

# PROMOTING GENDER EQUALITY AND CHALLENGING GENDER STEREOTYPES

## CHILDREN'S PICTURE BOOKS



Gender stereotyping can limit the development of talents and abilities of girls and boys, women and men, as well as their educational experiences and life opportunities.



Women and men need to work together with children and young people to break down persistent gender stereotypes.

## AIM OF THE BOOKLIST

Picture books can be used to encourage discussions, broader thinking and directly challenge harmful gender stereotypes. This picture booklist aims to provide parents, teachers and carers with a range of stories which provide broader ideas about who girls, boys, women, men and people who identify as diverse genders can be, what they can be interested in and achieve. It is important to challenge gender stereotypes to ensure children's aspirations are not limited by traditional ideas about what girls and boys and women and men can do<sup>2</sup>.

The books vary in age appropriateness from approximately two years to ten years.

## WHAT ARE GENDER STEREOTYPES?

Gender stereotypes refer to preconceived ideas, characteristics, roles and expectations which society or culture believe to be masculine or feminine - such ideas are socially created and can be changed<sup>3</sup>. Gender stereotypes can 'box' children and adults into narrow definitions and limit their abilities to explore personal interests, opportunities and responsibilities - now and into the future<sup>2</sup>.

## HOW DO GENDER STEREOTYPES PLAY OUT?

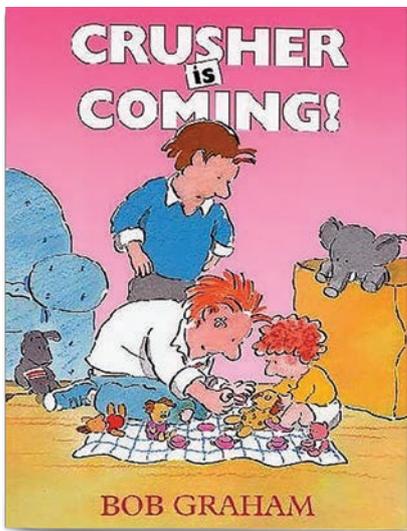
Many children's books and television programs still portray a world in which males fill traditionally masculine roles such as fire officers or postal officers, whilst females are often limited to either princesses or mothers<sup>2</sup>. Increasingly, toys and games are marketed as being 'for' one gender or the other - dolls and ovens are for girls and trucks and construction toys are for boys<sup>2</sup>. There are many television shows, books and toys aimed at boys that limit the male identity to being about action, physical strength and coming out on top whatever the cost<sup>2</sup>. Boys in fiction are much less likely to display empathy or nurturing skills - abilities that are generally assigned to female characters<sup>2</sup>. Female characters are often portrayed as 'beautiful' or 'pretty' and in search of a prince, reinforcing ideas that a female's worth lies in her appearance and need to be in a relationship with a man. Female characters are also less likely to be protagonists or leaders in stories<sup>2</sup>.

Many influences on children imply that there are 'typical' ways of being a boy or girl, thereby minimising awareness of the wide variety of gender expressions which exist within, as well as between, the sexes<sup>2</sup>. We all have the ability to challenge gender stereotypes through our language and actions.

<sup>1</sup> Bohan, M. (2011) *Steering committee for equality between women and men, Study on "Combating gender stereotypes in education"*  
[www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/O3themes/gender-mainstreaming/CDEG\\_2011\\_16\\_GS\\_education\\_en.pdf](http://www.coe.int/t/dghl/standardsetting/equality/O3themes/gender-mainstreaming/CDEG_2011_16_GS_education_en.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> National Union of Teachers, *Stereotypes stop you doing stuff: challenging gender stereotypes through primary education*  
[www.teachers.org.uk/files/stereotypes-stop.pdf](http://www.teachers.org.uk/files/stereotypes-stop.pdf)

<sup>3</sup> Monash University (2004) 'What is the difference between sex and gender?'  
[www.med.monash.edu.au/gendermed/sexandgender.html](http://www.med.monash.edu.au/gendermed/sexandgender.html)



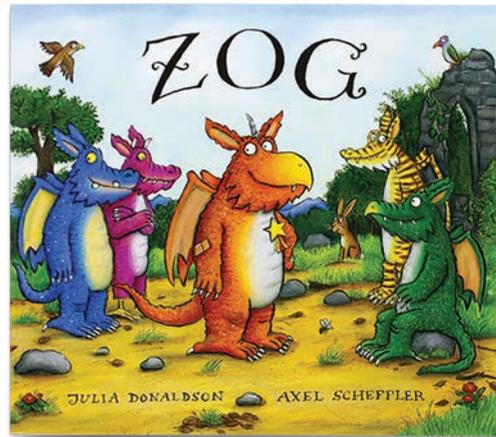
## CRUSHER IS COMING

By Bob Graham

Hoping to impress Crusher, the school tough, Peter clears his room of stuffed animals, warns his mother 'no kisses'. But Crusher surprises in this amusing, warm story.

*Lothian, 1987*

ISBN: 978-0-00-663604-5



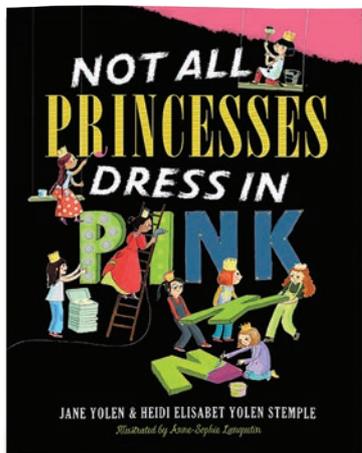
## ZOG

By Julia Donaldson

Zog is the keenest dragon in school. He's also the most accident-prone. Luckily, a mysterious little girl always comes by and patches up his bumps and bruises.

*Alison Green, 2010*

ISBN: 978-1-407-11556-6



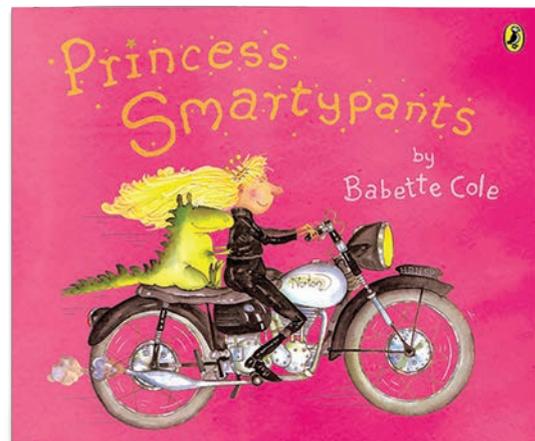
## NOT ALL PRINCESSES DRESS IN PINK

By Jane Yolen

This rhyming antidote to the many traditional princess books features girls doing carpentry and getting muddy while dancing in the rain - all while wearing their crowns.

*Simon & Schuster, 2010*

ISBN: 978-1-4169-8018-6



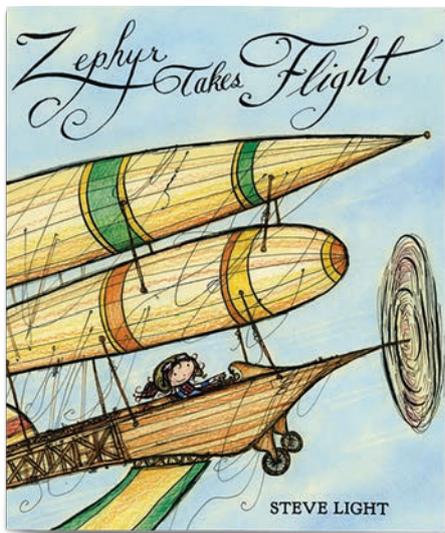
## PRINCESS SMARTYPANTS (SERIES)

By Babette Cole

Cole's wacky humour sparks this fable about a contemporary princess who enjoys being a 'Ms.' and finds an ingenious method for retaining her single status.

*Little Tiger, 1996*

ISBN: Various



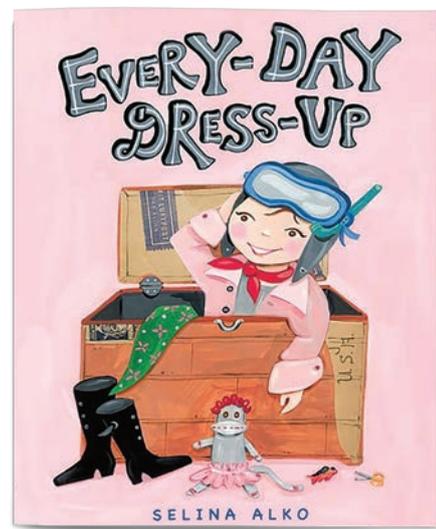
## ZEPHYR TAKES FLIGHT

*By Steve Light*

Zephyr loves everything about airplanes. The child discovers a secret passage to a remarkable land filled with airplanes.

*Candlewick Press, 2012*

ISBN: 978-0-7636-5695-9



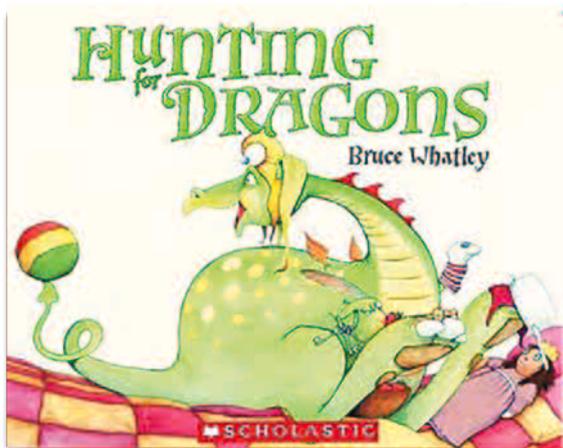
## EVERY-DAY DRESS-UP

*By Selina Alko*

A little girl's mother tells her stories about great women in history, introducing a "daring new dame" each day of the week.

*Random House, 2011*

ISBN: 978-0-375-86092-8



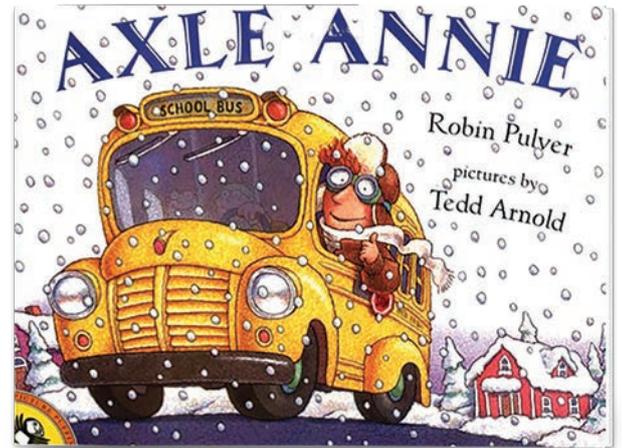
## HUNTING FOR DRAGONS

*By Bruce Whatley*

Dressed in unwieldy armour which includes a colander breastplate and saucepan helmet, a small but intrepid dragon hunter searches the family home.

*Scholastic Australia, 2010*

ISBN: 978-1-74169-330-0



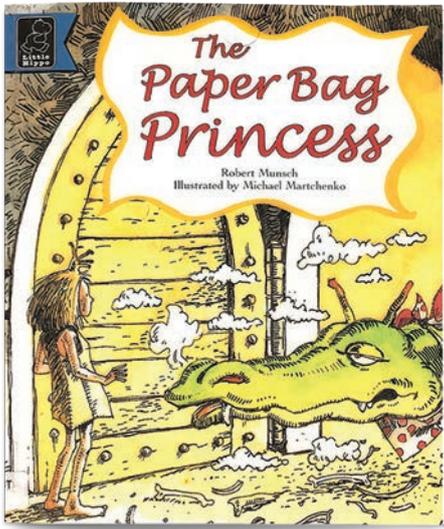
## AXLE ANNIE

*By Robin Pulver*

Axle Annie is not your average school-bus driver. She tells jokes, does magic tricks, and manages to retain her optimism even when a snowstorm strikes.

*Penguin, 2001*

ISBN: 978-0-8037-2096-1



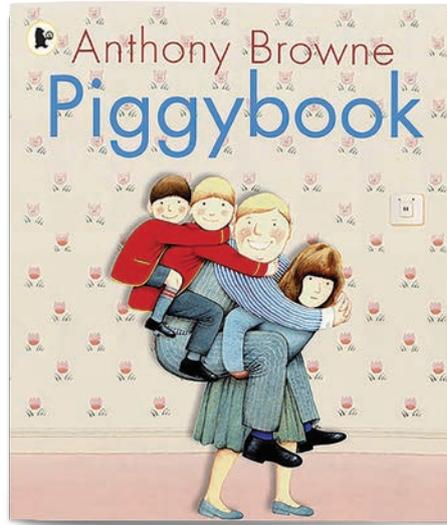
## THE PAPER BAG PRINCESS

By Robert Munsch

A classic and much loved tale of a princess who out smarts a dragon on her way to rescue a prince.

Annick Press, 1984

ISBN: 978-1-5545-1211-9



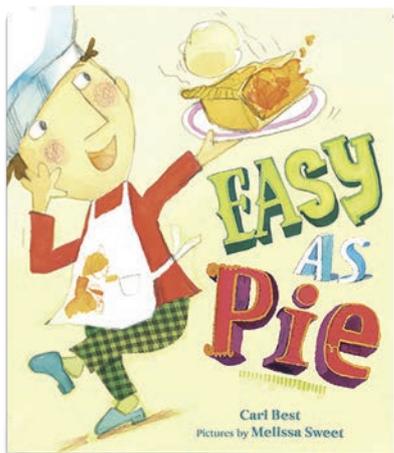
## PIGGYBOOK

By Anthony Browne

The Piggott family are taught an important lesson. Anthony Browne at his witty and clever best.

Walker Books, 1996

ISBN: 978-0-74453-303-3



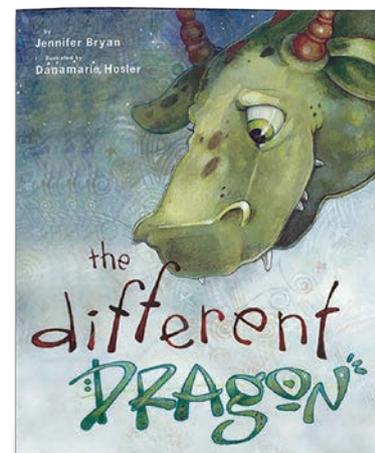
## EASY AS PIE

By Cari Best

Jacob watches his favourite television show, "Baking with Chef Monty," and bakes a beautiful peach pie, which he gives to his parents for their anniversary.

Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2010

ISBN: 978-0374399290



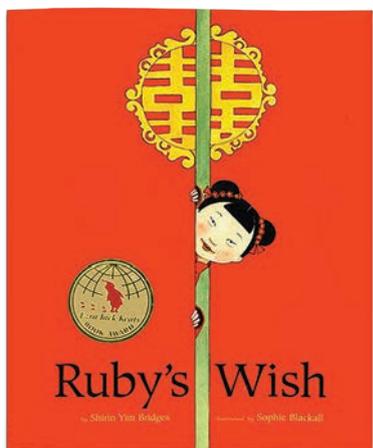
## THE DIFFERENT DRAGON

By Jennifer Bryan

This bedtime story about bedtime stories shows how the curiosity and care of a little boy, with some help from one of his mums, can lead to magical and unexpected places.

Two Lives Publishing, 2006

ISBN: 978-0-9674468-6-8



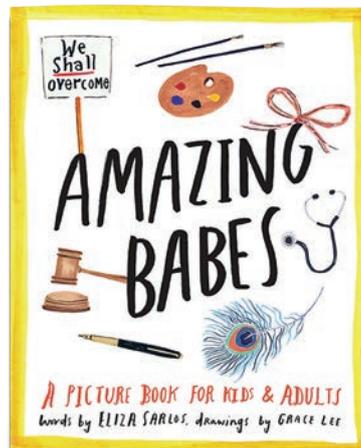
## RUBY'S WISH

By Shirin Yim Bridges

In a story set in a bygone era in China, a girl's wish to continue her education rather than marry is fulfilled when her perseverance with her at-home studies attracts her grandfather's notice.

Chronicle Books, 2002

ISBN: 978-0-8118-3490-2



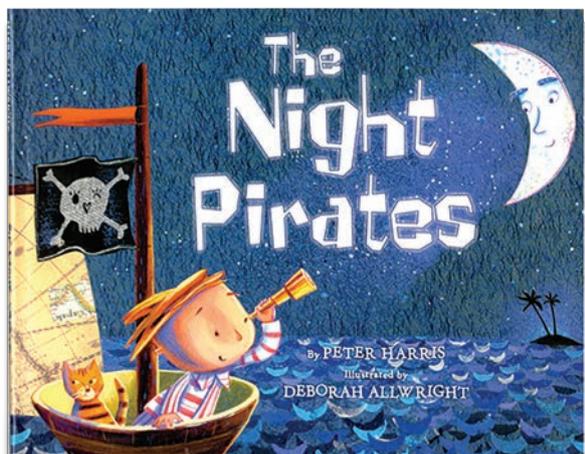
## AMAZING BABES

By Eliza Sarlos and Grace Lee

A unique picture book for young and old that celebrates inspirational women from around the world and across generations. You will recognise some and be delighted to meet others.

Scribe, 2013

ISBN: 978-1-922-07071-5



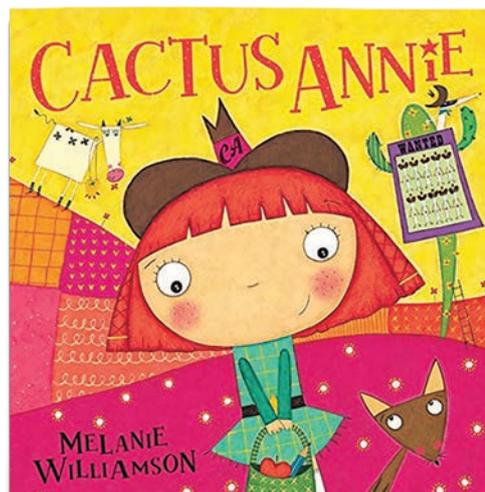
## NIGHT PIRATES

By Peter Harris

Despite him being "only a boy," Tom convinces the band of rough, tough, little girl pirates who have come to steal the front of his house to let him join in their adventures.

Egmont, 2007

ISBN: 978-1-4052-3043-8



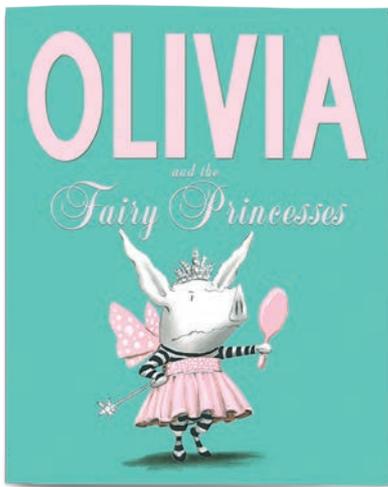
## CACTUS ANNIE

By Melanie Williamson

At the cowgirl school that Cactus Annie attends, the students ride cows. But she is scared of cows and fails subjects. Her teacher reminds her she can do anything if she believes in herself.

Hodder, 2010

ISBN: 978-0-34-098141-2



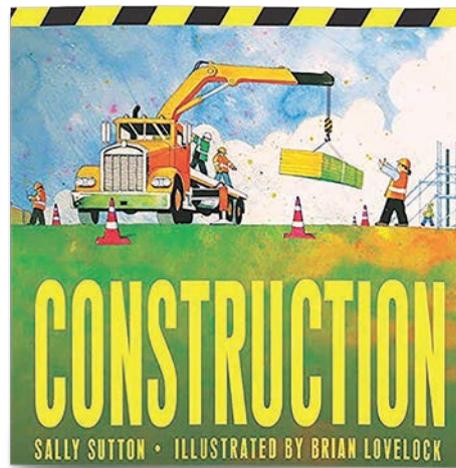
## OLIVIA AND THE FAIRY PRINCESSES

*By Ian Falconer*

The usually upbeat piglet is having an identity crisis. All of the children in her class, even the boys, want to be princesses in pink. But Olivia likes to be unique.

*Simon & Schuster, 2012*

ISBN: 978-1-4711-1775-6



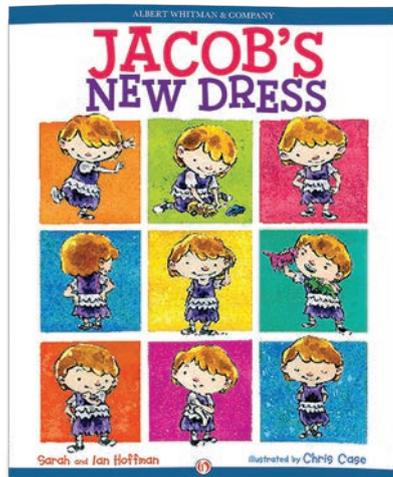
## ROADWORKS & DEMOLITION (SERIES)

*By Sally Sutton and Brian Lovelock*

This award winning duo has produced an engaging and vibrant series. There is a subtle theme of gender equality and mutual respect as men and women work together collaboratively.

*Walker Books, 2014/2012/2008*

ISBN: Various



## JACOB'S NEW DRESS

*By Sarah and Ian Hoffman*

Jacob loves dinosaurs, trucks, pirates, playing tag - and wearing dresses. When people begin teasing him, Jacob decides to take a stand. A story to help children who don't conform to gender stereotypes.

*Albert Whitman, 2014*

ISBN: 978-0-8075-6373-1



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