

ELEPHANT & PIGGIE'S

"WE ARE IN A PLAY!"

A Cardinal for Kids Study Guide



This delightful adaptation of Mo Willems's award-winning *Elephant & Piggie* books features best friends Gerald and Piggie in a hilarious vaudevillian musical romp! The scenes from *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"* come from six books in the *Elephant & Piggie* series:

- *I Am Invited to a Party!*
- *Listen to My Trumpet!*
- *I Am Going!*
- *Should I Share My Ice Cream?*
- *I Love my New Toy!*
- *We Are in Book!*

Ask your students to watch for ideas and events in the play they remember from these and other *Elephant & Piggie* books.

This Study Guide includes:

- Information for teachers
- Activities for children
- Booklist of other early-reader titles

To help children prepare for attending a live theater performance, see our "What to Expect When You See a Play" handout online at: <http://mcpl.info/Z4q>

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All illustrations © Mo Willems



Attending a play meets Indiana State Educational Standards

Indiana's academic standards recognize the educational value of experiencing live theater in a number of ways. The Indiana Department of Education embeds Media Literacy Standards into the College and Career Standards for English and Language Arts for Grades K-5.

(http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/enla/k-5_ela_draft-7-7-14-et.pdf)

English/Language Arts for First Grade:

1.SL.1 Listen actively and adjust the use of spoken language (e.g., vocabulary) to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

1.SL.3.1 Ask and answer questions about key details in a text read aloud or information presented orally or through other media.

Media Literacy Standards for First Grade:

1.ML.1 Recognize the role of the media in informing, persuading, entertaining, or transmitting culture.

1.ML.2.1 Demonstrate understanding of media by asking and answering appropriate questions about what is read, heard, or viewed.

Academic Standards for Theatre for Grades K-12:

Live theater performances provide students with the opportunity to learn about:

Analysis and Response: Students develop critical thinking skills necessary to analyze the form and style of plays and performances. They develop the ability to reflect on and interpret the nature of the theatre experience on a personal and global level.

Creative Process: Students create theatrical work through script development, research and collaboration. Through research, imagination, script analysis, observation, and improvisation, students develop proficiencies as designers, actors, directors and playwrights.

Careers and Community: Students identify a variety of theatrical careers. They develop a commitment to theatre that underscores the value of the theatre arts on a personal and societal level.

(http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts/2010_in_theatre_standards.pdf)

Theater and Music Standards for First Grade include:

Music:

1.6.4 Identify and demonstrate appropriate listening behavior during a classroom or outside performance.

(http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts/2010_in_music_standards.pdf)

Theatre:

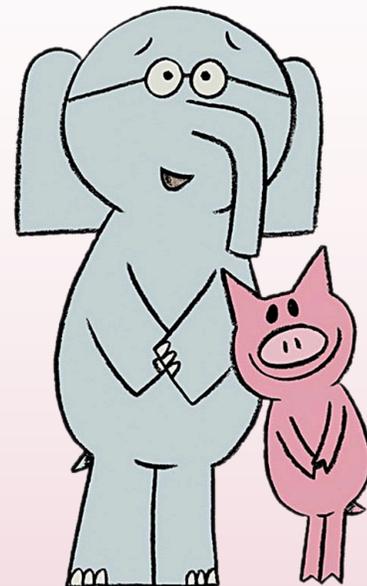
1.1.1 Identify elements of theatre in everyday life, such as relationships (characters), clothes (costumes), locations (setting).

1.3.1 Identify and describe the character, plot, and setting in stories.

1.5.1 Respond to plays, stories, songs, fairy tales, fables, and nursery rhymes. (Example: Through drawing, writing, and/or verbalizing, students express their reaction to the dramatization.)

1.10.2 Discuss what makes theatre a unique activity.

(http://www.doe.in.gov/sites/default/files/standards/fine-arts-dance-music-theatre-visual-arts/2010_in_theatre_standards.pdf)





What Happens in the Show

An elephant named Gerald and a pig named Piggie are best, best, “bestus” (a word Gerald and Piggie made up that means “very best”) friends. But Gerald worries that something could go wrong that would end their friendship. Piggie is not worried at all. She’s even happier and more excited than usual. That’s because she and Gerald are invited to a party hosted by the Squirrelles, three singing squirrels who love to have a good time.

And so begins a day when anything is possible. Gerald and Piggie will solve problems together, sing and dance to music played by a band on stage, make each other laugh, share their favorite things, get mad and sad with each other, and even do a little goofing around with you, the audience. Wait until you see what they have in mind!

Characters in the Play

- Elephant
- Piggie
- The Squirrelles
- Dog
- Pengu



What the Play is About

There are two big ideas you will notice in the play: friendship and feelings. Gerald and Piggie are best friends who talk and play together, but they are also very different. They are different animals and different sizes. They also have different personalities (how they behave).

During the play, think about how two very different animals can be such good friends. For ideas, watch how they:

- share
- cooperate
- joke around
- help each other
- forgive each other

Gerald and Piggie have strong emotions, or feelings—like joy, love, anger, worry, fear, sadness, and embarrassment (feeling uncomfortable with something you’ve done). Watch for ways these pals communicate their feelings through what they say, sing, or do.

After the performance, discuss with your teacher, family or friends what you think makes a good friend, and why. Think of other words to describe Gerald and Piggie’s personalities. Who are you more like?

Word Alert!

There might be a few words in the play that you don’t know. But don’t let this be a predicament! (That means a difficult situation.) Use this handy dandy glossary to learn the meaning of words and phrases used in the play:

- **Unintended consequences**—things that happen that surprise you
- **Pachyderm** (PAK-i-durm)—a thick-skinned animal like an elephant or hippopotamus
- **Swine**—a short-haired animal with a curly tail and hooves, like a pig
- **Unpossible**—a made-up word Gerald uses when he means not possible or impossible
- **Contingency**—something that might happen
- **Sty** (STEYE)—a fenced area, usually for pigs
- **Manipulate**—to change what people do or the way something happens

You will also hear some words that rhyme—words that have the same ending sound, like “toy” and “joy”. When Elephant and Piggie sing they often use words that rhyme. How many words can you write that rhyme with Pig? (Can you think of any words that rhyme with Elephant!?)

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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.

– Mo Willems

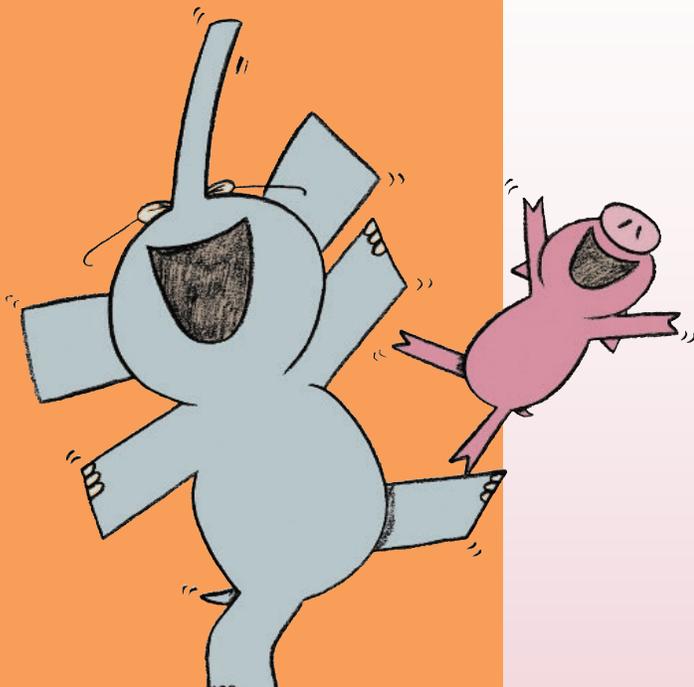


Photo: Marty Umans

About the Author

Mo Willems has written and drawn pictures for 25 *Elephant & Piggie* books so far, and lots of other books, too, like *Knuffle Bunny* and the *Pigeon* series. The *Elephant & Piggie* books are considered early-reader books, but are enjoyed by readers of all ages.

Mo Willems is a three-time Caldecott Honor winner (for *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, and *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*), and he has also won two Geisel Medals and three Geisel Honors for his *Elephant & Piggie* books. His books are perennial New York Times bestsellers, including *Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs*, *Knuffle Bunny Free: An Unexpected Diversion*, *Hooray for Amanda & Her Alligator*, and the *Cat the Cat* series. Before he turned to making picture books, Mo was a writer and animator on *Sesame Street*, where he won six Emmys. Mo lives with his family in Massachusetts.

Learn more about Mo and his books on his website: <http://www.mowillems.com/>



WRITE A REVIEW

Use your own words to write a review of the play. A reviewer's job is to see a play and write about what they liked and what they did not like. Now it's your turn to write or draw a review and share your ideas about *Elephant & Piggie's "We Are in a Play!"*

Write what your favorite part of the play was and why. If you could change one thing about the play to make it even better, what would you change?

This review was written by _____

Share your review with the rest of your class, Cardinal Stage Company, and the author!

Cardinal Stage Company

900 S Walnut St
Bloomington, IN 47401



Mo Willems Fan Mail

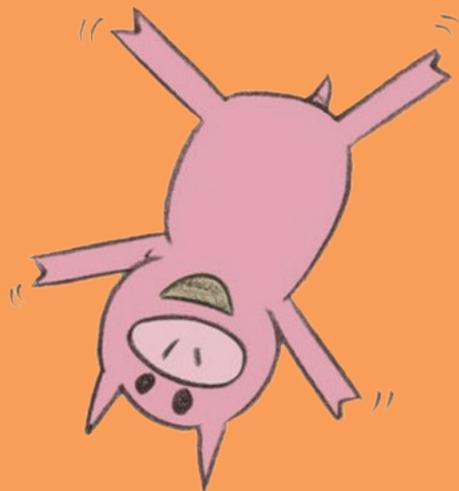
c/o Ricardo Mejias
Hyperion Books for Children (and Pigeons)
125 West End Avenue, 3rd Floor
New York, New York 10023



A Modern Day Dr. Seuss

Author Mo Willems is often compared to Theodore Geisel, aka Dr. Seuss. It is a fitting comparison, considering many of Willems *Elephant & Piggie* books have won Geisel Awards, named in honor of The Cat and the Hat author. The Association for Library Service to Children presents the Geisel Award "annually to the author(s) and illustrator(s) of the most distinguished American book for beginning readers published in English in the United States during the preceding year."

Find a complete list of Geisel Award winners online: <http://www.ala.org/alsc/awardsgrants/bookmedia/geiselaward>



If You Like *Elephant & Piggie* by Mo Willems . . .

try these other early-reader books about friendship.

The following books are in the Early Reader collection at Monroe County Public Library. Some are a little longer than *Elephant & Piggie* books, and a few are shorter. Librarians can help you choose books that are right for you!

Hi! Fly Guy

by Tedd Arnold (J-ER Arn)

When Buzz captures a fly to enter in The Amazing Pet Show, his parents and the judges tell him that a fly cannot be a pet, but Fly Guy proves them wrong.

Rabbit and Robot: The Sleepover

by Cece Bell (J-ER Bel)

Rabbit is excited about the sleepover he has carefully planned for his friend Robot, but Robot has some different ideas about how things should go.

Frog and Friends

by Eve Bunting (J-ER Bun)

Frog and his friends are alarmed by a strange object that appears on his pond, share a thoughtful—if scratchy—gift, and meet a hippopotamus that has run away from the zoo.

Cork and Fuzz

by Dori Chaconas (J-ER Cha)

A possum and a muskrat become friends despite their many differences.

Pete the Cat: A Pet for Pete

by James Dean (J-ER Pete Dea)

Garnering attention after painting a picture of his new pet goldfish, Pete the cat receives so many requests to make paintings for his neighbors that he devises an uproarious solution.

Frog and Toad are Friends

by Arnold Lobel (J-ER Lob)

From writing letters to going swimming, telling stories to finding lost buttons, Frog and Toad are always there for each other—just as best friends should be.

Hot Rod Hamster and the Wacky Whatever Race

by Cynthia Lord (J-ER Lor)

Hot Rod Hamster enlists the help of his friend Dog to build a super sleek soap box racer for the Wacky Whatever Race.

Fox and His Friends

by Edward Marshall (J-ER Mar)

In three separate episodes Fox wants to play with his friends, but duty in one form or another interferes.

George and Martha

by James Marshall (J-ER Mar)

Relates two episodes in the friendship of two hippopotamuses.

Pearl and Wagner: Two Good Friends

by Kate McMullen (J-ER McM)

Pearl and Wagner, a rabbit and a mouse, work together to build a robot for their science project.

Henry and Mudge: The First Book of Their Adventures

by Cynthia Rylant (J-ER Ryl)

Henry, feeling lonely on a street without any other children, finds companionship and love in a big dog named Mudge.

Monkey and Elephant

by Carole Schaefer (J-ER Sch)

In three episodes two friends cool off on a hot day, sing songs, and outsmart some ruffraff wildcats.

Mac and Cheese

by Sarah Weeks (J-ER Wee)

Two cats who are as different as night and day are nevertheless best friends.

New Pig in Town

by Lisa Wheeler (J-ER Wh)

Fitch the wolf and Chip the pig strike up an unlikely friendship because they discover something in common.

Cat the Cat, Who is That

by Mo Willems (J-ER Wil)

An exuberant cat introduces readers to her friends.

Upstairs Mouse, Downstairs Mole

by Wong Yee (J-ER Yee)

Mouse and his downstairs neighbor, Mole, discover that when they help each other, housecleaning and other daily tasks are much easier.

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What is an Early Reader Book?

Teacher and Geisel Award committee member Robin Smith states that a beginning or early reader book should have the following characteristics:

- The font is usually clear and readable, so the eye easily knows where to go next.
- The vocabulary is generally limited to words that are sight words or can be decoded easily using the rules of phonics.
- Sentences tend to be simple and do not extend over a page turn.
- The book should appeal to new readers who are about five to eight years old.
- The illustrations . . . reflect the text, help give clues about harder words, and tell the story.

