat, the moon, and trees are outlined with a heavy black line and filled in with varying shades of silvery gray, making them look almost like woodblock prints.

Hand out gray or black colored pencils and black fine-tipped markers. First, children can draw the outline of an animal with the markers. Then, using the

sides of the pencil, not the point, they can shade in the rest of the picture. Demonstrate how to shade lightly for a lighter color, and show how, if you keep on going, the color becomes darker and shinier. You can try the same effect with other colors and with watercolor paints, too.



Phases of the Moon

Find out facts about the moon and why it waxes and wanes. Introduce general moon vocabulary, including: new moon, crescent moon, quarter or half moon, gibbous moon, full moon, and waxing or waning moon. A meaningful interactive homework assignment would be to have parents and children go outside together each night to observe the moon and draw what they see. Make a class chart or ongoing bulletin board of their observations, incorporating their pictures, labeled and dated, to see how long each phase of the moon lasts.



A Good Day

★“A deceptively simple picture book, expertly tuned to the emotions and imaginations of young children.”

—ALA Booklist (STARRED REVIEW)

About the Book

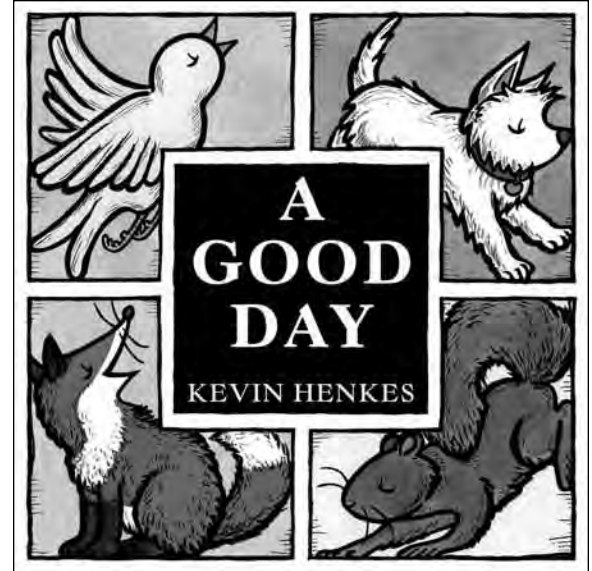
It's a bad day for a little yellow bird who loses his favorite tail feather, a little white dog whose leash gets tangled, a little orange fox who can't find his mother, and a little brown squirrel who drops her nut. But then something good happens to each of them, turning a bad day into a good one.

Themes

The most elemental of texts and handsome brown-bordered watercolors make this lost-and-found story just right for toddler and preschool story hours.

Getting Ready

Ask your listeners if they're having a good day. If they say they are, ask them what has made it good. If anyone is having a bad day, ask what made it bad. Talk over what they think it would take to turn a bad day into a good one or vice versa. Have you ever had a



Tr 0-06-114018-X • \$16.99 (\$19.99)

Lb 0-06-114019-8 • \$17.89 (\$22.89)

bad day that turned into a good day? What happened to perk up your day?

Questions for Discussion

- All four animals have something in common. What is it? (They've all lost something: the bird lost his feather, the dog lost her freedom, the fox lost his mother, and the squirrel lost her nut.)
- What did each animal do to turn a bad day into a good one?
- Why was each item or thing important to the animal that lost it?
- What important things have you lost? Did you find them? Which of your things is most important to you? What have you found that someone else may have lost?
- What does “Finders keepers, losers weepers” mean? Is it fair?

ACTIVITIES

Opposites

A bad day can turn into a good day. Discuss other opposite pairs as a group. Students can then individually write and illustrate a story that incorporates another pair of opposites. Some possibilities:

A cold day/A hot day
 A wet day/A dry day
 A cloudy day/A sunny day
 An inside day/An outside day



Comparing and Contrasting

Look at the four animals on the cover of the book. What do they have in common? How are they different?

With your group, brainstorm a list of different aspects and features of the animals. Make up a chart and, as children compare and contrast each characteristic, record the information. For example:

CHARACTERISTICS	BIRD	DOG	FOX	SQUIRREL
COLOR	yellow	white	orange & white	brown
COLLAR	no	yes	no	no
TAIL	yes	yes	yes	yes
WINGS	yes	no	no	no
LEGS	2 legs	4 legs	4 legs	4 legs
EARS	none	pointy	pointy	rounded
FEET	claws	paws	paws	paws

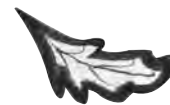
All About Feathers

Since losing and finding a feather is a pivotal element in *A Good Day*, use the opportunity to do a mini-lesson on feathers.



Make feather paintings, using a feather as your brush. (Your local crafts store will have feathers.) Or have children paint or draw a picture and incorporate an actual feather into it.

You can also introduce the idea of feather types (contour feathers, which include flight and tail feathers; down; semiplume; filoplume; and bristle), the parts of a feather (shaft, vane, barb, barbule, hooklets), and talk about the ways birds use their feathers. Bring in a peacock feather or a goose quill for students to examine.



Chrysanthemum

ALA Notable Children's Book
Horn Book Fanfare

About the Book

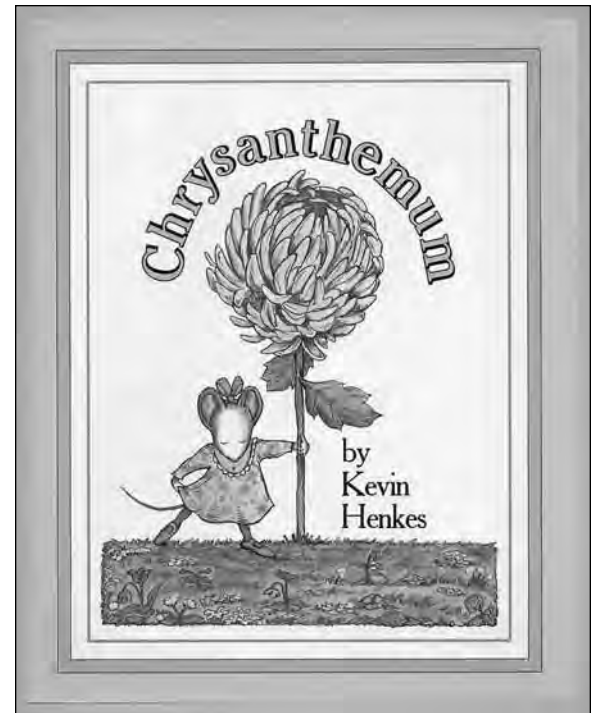
Chrysanthemum, a cheerful and guileless young mouse, loves everything about her perfect name. And then she starts school. Each day a trio of disdainful mouse girls—Jo, Rita, and the leader of the pack, the domineering Victoria—tease and taunt her mercilessly about the unsuitability of her name. Chrysanthemum wilts. Chrysanthemum's shattered psyche is repaired by Mrs. Twinkle, an "incredible wonder" of a music teacher, who reveals to the class her own long, flower-based name: Delphinium.

Themes

This is an ideal break-the-ice book for the first week of school. Not only does it get children thinking about and bonding with their own names and the names of everyone else in the class, but it is a fine vehicle for starting a discussion about treating classmates with tolerance, kindness, and compassion.

Getting Ready

Many of your children will not have heard of chrysanthemums, so visit your local garden center and buy a pot or two of the flowering plant for all to see and sniff.



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Lb 0-688-09700-6 • \$16.89 (\$25.89)
Pb 0-688-14732-1 • \$6.99 (\$8.75)

Making Predictions and Inferences

Discuss with your listeners the way the main character in stories often encounters a problem that he or she tries to solve. Read aloud the first five pages of the book, stopping at the top of the sixth page with: "Chrysanthemum thought her name was absolutely perfect. And then she started school." As a class, predict what might happen to Chrysanthemum when she gets to school.

Questions for Discussion

- Why do Jo, Rita, and Victoria make fun of Chrysanthemum's name? Why doesn't Chrysanthemum stand up to the three mean girls?
- How do her parents help her feel better each day when she comes home from school?
- Chrysanthemum dreams that her name is Jane. ("It was an extremely pleasant dream.") Do you like your name? Why or why not? If you could change your name to any name in the world, what name would you choose?



ACTIVITIES

Making Connections

What if Mrs. Twinkle had not come to Chrysanthemum's rescue? What could Chrysanthemum have done to get the girls to stop badgering her? What good advice could you give her, based on your own experience, about how to deal with bullies and people who say mean things? Talk this over as a group.

“Chrysanthemum felt much better after her favorite dinner (macaroni and cheese with ketchup) and an evening filled with hugs and kisses and Parcheesi.” What are the foods and games and other comforts that cheer you up when you are feeling down? Write and illustrate and then share responses: “When I’m feeling down, it helps when I _____.”

Beautiful Words

Chrysanthemum’s father has a way with words. Her mother says, “Your name is beautiful.” Her father adds, “And precious and priceless and fascinating and winsome.” Of her cruel classmates, her mother says, “They’re just jealous.” Her loquacious father says, “And envious and begrudging and discontented and jaundiced.”

Explore synonyms and antonyms. Children can work in pairs and come up with two opposite adjectives, and four synonyms for each, writing and illustrating the following:

Yesterday I felt _____. And _____ and _____ and _____ and _____.

But today, I feel _____. And _____ and _____ and _____ and _____.

Pick a pair of words (tired/awake) to use as models for brainstorming, and show how you can use the dictionary, thesaurus, and the website www.thesaurus.com to come up with a host of interesting (and captivating and engrossing and intriguing and unusual) synonyms.

Name Games

Celebrate names by making decorative name cards. Children can write their names with colored markers on strips of cardstock paper and decorate them with beads, buttons, glitter, and bits of shiny ribbon. Take digital pictures of each child, print them out, and make a class bulletin board of names and faces labeled with their fancy name cards.

Victoria says of Chrysanthemum, “I’m named after my grandmother. You’re named after a *flower!*” As a homework assignment, children can ask their parents to tell and write down the stories of how they got their perfectly perfect names.



Owen

Caldecott Honor Book

ALA Notable Children's Book

Boston Globe-Horn Book Award Honor Book

ALA Booklist Editors' Choice

Horn Book Fanfare

About the Book

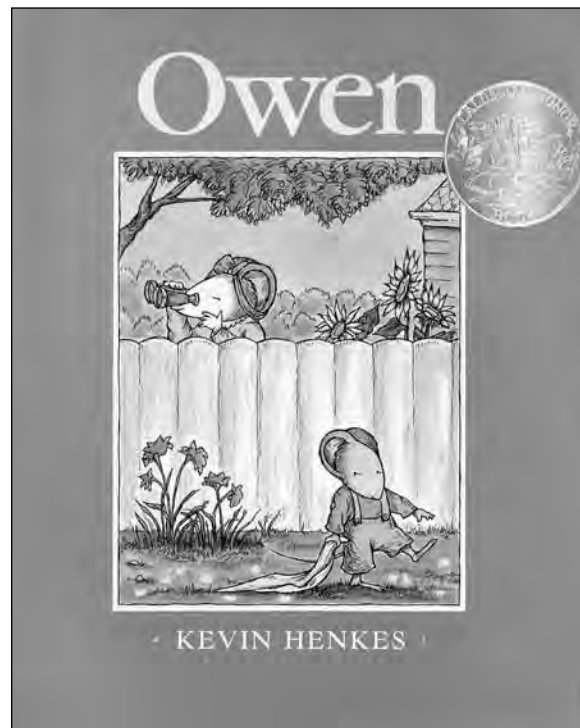
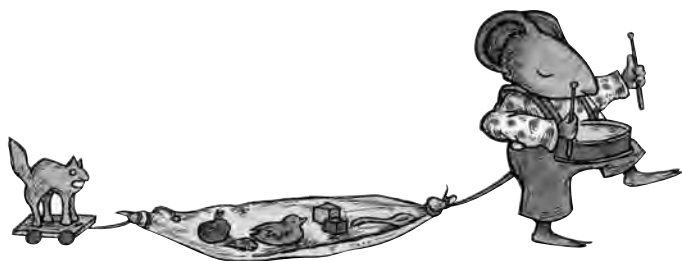
Though Owen thinks his blanket, Fuzzy, is just perfect, next-door neighbor Mrs. Tweezers gives Owen's parents loads of advice on ways to wean him from it, including invoking the Blanket Fairy, using the vinegar trick, and just saying no. Just in time for school, Owen's mother comes up with the perfect solution: she turns the blanket into handkerchiefs he can carry with him wherever he goes.

Themes

Every child uses some sort of security object, whether it's a toy, a thumb, or a binky. For those not yet ready to let go and for those who have moved on, here's a story about making compromises that speaks to us all.

Getting Ready

Wrap the book *Owen* in a nice, fuzzy baby blanket, and place it in a basket. When you are ready to read, show the basket to your listeners and ask them to guess what's in it. You could, if you like, first pull out a pacifier, a baby bottle, a teething ring, a diaper, and then the blanket, and ask what all these items have in common.



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Lb 0-688-11450-4 • \$17.89 (\$25.89)

Then, dramatically, unwrap the book from the blanket. Show the front and back covers and then the endpapers and the title page. Ask your listeners to make inferences: "Who is Owen, and what can you tell us about him?"

Making Predictions and Inferences

As you start the story, stop after the second page to have listeners take a careful look at the six-paneled illustration and describe the places Owen and Fuzzy go together. Stop again at the point where Mrs. Tweezers says, "Isn't he getting a little old to be carrying that thing around?" As a class, predict what the rest of the story will be about.

Discussion Points

- Why does Mrs. Tweezers think that Owen needs to give up his blanket? How does Owen feel about that?
- What are the ways Owen's parents use to try and wean him from his blanket? What does Owen do to foil them?

- What other methods could Owen have used to disguise and hide his blanket?
- Did you (or do you) have a special object that you carried (carry) around with you? Where is it now? Why was (is) it special to you?
- What are the good parts about growing up? What are the things that you did when you were little that you no longer do now that you are older?

ACTIVITIES

Making Connections

Owen cried when his parents told him he couldn't bring his blanket to school. Why did they want him to leave it at home? Have you ever had a problem like this? Talk this over as a group. Then ask, "Can you come up with another good solution to his problem?"

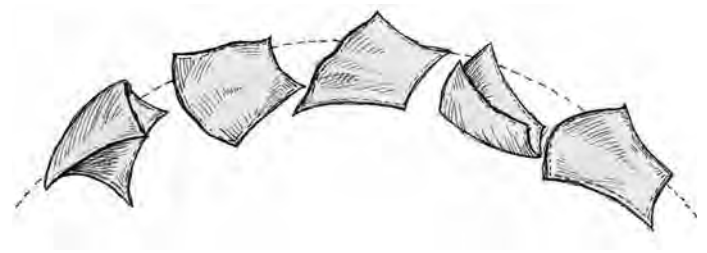
Each pair or small group can discuss, collaborate, and then write and illustrate a Problem vs. Solution page. For each group, fold a large piece of construction paper in half, labeling the left side PROBLEM and the right side SOLUTION. On the left, children write and illustrate the problem: Owen can't bring his blanket to school. On the right side, they write and illustrate an original and creative solution. Answers, of course, will vary. Have each group read its page aloud and show it to the rest of the class.

101 Uses for a Blanket

Ask your children to recall the many different ways Owen plays with and interacts with his beloved

blanket, Fuzzy. Then brainstorm a further list of creative uses for a blanket. Holding out your fuzzy blanket, ask volunteers to come to the front of the group and demonstrate their suggestions.

Make it more concrete by handing each child a souvenir of the story: a tiny, mouse-sized blanket, perhaps 1 to 2 inches square, cut from yellow flannel. Have them draw a picture of Owen using the blanket in a new way and label it with a descriptive sentence.



Precious Possessions

Owen's blanket, Fuzzy, is his most precious possession, as is Wemberly's doll, Petal, in the book *Wemberly Worried*.

Ask your students, "What are your names for your favorite things? How do you come up with good names? Why is it important to name things?"

Have them draw pictures of their most precious possessions and explain or write about why they are so special.



Wemberly Worried

ALA Notable Children's Book

IRA/CBC Children's Choice

IRA/CBC Teachers' Choice

About the Book

Wemberly worries about things big and small, all day and night. Her newest worry is the biggest yet: what will happen when she starts school? Wemberly's astute teacher, Mrs. Peachum, pairs her with another stripes-wearing, doll-clutching worrier, a classmate named Jewel, and the two become instant friends.

Themes

All children worry about different things, and this jewel of a story will help assuage their fears and show how bad things can be overcome, especially with the help of a friend.

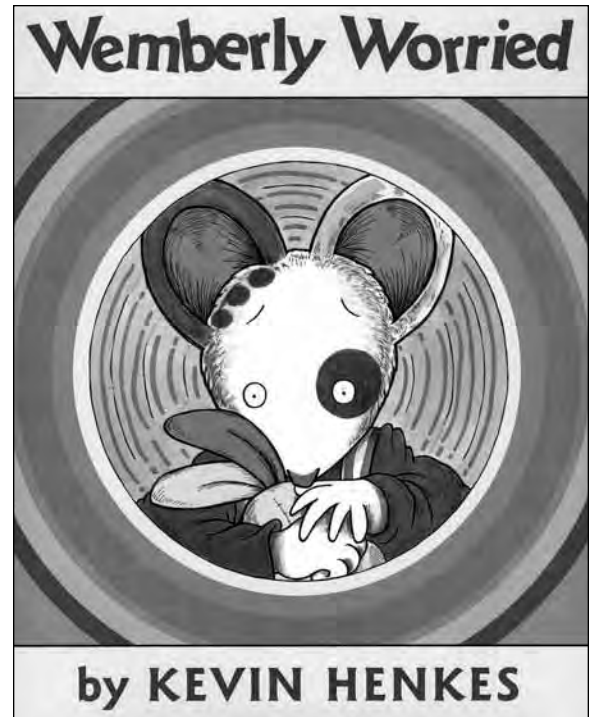
Getting Ready

Have your audience look at the cover of *Wemberly Worried* and speculate about what might be worrying her.

Discussion Points

- Why are Wemberly's parents worried about all her worrying?
- What big or little things do you worry about?
- How do you stop yourself from worrying?

Wemberly worries about big things, little things, and things in between. Have your children categorize each of Wemberly's worries as big, little, or in between.



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Lb 0-688-17028-5 • \$17.89 (\$24.89)

ACTIVITIES

Making Connections

Ask children to talk about or write about (and draw a picture of) a time they worried unnecessarily, and then tell what actually happened. As an example, ask them to describe their own recollections of the first day of school.

Optimist vs. Pessimist

Introduce the word *optimist* by drawing a smiling face on the board and *pessimist* with a frowning face. An optimist looks on the bright side of life and sees the good in every situation. When it's about to pour, the optimist says, "Just think how happy the flowers in my garden will be and how beautiful they'll look after all that rain." The pessimist looks on the dark side of every situation and says, "I bet everything will be flooded."

Ask your students: Which one are you? What's easier—to be an optimist or a pessimist? Which one would you rather be?

Wise Advice

Wemberly's mother says, "You worry too much." Her father says, "When you worry, I worry." Her grandmother says: "Worry, worry, worry. Too much worry." She points to the sampler on the wall that says, "Take it as it comes," and she wears a purple T-shirt that says, "Go with the flow."

Ask your group to share the wise advice the grown-ups in their lives have given them and talk about how has it helped them. Make a class list of parent sayings, adages, proverbs, truisms, maxims, and morals.

From all that counsel and from their own personal experiences of going to school, ask them what good advice they would give to Wemberly before her first day.

When you read aloud the double-page spread of Wemberly's worries about school, ask children to answer each of her questions with a practical suggestion of what she could do if any of these things actually occurred. Ask them: What are the most fun things you do at school?

For older children, this memory enhancer of a story will take them back to their kindergarten years but also will get them talking about techniques they might use to relax and allay their own fears before a test or other stressful event.

Making Character Connections

Wemberly takes Petal with her everywhere she goes. Ask Kevin Henkes fans to identify another Kevin Henkes character, in a different book, who takes comfort in carrying around a special item that comforts him. Ask them to compare and contrast



Wemberly and her blanket-toting counterpart, the title character in *Owen*. How are the two characters alike and different? Would they be friends? Why or why not?

Wemberly's teacher, Mrs. Peachum, says, "Wemberly, there is someone I think you should meet." Discuss: What do Wemberly and Jewel have in common? How do they help each other? What is it about finding a friend that can make your problems seem less important? What do you have in common with your friends?

The Letter "W"

From an alphabetical standpoint, you can read *Wemberly Worried* and start children collecting W words to fill in and illustrate this sentence: "Wemberly worried about _____."

Fun and Games

You can download a set of reproducibles—a stick puppet template, a word search, a dot-to-dot, a coloring page, a mouse maze, and even a recipe for Wemberly's "Don't-Cry-Over-Spilled-Punch" Punch at: www.harpercollinschildrens.com.



Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse

ALA Notable Children's Book

ALA Booklist Editors' Choice

Bulletin Blue Ribbon (*The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*)

Kentucky Bluegrass Award

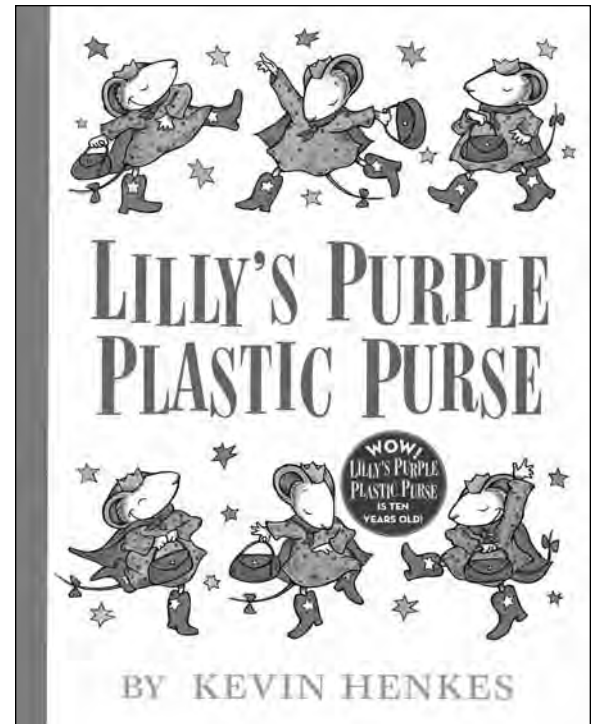
About the Book

Lilly—outspoken and high-spirited, with a red bow on her tail and jazzy red cowboy boots—loves everything about school, especially her sharp-as-a-tack teacher, Mr. Slinger. Unable to wait until Sharing Time to show off her new movie star sunglasses, three shiny quarters, and the purple plastic purse that plays a jaunty tune when it is opened, Lilly disregards Mr. Slinger's admonitions to listen, to be considerate, and to wait. But how dare Mr. Slinger confiscate her treasures? She draws a dreadful caricature of him, and slips it into his book bag. "I do not want to be a teacher when I grow up!" Lilly declares.

Themes

It's heartening to see Lilly take responsibility for her own intemperate, if understandable, actions and behavior. In modern society, where people routinely deny they did anything wrong, Lilly's apology is so thorough and sincere, and is so graciously received by that true-blue teacher, Mr. Slinger, that it warms the heart.

All will appreciate this honest and knowing tribute to wise and forgiving teachers who nurture children through tough times.



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Lb 0-688-12898-X • \$17.89 (\$25.89)

Discussion Points

- Why did Mr. Slinger take away Lilly's beautiful purse?
- Why did Lilly get angry with Mr. Slinger?
- What do you think Mr. Slinger thought and did when he opened his bookbag and found the mean picture that Lilly drew of him?
- "I do not want to be a teacher when I grow up," Lilly said as she marched out of the classroom." Why did she change her mind when she got outside?
- Why does Lilly put herself in the uncooperative chair? How does it help her?
- Lilly's father bakes tasty No-Frills Cheese Balls for Lilly to take to school. Why does he do that? Her mother writes a note to Mr. Slinger, though the contents are never revealed to us. What do you think her note said?
- How does Lilly apologize to Mr. Slinger for her behavior?
- What would have happened if Lilly had not apologized to Mr. Slinger?



ACTIVITIES

Making Connections

How have you apologized or made amends when you've done something wrong? What did you say?

What is the best apology you ever gave? How did you feel afterward? What is the best apology you ever received? How did you forgive that person? How did you feel afterward?

Share the famous apology poem "This Is Just to Say" by William Carlos Williams, which starts: "I have eaten / the plums / that were in / the icebox . . ." Children can compose apology poems, write I'm-sorry stories, and draw amend-making pictures to right wrongs that may be in their lives. And, of course, they can do an Interpretive Dance to celebrate, just as Lilly and Mr. Slinger did in class.

Loving School

Lilly says, "I love school!" Wowed by her teacher, Mr. Slinger, she says, "I want to be a teacher when I grow up." Talk over and share: What do you love about your school? What's so special about Mr. Slinger? What makes a great teacher?

Older children can write thank you notes to a teacher who had an impact on their lives.



The Lightbulb Lab

One thing Lilly loves at school is Mr. Slinger's Lightbulb Lab. There, students can express their ideas creatively through drawing and writing. Talk over why it's called the Lightbulb Lab. If you don't already have such an area in your classroom, why not set one up?

What's in the Purple Plastic Purse?

Using ingenuity and your own innate creativity, buy, borrow, modify, or create your own purple plastic purse as a prop to use after reading the story aloud. Place in it a variety of objects that begin with the letter P, such as: a Popsicle stick, a potato, a stuffed pig, a puppet, a pea pod, a pearl, a pencil, or even a pair of pants.

Give everyone a clue to each object's identity, riddle style: "You can mash me or bake me or fry me, even if you don't live in France. What am I?"

When they guess correctly, pull out the spud from your purse and have everyone recite the following alliterative tongue twister: "Lilly pulled a potato from her purple plastic purse."

Finding Lilly on the Internet

Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse was adapted as a play (using materials from *Chester's Way* and *Julius, the Baby of the World*, as well). When it was performed at the Kennedy Center in Washington, D. C., they created a website, <http://artsedge.kennedy-center.org/content/2430/>, where you'll find a wealth of lesson plans on the color purple, the sounds of coins, and Lilly's nifty disguises.

Go to the "Fun Things to Do with Lilly" page at www.kevinhenkes.com/meet/fun.asp, where you'll find great reproducibles, including coloring sheets of Lilly, a mouse maze, and a dot-to-dot.

Lilly's Big Day

ALA Booklist Editors' Choice
School Library Journal Best Book
Publishers Weekly Best Book

About the Book

"It will be the biggest day of my life," says Lilly the day her teacher, Mr. Slinger, announces he's planning to marry Ms. Shotwell, the school nurse. Lilly practices being the flower girl, even though Mr. Slinger hasn't asked her yet. Realizing how much she yearns for the job, Mr. Slinger offers her the chance to be the assistant to the official flower girl, his niece Ginger.

Themes

In this companion book to *Lilly's Purple Plastic Purse*, readers will discover a funny, poignant tale about facing life's disappointments and celebrating happy surprises.

Getting Ready

Children will be excited to see that Lilly is back, as boisterous and impetuous as ever. Don't tell them what Lilly's big day is. Just read the title and have them surmise what would constitute a big day for Lilly. Go around the room, have everyone hazard a guess, and make a list of their responses to see if anyone comes up with the actual answer.

Questions for Discussion

- Why did Lilly want to be the flower girl at Mr. Slinger's wedding?
- When her parents tried to explain to her why she couldn't be his flower girl, why did Lilly misunderstand what they were trying to tell her?
- Why did Mr. Slinger make Lilly an assistant flower girl?



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- How did Lilly hide and then show her disappointment at not becoming the real flower girl?
- Have you ever been terribly disappointed at something you could not change? What happened, and how did you handle it?

ACTIVITIES

Making Connections

Lilly thinks that being the flower girl at Mr. Slinger's wedding will be the biggest day of her life. What has been the biggest day of your life so far? Draw and write or tell about it.

About Lilly

Once again, Lilly segues through a gamut of emotions. As you read the story aloud, stop to ask your students to listen to her words and read her changing expressions. Ask them, "How is Lilly feeling now?" Record their list of adjectives on a chart.

Lilly has a larger-than-life personality. Ask your group what they think she would be like as a friend. If they

could spend a whole day with Lilly and could go anywhere and do anything with her, what activities would they choose to do? What would Lilly most enjoy? Mock up a Daily Action Plan page using the format of a Day Planner, with the hours listed on the left-hand side and two lines for recording the events of each hour. Children can fill in the page with their schedule.



Self-Portrait

At the Lightbulb Lab in the back of her classroom, Lilly draws a portrait of herself as “The World’s Best and Most Famous Flower Girl!” She says, “This is the best drawing I’ve ever done in my entire complete life!”

Have children look in the mirror and draw self-portraits depicting themselves doing something important. Make a bulletin board of their finished portraits and see if they can identify each other from the drawings.

Down the Aisle

In the story, we see Lilly practicing for the wedding, and the next thing you know, she’s heading down the aisle, toting the terrified Ginger. But what happens at an actual wedding? Have you ever seen a wedding? Have you ever been in a wedding? What does a flower girl do? How about a ring bearer? Stage a mock wedding with your class to answer those questions.

Wedding Plans

There are so many things to consider when you’re planning a wedding. Go to www.weddingchannel.com to get an idea about invitations, flowers and decorations, the ring, fancy clothes, the ceremony, photographs, food, and the reception.

Make mock wedding invitations using paper doilies, bits of ribbons, and other glittery materials.

Make tissue paper flowers. Accordion-fold six pieces of tissue paper. Cinch the flower in the middle with a pipe cleaner and fold it in half. Then wrap the pipe cleaner around the fold and use the rest of it as a stem. Carefully separate the twelve sheets of tissue paper, and voilà—a flower.

The Ceremony—Assign parts: a couple of flower girls and ring bearers, the parents of the bride and groom, the best man and groomsmen, and the maid of honor and the bridesmaids. This way, everyone will get to walk down the aisle as Lilly did, very slowly, heads held high. Sing “Here Comes the Bride,” or play a recorded version.

The Reception—Take a group picture with a digital camera, and celebrate with wedding cake (cupcakes with icing) and champagne (apple juice). Or, serve cheese and crackers and mouse-sized food like grapes, blueberries, and tiny crackers. At www.kevinhenkes.com/meet/fun.asp, there are recipes for lots of lovely, luscious cheese-based snacks, including Lilly’s Luscious Cheese Bites, and even one for Mr. Slinger’s Zinger Punch. Finally, put on a CD so everyone can do Lilly’s Interpretive Dance, the Flower Girl.



Q&A with Kevin Henkes

Q: How did you come to use mice as the characters in so many of your books? Did you consider other animals as well?

A: My early books have realistically rendered humans as the protagonists. As my stories became more humorous, I thought that I could better match my texts by drawing more loosely and using animals as my main characters. *Bailey Goes Camping* was the first book in which I did this; Bailey and his family are rabbits. For my next book, *A Weekend with Wendell*, I chose to use animals again, but I wanted to draw something other than rabbits. I made sketches—a dog, a cat, an elephant, and a mouse. I liked the mouse sketch, and so, Wendell was a mouse. I enjoyed doing that book so much, I continued to use mice as the protagonists in many of my picture books.

Q: Your mouse characters have loving, supportive, understanding parents, teachers, and other adults in their lives. What was your own childhood like?

A: I grew up in the 1960s in a working-class neighborhood in Racine, Wisconsin, with my three brothers, my sister, and my parents. There were people of all ages in my neighborhood . . . and many children.

As a boy, I drew more than anything. I also read, rode my bike, and played outside a lot. We didn't own many books, but we went to the public library regularly. This was one of my favorite family activities, and I'm certain it played a role in my becoming a writer and illustrator.

Q: Which of your characters is most like you?

A: Like Owen, I think I'm quiet, yet tenacious. And, like Wemberly, I am a worrier.

Q: How long does it take you to complete a new picture book, from getting the idea to final page proofs? How much time do you spend on each illustration, and what kinds of changes do you make to your words and pictures?

A: Each book is different. Some come easily, and some are very difficult to bring to completion. I'll often think about an idea for months, even years, before I'm ready to write.

It's difficult to say how much time I spend on each illustration. I don't do each illustration from start to finish; I do them in stages. I do sketches for the entire book first. Then I'll refine all the sketches. Next, I'll do a finished pencil drawing for each illustration in the book. Inking comes next.

At this point, I make several copies of each ink drawing so that I can test different colors before I finally paint each piece.

If I change words at this point, it's usually a matter of taking something out that isn't necessary any longer. Perhaps I've "said" what I want to say in the illustration and don't need the words any more.

Q: What comes first—the words or the pictures?

A: The words always come first for me. I try to perfect them before I draw anything. However, I do think about the pictures while I write.

I work on my stories in longhand on lined notebook paper. I'll rewrite several times before I type a nice, neat copy on my typewriter.

Q: Children adore *Kitten's First Full Moon*, but they do wonder why there's no color in it. Can you give them some insight into how you came up with the story and developed the illustrations?

A: The story began as part of a failed attempt at creating a young concept book about circles. There was one line from the manuscript I liked: "The cat thought the moon was a bowl of milk." This line stuck in the back of my mind. I expanded upon it to write *Kitten's First Full Moon*.

All along I saw the book in my mind as a black-and-white book. I'd long wanted to do a book with limited or no color, and for the first time, I'd written a story that seemed just right for this approach.

The text is simple and young, and so I wanted the art to be simple, too. I liked the idea of having a white cat, a white moon, and a white bowl of milk surrounded by the night.

Q: What is a typical workday like for you?

A: Now that I'm a parent, I work from the time my kids go to school until they return home. Sometimes, I'll work again before I go to bed.

Among other things, my day may include: drawing, painting, writing, answering mail, working on a speech, going over a contract, or getting slides organized for a talk.

Q: What does your studio look like?

A: My studio is in the remodeled attic on the third floor of our house. It is a large room filled with books. From the windows I have a great view of our yard. When I'm working, I feel as if I'm up in the trees. My "tools" are old-fashioned, but they suit me well. I use a typewriter that belonged to my wife when she was a teenager. And the light box I use for drawing is a small plastic one I received as a Christmas gift when I was a boy.

Q: Which is more satisfying to you—writing or drawing?

A: Writing and drawing are very different, but both are satisfying. I suppose drawing comes more naturally to me. I am much more daunted by a blank piece of typing paper than I am by a blank piece of drawing paper.

Q: In your books, we meet several inspirational teachers, notably Mr. Slinger and Mrs. Delphinium Twinkle. Who were the inspirational teachers in your life?

A: I've had several teachers who inspired me. Most notable was, perhaps, an English teacher I had during my junior year of high school. All my life I'd been praised and encouraged as an artist. This particular teacher did this, but she also encouraged me as a writer, going so far as to say once, "I wouldn't be surprised if I saw your name on a book one day." The power of these words was enormous. I'll never forget them. Or her.

Q: Do you have any recommendations for ways classroom teachers or parents can help children grow as readers, writers, and artists?

A: Exposure is everything. Read aloud as often as possible. If your child likes to write or draw, make sure that he/she always has paper available. Encourage children to experiment when it comes to art, and remind them to have fun and not be concerned with creating a masterpiece. If, as adults, we value art and books, our children will, too.





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A Selected Bibliography



Mouse Books

Penny and Her Song

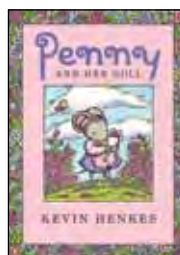
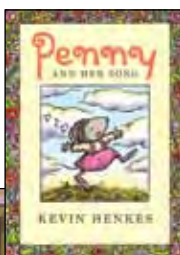
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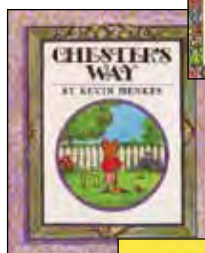
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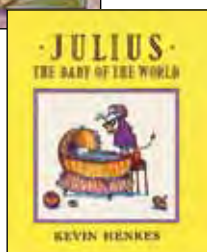
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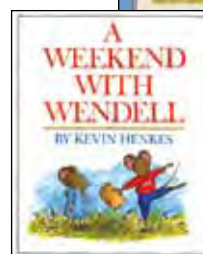
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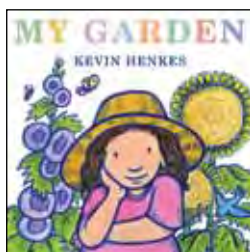
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★“This intimate exploration of a child's burgeoning imagination hits every note right.... Just plain perfect.”
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Birds

by Kevin Henkes

illustrated by Laura Dronzek

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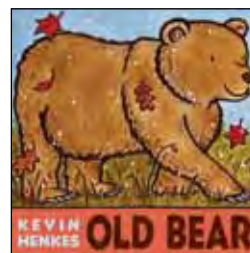
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