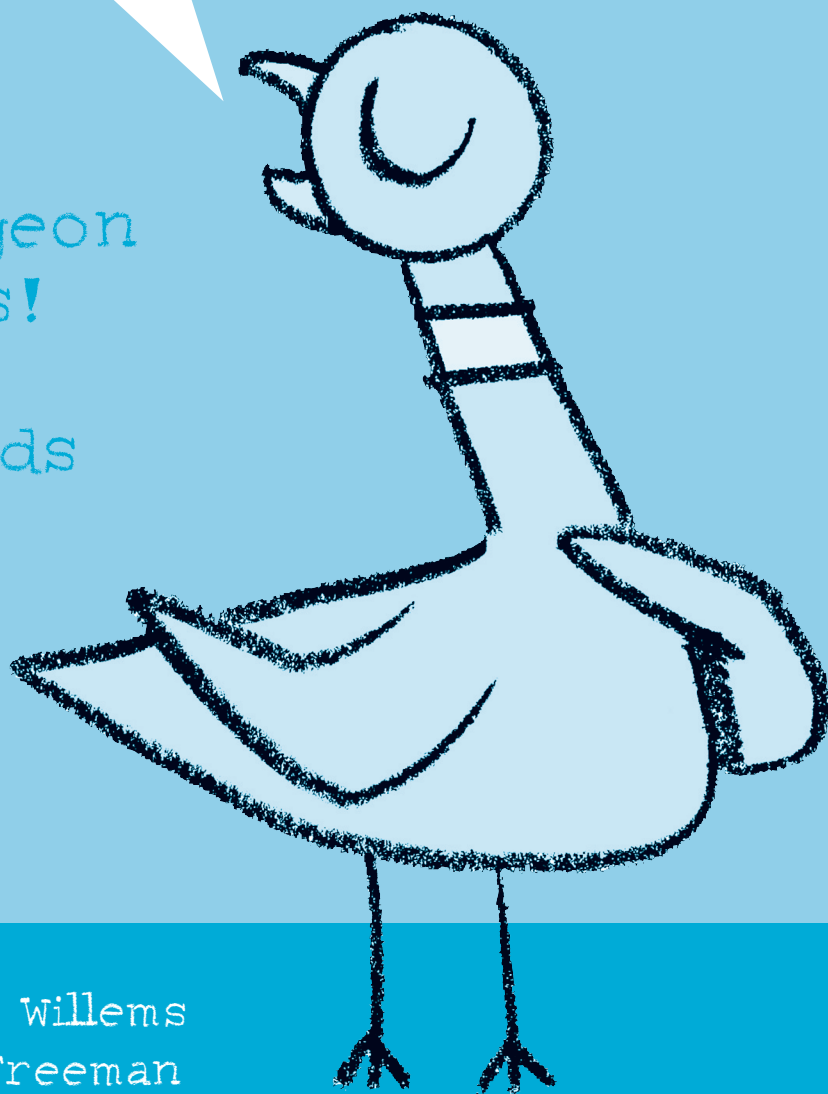


# The Pigeon Teacher's Guide

Don't Let the Pigeon  
Drive the Bus!

and

The Pigeon Finds  
a Hot Dog!



Words and pictures by Mo Willems  
Teacher's Guide by Judy Freeman

# Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

Though the bus driver has warned us, "... Don't let the pigeon drive the bus!" the jaunty blue pigeon uses every trick in the book, from whining to temper tantrums, to convince us, the readers, to let him do just that.

## INTERACTING WITH THE BOOK:

What's hilarious about this picture book for all ages is watching that pigeon try to talk us into something forbidden, just like children do every day. "Hey, can I drive the bus?" the gimlet-eyed blue pigeon asks you, the reader, straight out. "NO!!!" your listeners will reply spontaneously. They will most likely decide there is no way they will let that pigeon drive that bus.

And aren't these same kids begging and pleading with their own authority figures to let them stay up late and do forbidden stuff? You might think your young listeners will empathize with the poor pigeon and let him drive, but you will most likely be amazed by how adamant they are.

The youngest children can read the pictures and the moods of the pigeon as he tries to fast-talk us into letting down our guard. As you read the book aloud, acknowledge your listeners' spontaneous responses ("NO!" "Forget it!") as they interact and answer back each of the pigeon's entreaties.

## CALDECOTT HONOR:

The Caldecott Honor, or silver medal, is given each year to the artists of the year's most distinguished American picture books for children. Some readers may look at Willems's books and call them deceptively simple. Willems agrees, but with some clarification.

"I'd tweak that to 'deliberately simple,'" he says. "The essence of my design is to create an immediate, emotional connection... I'm thrilled that any child can pick up a crayon and quickly create a reasonable drawing of Pigeon; it allows the book to connect with the reader on a fundamental, participatory level."

## Discuss with your students:

Why do you think the Caldecott Committee chose this book?

What is special or memorable about the illustrations?



C'mon,  
say it  
loud:  
LET ME  
DRIVE THE  
BUS!!!!!"



## ACT IT OUT:

Have your group stand up and act out the pigeon's role, emulating his dialogue and especially his body language as he shifts through a masterful range of emotions. He is eager, hopeful, cajoling, annoyed, joyful, deflated, doubtful, exasperated, and finally erupts into a full-blown tantrum: "LET ME DRIVE THE BUS!!!" Examine and analyze that wonderfully evocative tantrum page, with the explosive yellow and black lettering, feathers flying, and six images of Pigeon having a meltdown, and then ask your actors to re-create the scene. Ask them if they can recall ever having a tantrum and what it felt like.

## GET TO KNOW THE PIGEON:

With your children, compile a list of words that describe each of his emotions. Next, list words that describe the pigeon's personality. They can draw a picture of the pigeon to go along with one or more of those words. Examine the illustrations and describe how the pigeon's face was drawn to express each emotion.



I like  
sunsets,  
long walks  
on the beach,  
and driving  
buses ...



Dear Mr.  
Bus Driver,  
How are you?  
How is  
your bus?  
Your friend,  
Pigeon

## WRITE ABOUT IT:

For older children, what is this? It's a monologue, though one that encourages you, the person on the outside of the story, to interact and respond. Read the story aloud again and have children answer each of the pigeon's entreaties out loud (or in writing), giving a variety of good reasons for each response. What a fabulous showcase for persuasive writing, one of the many forms writing teachers introduce and model! Ask your students to write a persuasive letter to the bus driver, with clear reasons why the pigeon should, or should not, be allowed to drive. Or have them write to the pigeon himself.

## PERSONAL NARRATIVE WRITING:

Ask your listeners: What do you do when your parents say no? Write about a time you tried to talk your parents into letting you do something. What arguments did you use? What did they say? Were you successful or not? What happened? Have them do a Quick Write describing their experience, and then share their stories aloud.

## PREDICTING OUTCOMES:

When you come to the end, where the pigeon turns and sees the enormous red tractor trailer truck and says “Hey...” ask your group to predict what the pigeon will do next. (The back endpaper shows him, once again, dreaming, rapturously, of driving that semi.) One question the pigeon never answers is WHY he wants to drive the bus or truck. So children can write and illustrate his reasons from his point of view: “I, Pigeon, want to drive the bus because...”

## WRITE NEW ADMONITIONS:

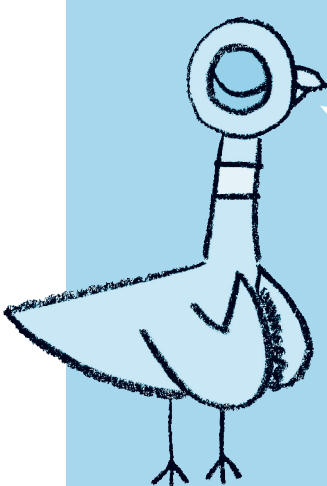
Children can write and illustrate new cautionary sentences, starting with, “Don’t let the pigeon . . .” (One student wrote, “Don’t let the pigeon drive the *Titanic*.”) Or have them finish the sentence: “Don’t let the pigeon drive the bus BECAUSE . . .” They will come up with all sorts of interesting reasons. Be sure to have crayons available so they can get Pigeon’s coloring just right. They can add his comments in dialogue balloons.

## WRITE AND ILLUSTRATE SEQUELS:

*Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Tractor Trailer Truck!* is one possibility for a sequel, of course. Using dialogue balloons, kids can sketch the pigeon trying to talk his way into that or yet another forbidden activity. Students can fold a large piece of drawing paper in half three times, which will give them eight boxes to develop a new story line. Or have each child contribute one page and compile a class book.



I bet  
your mom  
would  
let me ...  
Right?



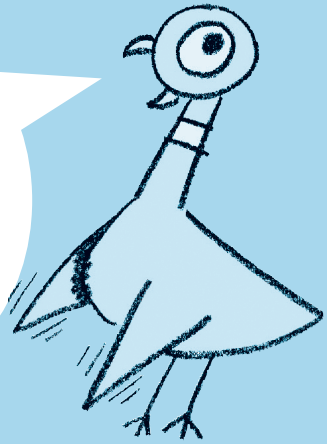
It's not  
just busses  
that rock  
my world.



Hmm..  
I never  
thought  
of driving  
the  
'Titanic'.  
Sounds  
like fun!



Don't  
worry, I'm  
cute no  
matter how  
you draw  
me!



Ask  
Away!  
I'm an  
open  
book!

## INTERVIEW THE CHARACTERS:

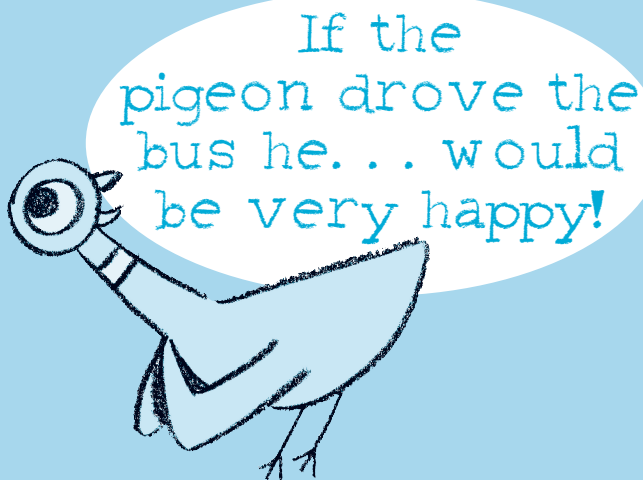
With your entire group, or with groups of three, set up an interview. The moderator interviews first the bus driver and then the pigeon, asking questions like, “Well, bus driver, why didn’t you want the pigeon to drive your bus?” and “Say, Pigeon, what kind of driving experience do you have?”



DEBATE?  
No one  
ever listens  
to me  
anyway...

## HOLD A DEBATE:

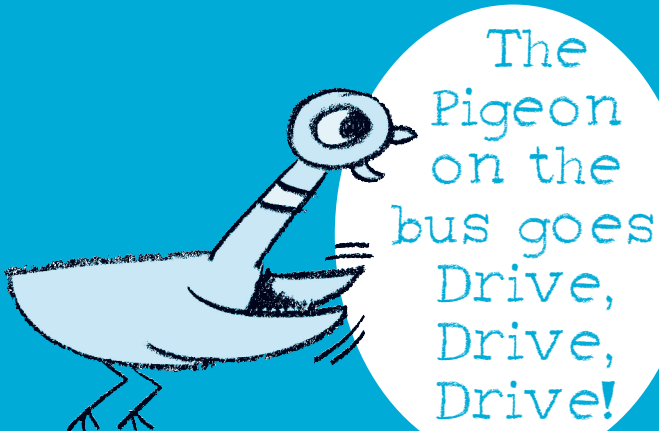
Divide your group into two camps: pro-pigeon-driving and anti-pigeon-driving. Each group must come up with a list of reasons to support their side. Then, start a debate with the topic: Should the pigeon drive the bus?



If the  
pigeon drove the  
bus he... would  
be very happy!

## “WHAT’S THE BIG DEAL? IT’S JUST A BUS!”:

While we know we can’t possibly allow the pigeon to drive, we nonetheless feel sorry for him and wish we could let him do it. What would happen if the pigeon did drive the bus? Ask your listeners to predict how Pigeon would be as an actual driver. They can finish the following sentence and illustrate it: “If the pigeon drove the bus, he \_\_\_\_.”



The  
Pigeon  
on the  
bus goes  
Drive,  
Drive,  
Drive!

## SING IT OUT:

You know you’ll be singing that “Wheels on the Bus” song forever after this one. After singing it the usual way, ask your children to compose some new verses to sing and act out, incorporating the pigeon, such as: “The pigeon on the bus says, “Flap your wings!”

# The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!

About to wolf down the hot dog on a bun he has just found, the pigeon is interrupted by a persistent yellow duckling who says, "I've never had a hot dog before . . . What do they taste like?"

## HOT DOG!:

The pigeon says to the duckling, "It just tastes like a hot dog, okay!?" What exactly does a hot dog taste like? How would you describe it to someone who had never tasted one? After finishing the book (when Duckling says, "Hmmm . . . needs mustard."), ask your listeners: "Do you think the duckling has ever tasted a hot dog before? And, by the way, what do you put on YOUR hot dogs?" You might want to serve pigs-in-a-blanket as a follow-up snack.

## HAVE A TASTE?:

The duckling wants a taste of the hot dog. The pigeon doesn't want to share. He asks you, the reader, "What am I supposed to do?" What COULD he do? How does the duckling get the pigeon to share? What do you do when someone wants a taste of your favorite food? What is your favorite food? Would you share it with someone who asked for some? How would you persuade a friend to share with you?

## LEARN TO DRAW THE PIGEON... AND MAYBE ... THE DUCKLING

Download the "How to Draw the Pigeon" sheet from [www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com](http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com) website, located on the *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* pages.

Have the children follow the step-by-step instructions for drawing the pigeon. Once they have practiced, they can create their own scenes or stories using the character. Now try the duckling . . .



I've had  
just about  
enough  
of that  
duckling...



## COMPARE AND CONTRAST:

The pigeon gets a taste of his own medicine when the persistent duckling gets him to share his hot dog. Compare and contrast the pigeon's relentless hectoring in *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* with the duckling's less direct approach in *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* The pigeon and the duckling each try to get their own way, but they have very different ways of getting what they want. Which one works? Why? How?

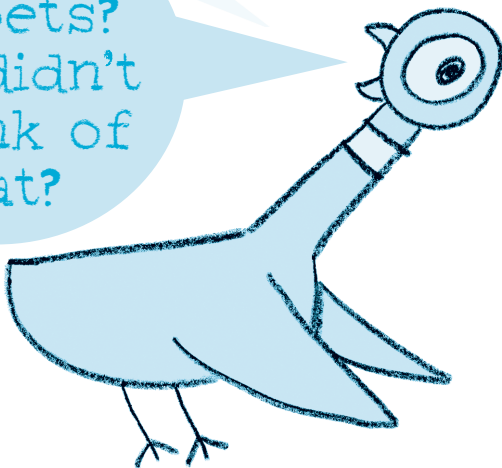
## COLOR THE PIGEON:

Download the coloring sheet from [hyperionbooks-forchildren.com](http://hyperionbooks-forchildren.com) website. It is located in the record for *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* and the record for *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!* Make copies for all the children and encourage them to color or decorate them for a pigeon gallery or show.

Sometimes  
I feel blue.  
Other times  
yellow,  
orange &  
purple.



Pigeon  
Puppets?  
Why didn't  
I think of  
that?



## MAKE THE PIGEON PUPPETS:

Have children draw and color the pigeon and the duckling on construction paper or oak tag (file folder card). Cut out the figures, and glue them onto paint sticks to make stick puppets. Working in pairs, kids can then reenact the dialogue of both books or engage the two characters in a new situation.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

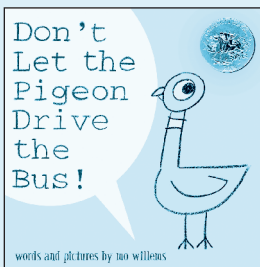
**MO WILLEMS** has won six Emmy Awards for his writing and animation on *Sesame Street* and is the head writer for Cartoon Network's *Codename: Kid Next Door*. His first book for children, *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*, was awarded a 2004 Caldecott Honor by the American Library Association. His other books include *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!*, *Time to Pee!*, and *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*. Mo lives with his family in Brooklyn, New York. Check out his wonderful Web site at [www.mowillems.com](http://www.mowillems.com).

**JUDY FREEMAN**, children's literature consultant and workshop presenter, is the "Book Talk" columnist for *Instructor Magazine* and the author of *More Books Kids Will Sit Still For: A Read-Aloud Guide* (Libraries Unlimited, 1995). Visit her Web site at [www.JudyReadsBooks.com](http://www.JudyReadsBooks.com).

This and other teacher resources are available at [www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com](http://www.hyperionbooksforchildren.com). Visit the *Teachers and Librarians* area for a full list of available materials.

## Books written and illustrated by Mo Willems

### PRAISE FOR PIGEON:



#### Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

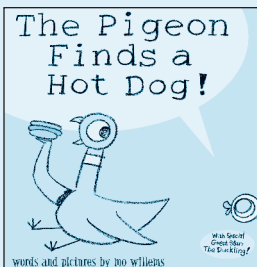
Tr. ed. 0-7868-1988-X

\$12.99 2003

2004 Caldecott Honor Book

ALA 2004 Notable Book

- ★ "Brilliantly simple . . ."  
— *School Library Journal* (Starred Review)
- ★ "Begu to be read again and again."  
— *The Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books* (Starred Review)
- ★ "Preschoolers will howl over the pigeon's dramatics . . ." — *Booklist* (Starred Review)



#### The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!

Tr. Ed. 0-7868-1869-7

\$12.99 2004

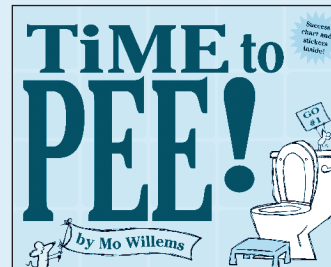
A Publishers Weekly Editor's Pick

- ★ "Readers of all ages won't be able to resist miming the sly conversation in this satisfying sequel."  
— *Publishers Weekly* (Starred Review)

Extra Citation for Pigeon/Bus:

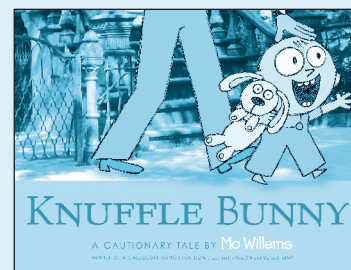
Capitol Choices 2004

### OTHER BOOKS:



#### Time to Pee!

Tr. Ed 0-7868-1868-9 \$12.99 2003



#### Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale

Tr. Ed. 0-7868-1870-0 \$15.99 2004

I'd also like to try  
some sushi while  
were at it, kay?

