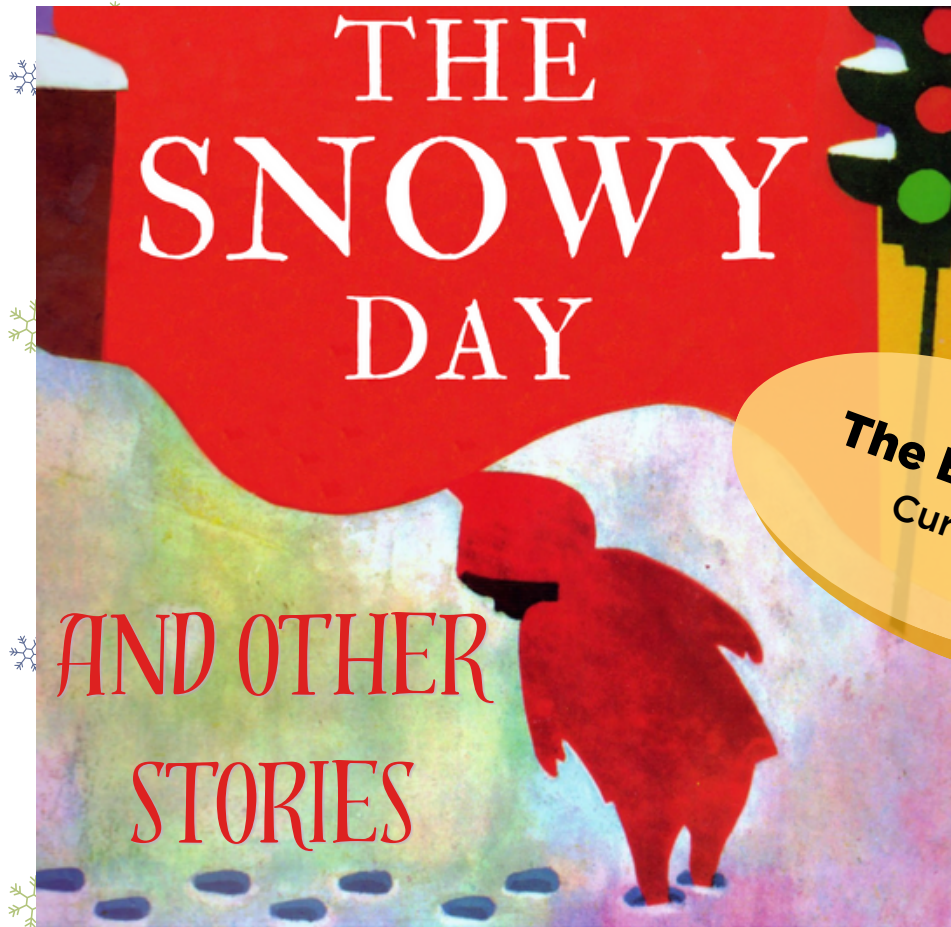


CHILDPLAY RESOURCES



The Big Idea:
Curiosity

By Jerome Hairston

Based on the books by Ezra Jack Keats

Music by Victor Zupanc

Directed by Chanel Bragg

What the Play is About

'The Snowy Day and Other Stories' brings together four books by Ezra Jack Keats, each one about Peter. As he grows from a young child into an older boy, Peter explores the world around him, faces challenges, and learns about growing up.

In 'The Snowy Day,' Peter wakes up to find the city covered in snow. He explores outside and hears the crunch of snow, makes tracks with his feet, and hits a tree with a stick. Peter considers joining the older kids in a snowball fight, but decides to make his own fun instead by building a snowman, making snow angels, and sliding down a hill. Before going home, he saves a snowball in his pocket. That night, he is disappointed to discover it has melted. But in the morning, Peter is delighted to see the snow still outside, and he joyfully goes outside to play with his friend Archie.

In 'Whistle for Willie,' Peter wants to learn how to whistle so he can call his dog, Willie. At first, he cannot do it and feels like giving up. With encouragement and instruction from his mother, he keeps trying until he whistles successfully. Proud of his new skill, he uses it to surprise Willie and show his family what he has learned.



In 'Goggles!,' Peter and Archie find a pair of motorcycle goggles. While wearing them, the two imagine exciting things they could be, like motorcycle racers, deep-sea divers, or astronauts. Two older boys try to take the goggles, but Willie grabs them and runs away. Peter and Archie hide while the older boys search for Willie. Peter comes up with a clever plan, and in the end, Peter, Archie, and Willie make it safely back to Archie's house with the goggles.

The final story, 'A Letter to Amy,' takes place as Peter prepares for his birthday party. He wants to invite Amy to the party, and decides to write her a letter so the invitation will feel special. Writing the letter is not easy, but Peter works hard until he gets the words just right. Trouble begins when the wind blows the letter away and Peter accidentally knocks Amy down while chasing it. Amy runs away crying, and Peter worries that now she won't come to his party. On the day of the party, Amy arrives after all and tells Peter that she liked the letter. The play ends with Peter's friends gathered around him as he makes a wish and blows out the candles.

Together, these stories show Peter growing in confidence, courage, and kindness.

Themes of the Show

- Curiosity & Discovery
- Childhood
- Growing Up
- Navigating Friendship



Talk About It!

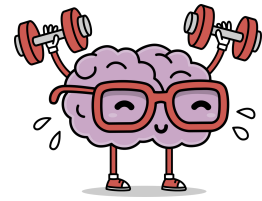
Start a conversation before the show:

- ★ What is something you had to practice and practice before you were able to do it? What is something you are still working on?
- ★ What are your favorite hiding places?
- ★ What are your favorite outdoor activities? Do they change during different seasons?
- ★ This play is based on four different books by Ezra Jack Keats. How do you think the playwright will create one story out of them?

Start a conversation after the show:

- ★ How was the play similar to the books? How was it different?
- ★ How did Peter and Archie stand up to the bullies who wanted their goggles? Do you think they did the right thing? What would you have done?
- ★ Peter isn't big enough to join the snowball fight, but he wants to some day. What are you looking forward to doing when you're bigger?
- ★ What brings you joy?

Discover It!



About the Seasons

- There are four seasons each year, and each season lasts three months.
- The seasons change because the Earth orbits, or revolves, around the sun. It takes a year to complete one orbit.
- For six months of the year, the North Pole is tilted toward the Sun, which means more sun and more daylight in the Northern Hemisphere, where we live. That equals warmer weather - spring and summer!
- For the other six months, the South Pole tilts towards the sun. The Southern Hemisphere has spring and summer, and we get fall and winter!



About the Author

- Ezra Jack Keats was born in 1916 in Brooklyn, New York.
- His given name was Jacob Ezra Katz; he changed his name after World War II in order to hide his Jewish heritage.
- Before getting into children's books, Ezra worked as a mural painter and comic book illustrator. He also designed camouflage patterns for the Army during World War II.
- He authored and/or illustrated more than 85 books for children!



Bronze statue of Peter and Willie in Prospect Park, Brooklyn

Real People & Places

- Peter's neighborhood was based on the neighborhood where Ezra grew up.
- Many of Peter's friends were based on Ezra's childhood friends!
- The bullies in 'Goggles' were based on Ezra's experiences being bullied as a child.
- Peter's character was inspired by photographs that Ezra clipped from a magazine of a real little boy about to get a blood test.

Did You Know?

- The Snowy Day was the first book Ezra Jack Keats wrote AND illustrated all by himself, and it won the Caldecott Medal for best picture book illustration!
- The Snowy Day is the most checked-out book in the 125-year history of the New York Public Library.
- The character of Peter appears in seven of Ezra's books.
- Peter was the first Black main character in a full color picture book. But Ezra didn't create Peter just to be groundbreaking. Ezra said, "My book would have him there simply because he should have been there all along."

Imagine It!



Page to Stage Tableaux



A tableau (plural - tableaux) is a frozen picture we make with our bodies - it's kind of like pulling the illustrations right out of a book and bringing them into the classroom! Work together to create real-life versions of illustrations from 'The Snowy Day and Other Stories'!

1

Choose an illustration from one of the stories in the play and talk about what is in it. Include living and non-living things. For example, the cover of 'The Snowy Day' includes Peter, his footprints, piles of snow, buildings, and a traffic light. The pages after this one have some sample illustrations you can use if you don't have a copy of any of the books.

2

Designate an area of the classroom as the "stage" and another area (or students' seats) as the audience. Invite a volunteer to take the stage and become one of the items from the illustration. Remind them to make a clear, specific shape with their body to show what they are!

3

Add on to the tableau one person at a time until you have the full picture! Participants can relax in place as the tableau is being constructed.

4

Count down to a "3...2...1...freeze" so the audience can see the completed tableau. Compare it to the illustration from the book AND to what you saw onstage during the play. How did things change from page to stage?

5

Bring the tableau to life. Say, "activate!" and count down from 5. During the countdown, the tableau can move and make sound. When the countdown ends, the tableau should re-freeze.

6

Choose another illustration and repeat!

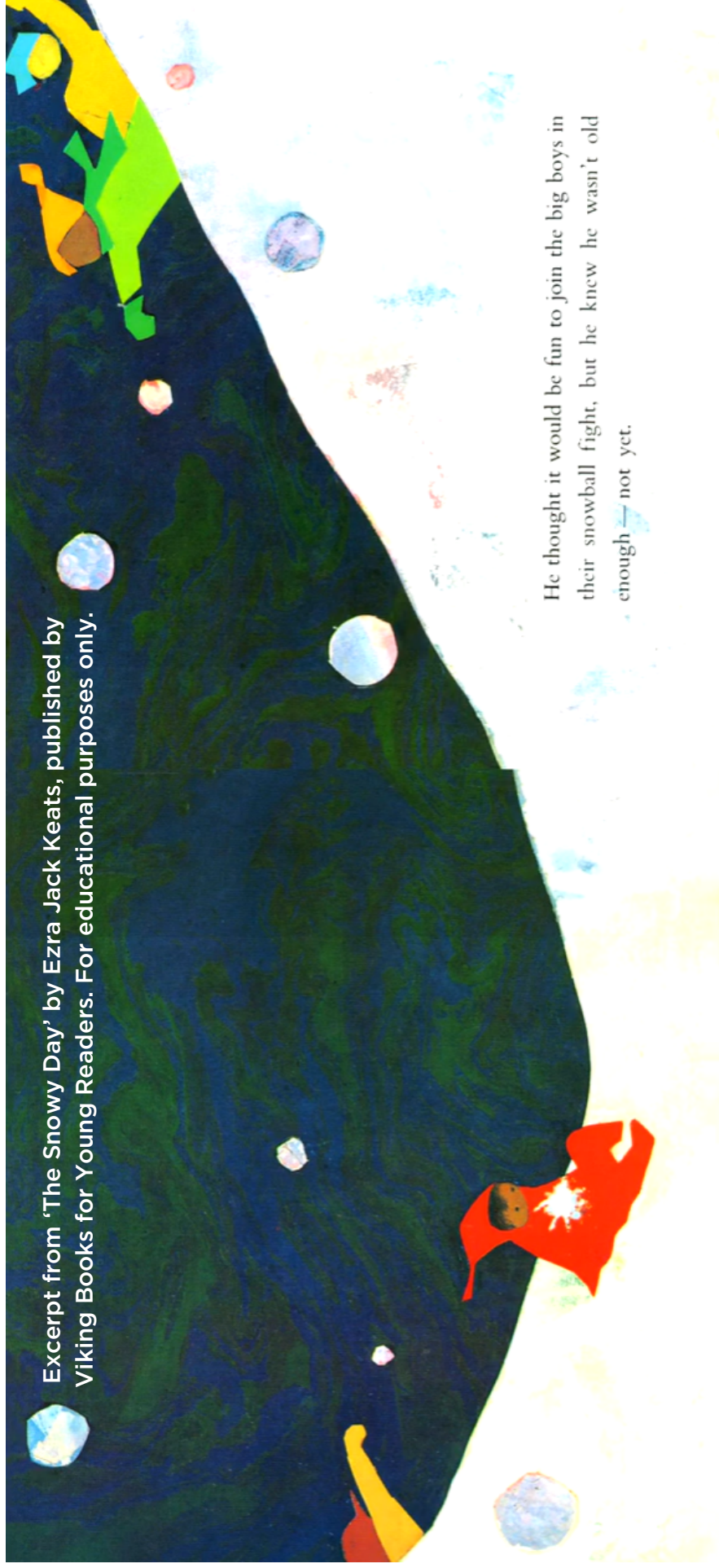


Possible Extension:

Break into groups of 3-4 and give each group an illustration to work from. Create and rehearse tableaux in these groups and then share them out!

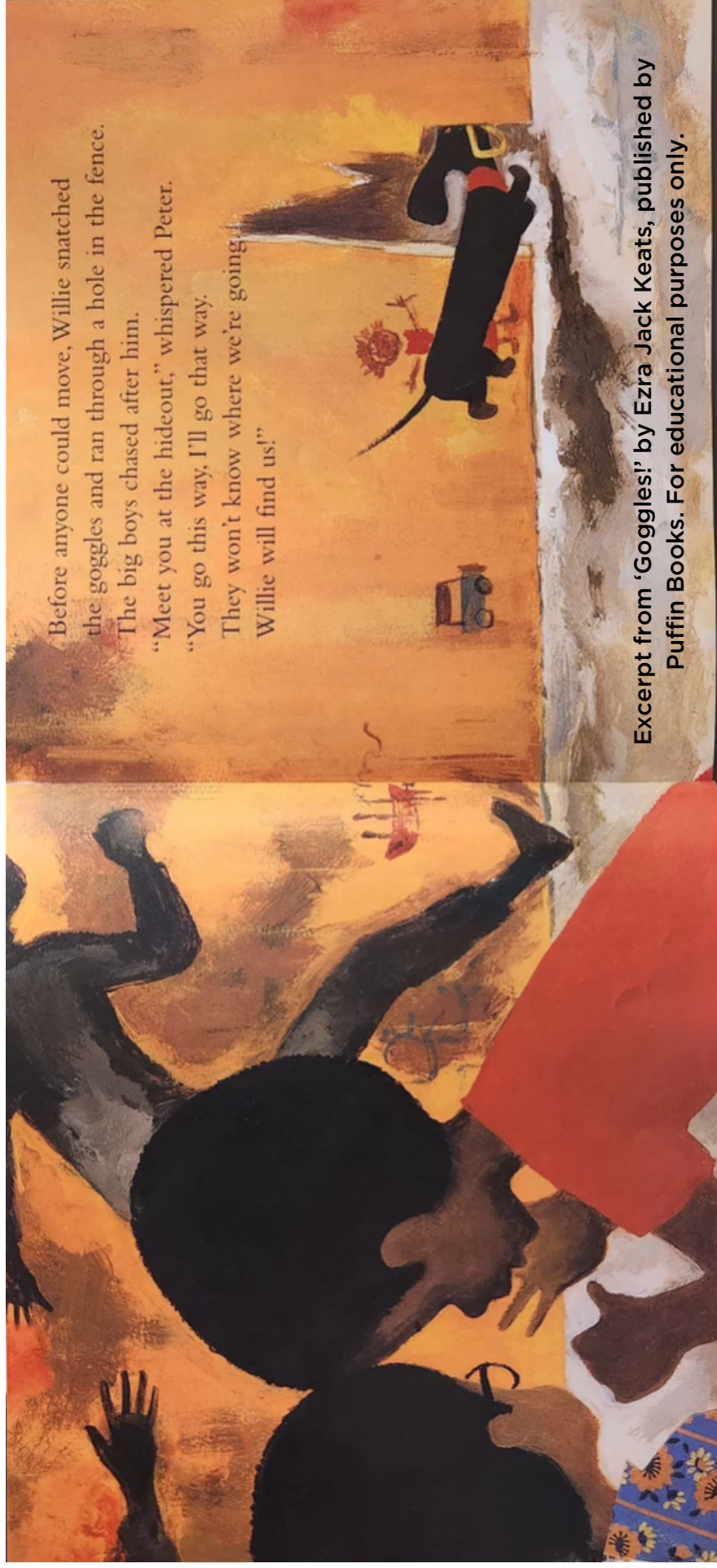
Page to Stage Tableaux

Excerpt from 'The Snowy Day' by Ezra Jack Keats, published by Viking Books for Young Readers. For educational purposes only.



He thought it would be fun to join the big boys in their snowball fight, but he knew he wasn't old enough — not yet.

Page to Stage Tableaux



Excerpt from 'Goggles!' by Ezra Jack Keats, published by Puffin Books. For educational purposes only.

Page to Stage Tableaux



Excerpt from 'Whistle for Willie' by Ezra Jack Keats, published by Viking Books for Young Readers. For educational purposes only.

Page to Stage Tableaux



In his great hurry, Peter bumped into Amy.
He caught the letter before she could see it was for her.

Excerpt from 'A Letter to Amy' by Ezra Jack Keats, published
by Puffin Books. For educational purposes only.

Share It!



Try, Try Again!

In the play, Willy learns to whistle for the first time! He has to practice many times before he finally gets it. He perseveres! Think of something you had to try many times before you could do it. Let's draw it together!



You will need: ★ printable template (on the next page)
★ coloring tools

1

The template has three squares. In the first square, draw the thing you wanted to learn to do!

2

In the second square, draw your first attempt to do it. Have fun showing how things went wrong - remember, you kept trying, so it's okay that you didn't get it right away!

3

In the third square, draw how you felt when you finally figured it out. Sometimes getting something right feels even better when it didn't come easy!

4

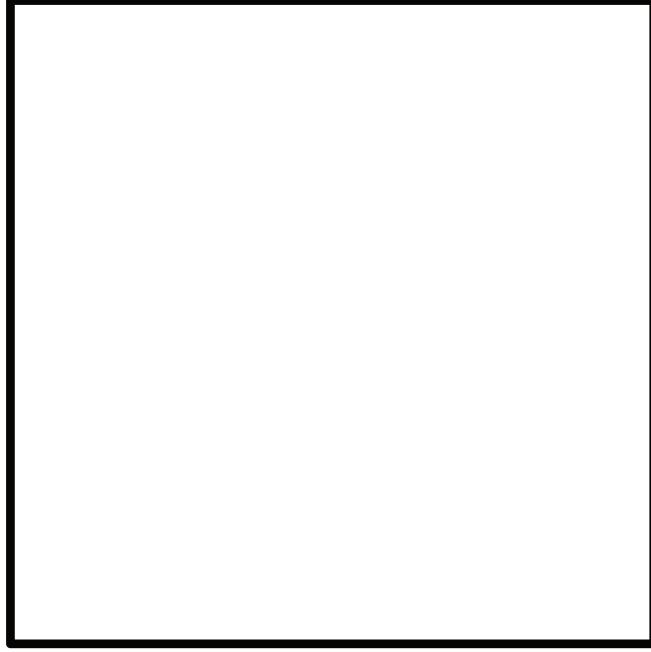
Share your drawings with a classmate and, if you'd like, the entire class! You can even hang them on the wall in your classroom and create a big display of the power of perseverance!



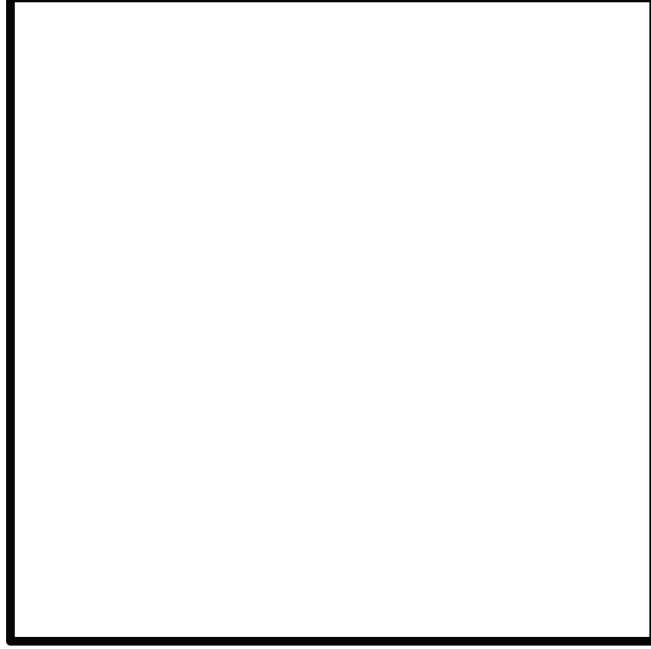
Name:

Try, Try Again!

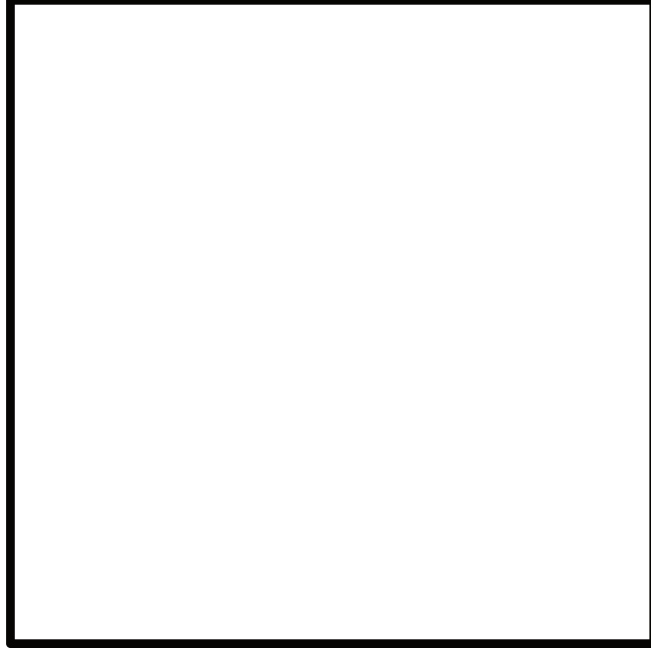
What I wanted to do:



My first try:



How I felt when I got it:



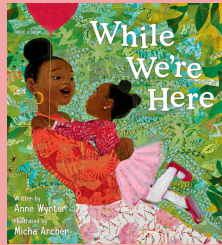
Read About It!



Keep the conversation going! Check out this list of books connected to the ideas and themes in “The Snowy Day and Other Stories”!



Keats's Neighborhood
By Ezra Jack Keats
Ages 5-8



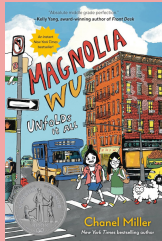
While We're Here
By Anne Wynter
Ages 4-8



If Winter Comes, Tell It I'm Not Here
By Simona Ciraolo
Ages 3-7



Hot Dog
By Doug Salati
Ages 4-8



Magnolia Wu Unfolds It All
By Chanel Miller
Ages 7-11



Dirt + Water = Mud
By Katherine Hannigan
Ages 4-8



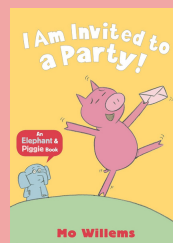
Rain!
By Linda Ashman
Ages 4-7



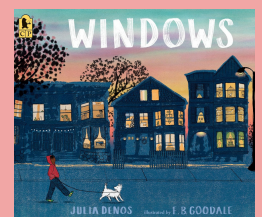
Small in the City
By Sydney Smith
Ages 4-8



Float
By Daniel Miyares
Ages 4-8



I Am Invited to a Party!
By Mo Willems
Ages 4-8



Windows
By Julia Denos
Ages 3-7

Extend It!

The play is just the beginning - there's always more to learn. Check out these links to dig deeper into what interests you!

- ★ Become an expert at object transformation!

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tZAYZ5ZBnrQ>

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qLTw7HXT-Hw&t=8s>

- ★ Learn how to whistle

<https://www.vermontpublic.org/podcast/but-why-a-podcast-for-curious-kids/2025-01-24/how-do-you-whistle>

- ★ Watch an animated read aloud of 'The Snowy Day'

<https://www.ej kf.org/read-aloud-the-snowy-day/>



Founded in 1977, Childsplay is a nonprofit professional theatre company based in Tempe, Arizona whose chosen audience is young people and families.

Our mission is to ignite imagination, wonder and joy by creating strikingly original theatre and learning experiences that inspire young minds to explore and soar.

For more information:

childsplayaz.org

#SHAREWITHUS

Follow us on social media and share your comments & photos!

#ChildsplayAZ

#SnowyDay



ChildsplayAZ



childsplayaz



@childsplayaz

We also love getting mail!



Childsplay Theatre
Education Team
900 S. Mitchell Drive
Tempe, AZ 85281