

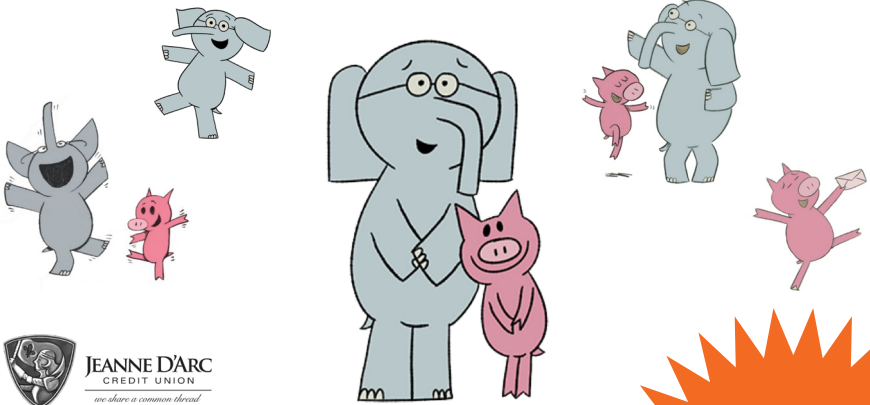
THEATRE FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES

# ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!"

BOOK AND LYRICS BY **MO WILLEMS**

MUSIC BY **DEB WICKS LA PUMA**

PERFORMED AT RICHARD AND NANCY DONAHUE FAMILY ACADEMIC ARTS CENTER



STUDY GUIDE SPONSOR

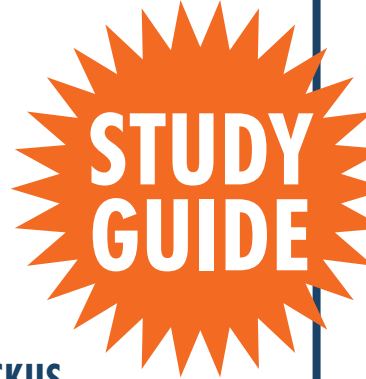


MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE  
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STUDY GUIDE BY **ALLISON BACKUS**

DESIGNED BY **EMILY BOYER**

SCHOOL SHOWS

# JANUARY 8-24, 2025

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# JANUARY 25, 2025



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# LEARNING STANDARDS

PRE-K-2<sup>ND</sup> GRADE

PRESENTS

# ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!"

BOOK AND LYRICS BY  
**MO WILLEMS**

MUSIC BY  
**DEB WICKS LA PUMA**

FEATURING

**RYAN BELANGER  
PETER CARRANZA  
GABRIELLA NAVARRETE  
SAMANTHA PERRY  
BRONTE RYAN  
VANESSA WAUGH  
KATIE WIITALA**

SCENIC DESIGNER  
**KATHLEEN CHADWICK**

COSTUME DESIGNER  
**YAO CHEN**

LIGHTING DESIGNER  
**MICHAEL C. FINKE**

SOUND & PROJECTION DESIGNER  
**ROBERT CARLTON STIMMEL**

CHOREOGRAPHER  
**DORI BRYAN-PLOYER**

STAGE MANAGER  
**SAMANTHA PERRY**

ASSISTANT STAGE MANAGER  
**FERNANDA ALBUQUERQUE**

DIRECTOR & MUSICAL DIRECTOR

**KAREN OSTER**

**JANUARY 8-25, 2025**



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## THEATRE ETIQUETTE & THEATRE VOCABULARY

English Language Arts – *Speaking and Listening, Language*

SL.1, L.4

Dance – *Responding*

D.R.07

Theatre – *Responding*

T.R.07

Music – *Responding*

M.R.09

## ABOUT THE WORLD OF ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE & READING LIST

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text*

RL.9, RL.10, RI.PK.9

## SYNOPSIS, FROM THE DIRECTOR, & AFTER THE SHOW: DISCUSSION PROMPTS

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Speaking and Listening*

RL.7, SL.1, SL.2, SL.4

Dance – *Responding*

D.R.07

Theatre Arts – *Responding*

T.R.07, T.R.08, T.R.09, PK-K.T.Co.11

Music – *Responding*

M.R.09

## AFTER THE SHOW: CONSIDERING FRIENDSHIP

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Speaking and Listening*

RL.9, SL.1, SL.2, SL.4

Theatre – *Responding*

PK-K.T.R.08, PK-K.T.R.09, PK-K.T.Co.10

## INTRODUCING CHARACTER TRAITS

English Language Arts – *Speaking and Listening, Reading Literature*

SL.4, RL.3

Theatre – *Responding*

PK-K.T.R.08, PK-K.T.R.09, PK-K.T.Co.10

## BOOK COVER BONANZA!: DISCUSS AND LEARN & I NOTICE/I WONDER...

English Language Arts – *Reading Literature, Reading Informational Text, Reading Foundational Skills, Speaking and Listening*

RL.6, RL.7, RI.9, RF.PK.1, SL.6

## BOOK COVER BONANZA!: PROJECT: MY FRIENDS, \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

English Language Arts – *Writing, Language*

W.1, W.2, W.3, W.10, L.1, L.2, L.3

Visual Arts – *Creating, Presenting*

PK-K.V.Cr.02, PK-K.V.P.04, 1-2.V.Cr.02, 1-2.P.05

## ACTIVITY: WIGGLE WAGGLE

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SL.1, RI.PK.3

Theatre Arts – *Performing*

T.P.04, T.P.06

Comprehensive Health – *Physical Health*

CH.PH.02.02, CH.PH.02.07, CH.PH.02.08, CH.PH.02.12

Dance Standards – *Performing*

D.P.05, D.P.06

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W.1, W.2, W.3, W.10, L.1, L.2, L.3

History and Social Science – *Personal Experiences and Memories*

Pre-K.T.3.01

Theatre – *Responding*

T.R.08, T.R.09, T.Co.10

# WELCOME TO MERRIMACK REPERTORY THEATRE!

MRT is a professional theatre company based in Lowell's Nancy L. Donahue Theatre at Liberty Hall. For Theatre for Young Audiences MRT is producing at the Richard and Nancy Donahue Family Academic Arts Center. Specializing in new work, MRT produces contemporary plays, new concerts and new musicals all year long. MRT is dedicated to “**engaging, entertaining, and enriching**” the Merrimack Valley Community through the magic of the performing arts.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> “About MRT,” Merrimack Repertory Theatre, 2024, <https://mrt.org/about-mrt>.

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

Theatre is a community event. A powerful form of art, theatre allows us to enjoy and experience a show with our fellow community members. As a part of the community, please follow these theatre etiquette guidelines, so that everyone can enjoy the experience of live theatre!

### PLEASE SILENCE AND TURN OFF ALL CELLPHONES AND OTHER ELECTRONIC DEVICES.

Any and all electronic use is distracting to the actors, and the other audience members, and can interfere with essential technical equipment.

### PLEASE BE RESPECTFUL WHILE YOU'RE IN THE AUDIENCE.

You will enjoy the performance more if you listen and watch closely. Feel free to laugh at the funny parts, but please refrain from talking with fellow audience members until after the show is finished.

### PLEASE REFRAIN FROM TAKING ANY PHOTOGRAPHS OR VIDEOS OF THE PLAY.

This is to protect our actors and productions from piracy, which is illegal.

### IF YOU OR SOMEONE YOU'RE WITH IS HAVING DIFFICULTY WITH THESE RULES, PLEASE TAKE A MOMENT TO STEP OUTSIDE THE THEATRE AND RE-COLLECT YOURSELF.

Sometimes, things go wrong, and individuals just aren't in the right mindset to be the best audience members they can be. Please be considerate to the performers and your neighbors by taking time away to settle yourself or your companion.

### OTHER THINGS TO KEEP IN MIND:

- Use the bathroom before the show begins, that way, you won't have to crawl over the person next to you, and you won't miss a minute of the show!
- Applaud and cheer the actors and crew when they come out for the curtain call at the end of the show to show your appreciation.

# THEATRE VOCABULARY

**ACTOR (n)** A person whose job is to act on stage, in movies, or on television.  
“She wants to be an *actor* when she grows up.”

**AUDIENCE (n)** The group of people watching a play or concert.  
“While I was performing in the school play, my mom was a member of the *audience*.”

**AUDITION** A job interview where actors perform in front of directors in order to show their talent. The act of performing in the hopes of being hired as an actor.  
(n) “My brother has an *audition* for a play this afternoon.”  
(v) “I am *auditioning* for the role of Red Riding Hood.”

**BACKSTAGE (adv)** In the area behind the stage which is hidden from the audience. This is where actors go when they are not on stage. Sometimes costumes and props are kept backstage.  
“After the play, the audience was invited *backstage* to see the props and costumes.”

**CAST (n)** All the actors in a given play or movie.  
“The *cast* had a big party to celebrate the last performance.”

**CHARACTER (n)** A person in a book, movie, play, video game, or graphic novel.  
“My favorite fairytale *character* is the wolf in Little Red Riding Hood.”

**COSTUME (n)** The clothing actors wear on stage when they are playing their characters.  
“Her *costume* includes a dress, an apron, glasses, and a gray wig.”

**CURTAIN CALL (n)** When the performers in a play gather on stage at the end of the show so that the audience can applaud them.  
“I loved the play and clapped really loudly during the *curtain call!*”

**DIRECTOR (n)** The person in charge of a play or movie. They organize the actors and designers and help everyone work together.  
“My mom is a *director* at our local theatre.”

# THEATRE VOCABULARY

**ENCORE** (n) An additional performance after the end of a concert or play, given when the audience loved the show and wants to see more.

**“At the end of the night, the band gave an *encore* performance of three more songs.”**

**INTERMISSION** (n) A short break in the middle of the play where the audience members can use the bathroom, stretch their legs, or get a snack.

**“At *intermission*, I bought a water bottle and read the program.”**

**MUSICAL** (n) A play where the characters sing and dance.

**“My parents are taking me to see a *musical* for my birthday.”**

**PLAYWRIGHT** (n) A person who writes plays.

**“Mo Willems is an author and *playwright*. He wrote the play, *Elephant and Piggie* “*We Are in a Play!*”.”**

**REHEARSAL** (n) A practice performance before the play is performed in front of an audience.

**“My sister has *rehearsals* for the school play every day after school.”**

**ROLE** (n) The character assigned to a specific actor.

**“I’m playing the *role* of Tree #2 in the play!”**

**SCRIPT** (n) The written play. A document with all the dialogue and stage directions.

**“My best friend just finished writing her first *script*.”**

**SET** (n) The background and props used in a given play.

**“He helped to build and paint the *set*. It looked like a real forest!”**

**STAGE** (n) Where the actors perform the play.

**“At the beginning of the play, my character does a somersault across the *stage!*”**

**WINGS** (n) The areas to the side of the stage, unseen by the audience. This is where the actors wait to enter the stage.

**“José was nervous as he waited in the *wings*.”**

## ABOUT THE WORLD OF *ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE*

*“Elephant Gerald is careful. His best friend Piggie is not. Gerald worries so that Piggie does not have to... Piggie cannot help smiling. Her best friend Gerald can. Piggie is always ready for a new adventure, especially when Elephant Gerald is ready to play, too!”<sup>2</sup>*

Written and illustrated by Mo Willems, the *Elephant and Piggie* series follows two best friends, Gerald the elephant and Piggie the pig. Gerald is cautious and prone to bouts of nervousness, while the outgoing Piggie is always keen to meet new friends and share new experiences. Despite their differences, Gerald and Piggie’s friendship is true-blue. Willem’s series, written for young readers between the ages of four and eight, helps students learn about the importance of respect, responsibility, fairness, and compassion, and encourages readers to hone their skills in conflict resolution and emotional empathy.

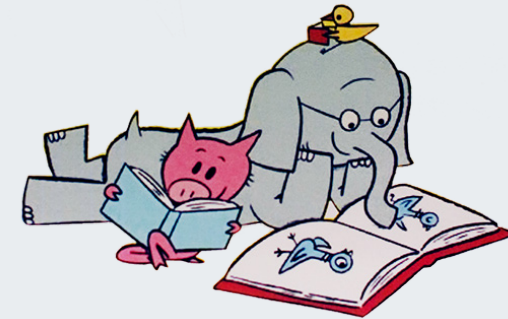


FIGURE 1: [HTTPS://WWW.PENGUINRANDOMHOUSE-  
TAIL.COM/2023/05/04/MO-WILLEMS-IS-HERE/](https://www.penguinrandomhouse-til.com/2023/05/04/mo-willems-is-here/)

### READING LIST

#### BOOKS REFERENCED IN AND ADAPTED FOR THE PLAY:

*I Am Invited to a Party!*  
*Elephants Cannot Dance!*  
*Listen To My Trumpet!*  
*I Am Going!*  
*Should I Share My Ice Cream?*  
*I Love My New Toy!*  
*We Are in a Book!*

#### MORE TALES FROM ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE:

*Today I Will Fly!*  
*There Is a Bird on Your Head!*  
*I’m a Frog!*  
*Can I Play Too?*  
*Waiting is Not Easy!*  
*My New Friend is So Fun!*  
*I Broke My Trunk!*  
*A Big Guy Took My Ball!*  
*I Really Like Slop!*  
*The Thank You Book*

#### MORE BOOKS BY MO WILLEMS:

*Knuffle Bunny*  
*Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!*  
*Leonardo the Terrible Monster*  
*Naked Mole Rat Gets Dressed*  
*Hooray for Amanda and Alligator!*  
*Goldilocks and the Three Dinosaurs*  
*I Lost My Tooth!*  
*Nanette’s Baguette*

<sup>2</sup> Mo Willems, “Elephant and Piggie,” Mo Willems Workshop (Hidden Pigeon, LLC, 2024).

# SYNOPSIS

Gerald Elephant enters and exits the stage, looking for his best friend, Piggie. Hearing her name being called, Piggie enters and exits, looking for Gerald. After narrowly missing each other multiple times, the best friends find each other and delight in all the happiness their friendship brings them (“Lucky to See You”). Piggie and Gerald ponder all the wonderful things their day together might bring: they could skip, play ping pong, or wear silly hats.

Piggie receives an invitation to a party hosted by their friends, the Squirrels. The invitation says she can bring a friend with her, and she decides to bring Gerald. Piggie’s excitement about the party quickly turns to nervousness when she remembers that she’s never been to a party before. Luckily, Gerald declares that he is a “party expert,” and he and Piggie prepare for the party by getting dressed up and imagining what the theme of the party might be. The Squirrels welcome Gerald and Piggie to their “swimmy fancy costume party,” and together, the friends enjoy themselves (“Swimmy! Fancy!”). But when the Squirrels start to dance, Gerald becomes withdrawn and confesses to Piggie that elephants “cannot dance.” Piggie promises to help Gerald learn how to dance, and with the Squirrels, she does her best to encourage and teach her friend. Gerald struggles to master the dance moves Piggie and the Squirrels show him, and he becomes frustrated. The Squirrels ask Gerald to teach them a new dance – “The Elephant.” Delighted, Gerald teaches Piggie and the Squirrels his own unique dance.

## LISTEN TO THE PLAY’S SOUNDTRACK [HERE!](#)

1. “Lucky to See You”
2. “Swimmy! Fancy!”
3. “Don’t Go”
4. “Ice Cream Hero”
5. “Ode to Toy”
6. “Toy Breaker”
7. “Elephant in the Room”
8. “We’re in a Play!”
9. “We’ll Be Friends”
10. “We’ve Been Lucky”

Piggie wants to thank Gerald for helping her prepare for the party, and she fetches her trumpet to show her appreciation. Piggie’s trumpet-playing skills leave much to be desired, and the Squirrels scatter at the horrible noise. When Piggie asks Gerald what he thinks of her trumpet-playing, he struggles to answer. He wishes to be honest but doesn’t want to hurt his friend’s feelings. He tells her that while her trumpet is shiny, and while she holds her trumpet very well, what she played was “not music.” Piggie tells him that she wasn’t trying to make music but rather trying to thank him “in elephant.” Together, they practice speaking elephant – Piggie with her trumpet and Gerald with his trunk. The two friends share their appreciation for each other and have a “best-off” where they say, “You’re the best” in the silliest manner possible.

Piggie tells Gerald that she has “to go.” Gerald, distraught at the thought of Piggie leaving, begs her to stay (“Don’t Go”). Piggie clarifies that she has to go, as in go to the bathroom. Relieved that Piggie intends to return, Gerald encourages her to go. While Gerald waits for Piggie to come back, the Ice Cream Penguin enters, and Gerald orders some ice cream for

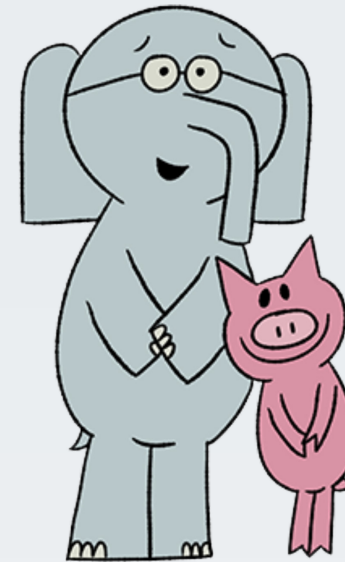
himself. However, before he can enjoy it, he remembers Piggie. Gerald is conflicted. He really wants to eat the ice cream, but he knows how much Piggie loves ice cream, too. Gerald decides he will wait for Piggie to return so that they can share and eat the ice cream together (“Ice Cream Hero”). Unfortunately, the ice cream melts quickly, and Gerald mourns the fact that neither he nor Piggie will be able to enjoy the treat. Piggie returns with ice cream for them to share, and Gerald declares her an “ice cream hero.”

Piggie shows Gerald her new toy. Gerald is eager to see and play with the toy himself, but Piggie keeps it to herself (“Ode to Toy”). Eventually, Piggie hesitantly hands her toy to Gerald, who declares that he loves “throwing toys.” Gerald tosses Piggie’s toy high into the air, and it breaks in two when it hits the ground. Gerald apologizes to Piggie, but Piggie is angry at her friend and saddened by the loss of her toy. She expresses this to Gerald, who feels guilty for causing Piggie’s distress and regretful for failing to handle the toy with more care (“Toy Breaker”). The Squirrels, who have watched the drama between the two friends unfold, discover that Piggie’s toy is a “snap and break” toy that easily snaps back into place. Piggie becomes embarrassed for lashing out at Gerald since her toy is not, in fact, broken,

and Gerald becomes angry and hurt. Piggie tells Gerald that she loves him more than any toy, and the two make up (“Elephant in the Room”).

Gerald and Piggie notice the audience for the first time and figure that they must be in a play (“We’re in a Play!”). Gerald, Piggie, and the Squirrels ask the audience to clap and chant with them. Piggie asks Gerald what else they should do before the play ends, and Gerald panics because he doesn’t want the show to be over. Piggie helps him calm down,

and together, they take a series of deep breaths. Piggie tells Gerald that they’ll still be best friends after the play ends and that they’ll always have each other (“We’ll Be Friends”). Contented, the two friends end the play (“We’ve Been Lucky.”)





## FROM THE DIRECTOR:

# AN INTERVIEW WITH KAREN OSTER

### WHAT INITIALLY DREW YOU TO A CAREER IN THEATRE?

My whole family was involved in theatre. My mom would design sets and stage manage for local theatres, and my dad, although a dentist, would perform in community theatre throughout our area. Even our dog would make guest appearances in productions! So naturally, my brother and I got involved in theatre at an early age. We were both very active in our local children's theatre, as well as in community theatre productions.

### WHAT IS YOUR PROCESS LIKE? WHAT'S THE FIRST THING YOU DO WHEN YOU START ON A NEW SHOW?

It's always important to me to have a strong image in mind for whatever production I'm working on. After reading the play over and over, I'll start to come up with descriptive image words, then find images that represent those words—something that will evoke the overall feeling of the piece. This helps with the collaborative process. I can share these images and words with my design team and cast, and it's a great starting point for discussions, helping everyone work toward a unified concept.

### WHAT SKILLS DO YOU THINK ARE MOST IMPORTANT FOR A DIRECTOR TO HAVE?

A strong commitment to collaboration—knowing that you are part of a team of creative people who share a vision and are dedicated to working together to bring it to life. It's also essential to provide a nurturing and supportive environment where everyone feels as if their opinion matters and where actors can feel safe to take risks and have room to explore without judgment. We're all in the same sandbox, and they're called plays for a reason!

### WHAT IS A CHALLENGE YOU FACE AS A DIRECTOR, AND HOW DO YOU APPROACH IT?

I tend to view challenges as opportunities. I don't think there has ever been a situation from which I haven't learned something new or developed new ways to solve issues that may arise.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF *ELEPHANT AND PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!"*? WHY?

I think what strikes me most about this piece is the beautiful way it depicts the true essence of friendship.

### WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE PART OF DIRECTING PLAYS FOR YOUNG AUDIENCES? WHY?

I enjoy finding ways to surprise the audience—little tricks here and there, little moments that are unexpected and add to the playfulness of the piece. I also enjoy the interactive nature of it—bringing young audiences into the world of the play and sometimes asking them to join in the fun.

### WHAT DO YOU HOPE AUDIENCES TAKE AWAY FROM *ELEPHANT & PIGGIE'S "WE ARE IN A PLAY!"*?

My first theatrical experiences when I was young were in children's theatre. It's where I fell in love with theatre. There is nothing like watching a beloved story come to life on stage and feeling like part of the experience. I hope we are able to bring that to the young people seeing our show, so they can carry wonderful memories with them throughout their lives and hopefully develop a love for live theatre.

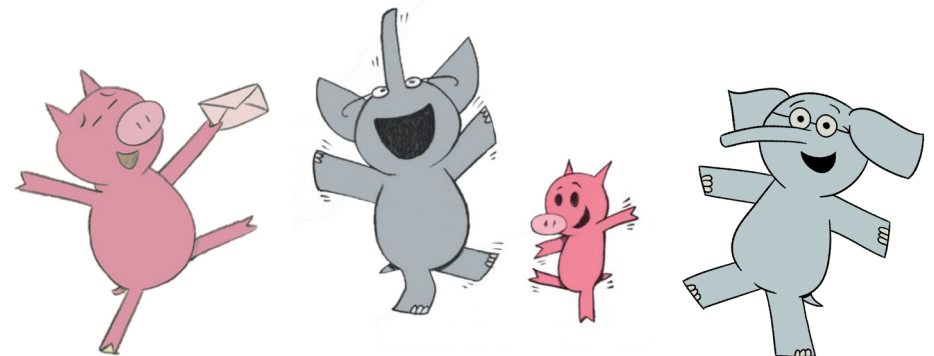
**WHAT STRIKES ME MOST ABOUT THIS PIECE IS THE BEAUTIFUL WAY IT DEPICTS THE TRUE ESSENCE OF FRIENDSHIP.**

## AFTER THE SHOW

# DISCUSSION PROMPTS

After seeing *Elephant and Piggie* at Merrimack Repertory Theatre, have students discuss their visit with each other by chatting in pairs or small groups. If working in pairs, have students switch partners every few questions so that they can hear from several of their peers.

1. What do you remember about the set of the play? What did it look like? What colors/shapes did you see?
2. What do you remember about the costumes? What were the characters wearing?
3. What are some of the sounds you remember hearing in the play?
4. What was your favorite part of the play? Why?
5. What was your favorite song in the play? Why?
6. What are some of the emotions Gerald feels in the play?
7. What are some of the emotions Piggie feels in the play?
8. How did you feel being in the audience?
9. How did you try to be a good audience member?
10. Why is being a good audience member important?
11. What is one thing that happened at the beginning of the play?
12. What is one thing that happened in the middle of the play?
13. What is one thing that happened at the end of the play?
14. How did you feel when the show was finished?
15. If you were to describe your visit to the theatre in three words, what would they be?



# CONSIDERING FRIENDSHIP

Gerald and Piggie are best friends. Throughout the play, they demonstrate many of the characteristics associated with being a good friend. The following discussion prompts and brainstorming activity are designed to encourage students to reflect on the play, on Gerald and Piggie’s friendship, and how they can practice being good friends in their own lives.

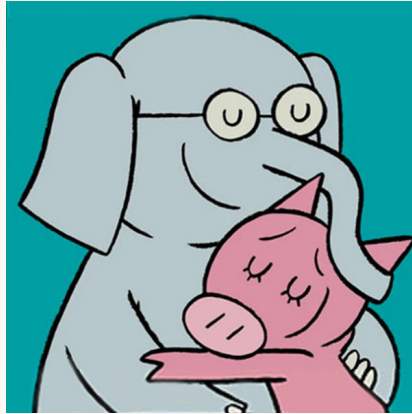


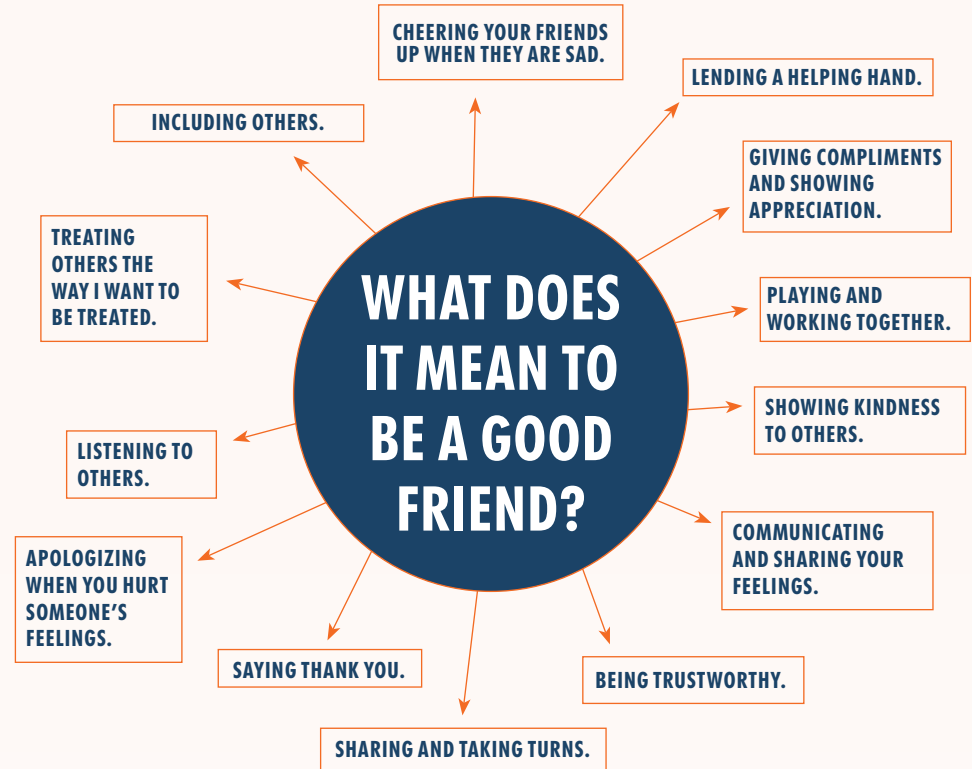
FIGURE 3: FROM “THE THANK YOU BOOK.”  
[HTTPS://WWW.READBRIGHTLY.COM/TOPICS/ELEPHANT-AND-PIGGIE/](https://www.readbrihtly.com/topics/elephant-and-piggie/)

## DISCUSS:

1. How are Gerald and Piggie good friends to each other?
2. How are they kind to each other?
3. How are they respectful to each other?
4. How do Gerald and Piggie show their appreciation for each other?
5. What does Gerald do when Piggie says she has never been to a party before?
6. What does Piggie do when Gerald tells her that “elephants cannot dance”?
7. What happens after Gerald buys himself an ice cream cone?  
 Does he eat it right away?
8. What does Gerald do when he breaks Piggie’s toy? What does Piggie do when she learns her toy isn’t broken?
9. What does Piggie do when Gerald panics because he doesn’t want the play to end?
10. When was a time you were a good friend?
11. Why is being a good friend important?

## BRAINSTORM

After discussing the characteristics of good friendship, as exemplified by Gerald and Piggie, create a visual map of what it means to be a good friend. Hang the map in the classroom so students can remind themselves of how they can continue to be excellent friends to each other throughout the year. An example map is shown below.



# INTRODUCING CHARACTER TRAITS

Gerald and Piggie are best friends, but they think and act very differently. Explain to students that character traits can help us describe how different characters think, feel, and act. Have students compare and contrast the characters of Gerald and Piggie as a class, in groups, or individually.

## GUIDING QUESTIONS

1. Can you be friends with someone who is different from you?
2. What are three character traits that describe Gerald?
3. What are three character traits that describe Piggie?
4. Do Gerald and Piggie share any character traits? If so, what are they?
5. How are you different from your friends?
6. Do you share any character traits with Gerald?
7. Do you share any character traits with Piggie?

## BASIC CHARACTER TRAITS TO CONSIDER

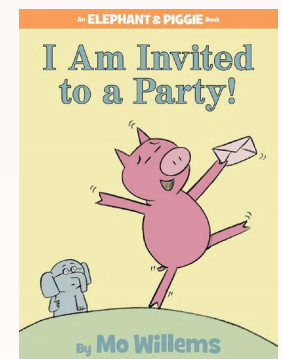
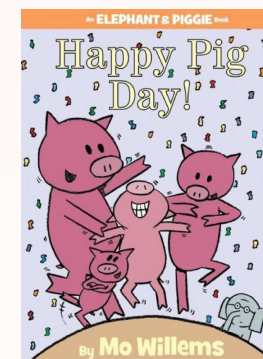
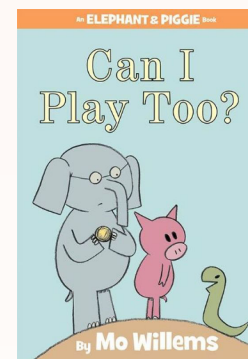
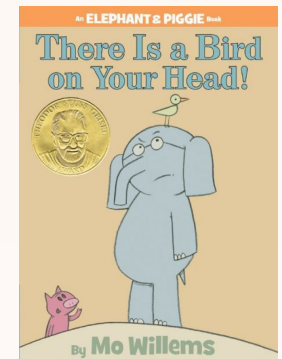
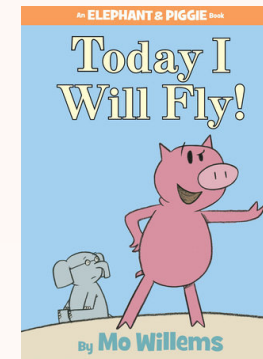
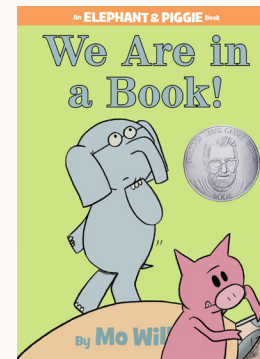
Serious	Curious	Mean
Silly	Sad	Confident
Loud	Confused	Smart
Quiet	Careful	Honest
Brave	Patient	Creative
Loyal	Cheerful	Helpful
Bossy	Respectful	Fair
Happy	Nice	Trustworthy
Excited	Outgoing	Reliable
Nervous	Caring	
Kind	Shy	

# BOOK COVER BONANZA!

Book Covers feature the book's title, the author, and the illustrator. Many book covers have a picture that hints at the book's subject. Use the following discussion questions to introduce students to the information they can find on book covers and why this information is important.

## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. Why do you think books have covers?
2. What information do you find on a book cover?
3. Why is this information important?
4. Where can you find the title on a book cover?
5. Where can you find the author's name on a book cover?
6. What kind of picture might you see on a book cover?
7. What is on the cover of your favorite book?



BOOK COVER IMAGES FROM [HTTPS://MOWILLEMSWORKSHOP.COM/CATALOG/BOOKS/COLLECTION/ELEPHANT-AND-PIGGIE](https://mowillemsworkshop.com/catalog/books/collection/elephant-and-piggie)



## ACTIVITY: I NOTICE/I WONDER

### WHAT IT IS

An opportunity for students to use their knowledge of book covers to practice their visual inference skills and make educated guesses about a given book's plot and characters. This exercise can be done before students see the show, with a book referenced in the play, or after the show with an *Elephant and Piggie* book not referenced in the play.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. Select one of the *Elephant and Piggie* books. Pass the book around the class or project its cover image onto a wall/screen. Cover the title of the book with a piece of paper.
2. Ask students to observe the cover and share what they notice, using the prompting questions as needed. Students should begin their observation statements with "I notice..."
3. Next, ask students what questions they have about the book cover. Students should begin their statements with "I wonder..."
4. Finally, ask students to make an educated guess as to what might happen in the story before sharing the title with them and reading the book to the class.

### PROMPTING QUESTIONS

1. What colors do you see?
2. Are there words? Where are they?
3. Are there people? Animals?
4. Do you recognize any characters?
5. What are the characters wearing?
6. What are the characters doing? What do you think the characters are feeling? Are they happy? Sad? Nervous? Angry?

### RECOMMENDED BOOK COVERS

*I Am Going!*

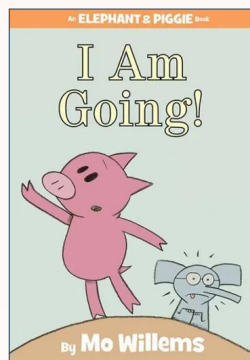
*I Really Like Slop!*

*My New Friend is So Fun!*

*Elephants Cannot Dance!*

*Can I Play Too?*

*Should I Share My Ice Cream?*



"I AM GOING!" [HTTPS://MOWILLEMWORKSHOP.COM/CATALOG/BOOKS/COLLECTION/ELEPHANT-AND-PIGGIE](https://mowillemsworkshop.com/catalog/books/collection/elephant-and-piggie)

## PROJECT: MY FRIENDS, \_\_\_\_\_ & \_\_\_\_\_

### WHAT IT IS

An opportunity for students to use their knowledge of book covers to make their own book covers for a book in their own imagined book series.

### INSTRUCTIONS

1. The *Elephant and Piggie* series follows two different animal friends: Gerald the elephant and Piggie the pig. Mo Willems, the author and illustrator of *Elephant and Piggie*, created these characters. Explain to students that they are to imagine they are authors and illustrators who want to write about two different animal friends, just like Mo Willems.
2. Students should first decide which two different animals they want their series to feature and then give each of these characters a name.
3. Students can then consider what they want their book to be about. Possible examples include:
  - a. Does one character feel afraid about trying something new?
  - b. Do the two friends meet for the first time?
  - c. Does one friend share a toy with the other?
  - d. Do the two friends get ice cream? Or go to a party?
  - e. Do the two friends learn something new?
4. Once students have decided what they want their book to be about, they should brainstorm a title and then brainstorm what they want to be on their cover.
5. In small groups or pairs, have students share their book covers with their peers.

### EXTENSION ACTIVITY:

Ask students to make a list of three different character traits for each of their animal characters.

**PRINTABLE BOOK COVER TEMPLATE ON NEXT PAGES**



## ACTIVITY: WIGGLE WAGGLE!

### WHAT IT IS

A fun vocal and movement game designed to help students practice quick listening and responding.

### INSTRUCTIONS

Standing at the head of the classroom, explain to the students that you'll be calling out a series of names and phrases. Each name/phrase has an attached action/movement that they are to do as soon as they hear it. Begin with 3-4 commands, and add more as you go.

### POSSIBLE COMMANDS

**WIGGLE WAGGLE** | Students wiggle in place.

**FLIPPIE FLOPPY FLORRIE** | Students move their arms back and forth in the air.

**ROBOT** | Students move their arms and bodies like robots

**GERALD** | Students put one arm in front of their faces and wave it about like an elephant trunk.

**PIGGIE** | Students put their hands behind their heads to make pig ears.

**SQUIRRELS** | Students dance in place and say, "Swimmy fancy costume dancey!"

**TRUMPET** | Students put their hands over their ears and say, "Yikes!"

**ICE CREAM HERO** | Students turn to the person next to them and pretend to hand them an ice cream cone, saying, "This is for you!"

**BEST-OFF** | Students turn to the person next to them and say, "You're the best!" in a silly manner.

### POSSIBLE COMMANDS

**ACTOR** | Students bow as if they are at a curtain call.

**AUDIENCE** | Students clap their hands in applause and say, "Banana nana nana!"

## WRITING PROMPTS

These writing prompts are designed to help students reflect on the play and make connections between the world of *Elephant and Piggie* and their own lives. Encourage students to draw a picture to accompany their writing.

1. If I were invited to the Squirrels' "swimmy fancy costume party," I would wear...
2. If I were throwing a party, the theme would be...
3. Dancing makes me feel...
4. I am a good friend because...
5. If my friend were sad, I would...
6. My favorite part of the play was...
7. My favorite Elephant and Piggie book is...
8. My favorite book by Mo Willems is...
9. If I met Gerald and Piggie, I would say...
10. My favorite ice cream flavor is...
11. If I could spend the day with Gerald and Piggie, we would...
12. My favorite toy is...
13. If I were in a play, I would...
14. Describe what you saw during your visit to Merrimack Repertory Theatre.
15. Describe what you heard during your visit to Merrimack Repertory Theatre.
16. Describe what you felt during your visit to Merrimack Repertory Theatre.