

Dear Friend,

Since writing my last newsletter, I have been very busy, both in my studio and at work on various projects that I will tell you about later on. Your kind letters and e-mails have continued to arrive in my mailbox and on my computer screen. What a lucky person I am to be on the receiving end of so many wonderful pieces of mail. I receive many letters from children and teachers, parents and librarians from all over the world including Japan, Australia, South America, Israel, Poland, Germany, the U.S. and from a school called The Caterpillar School in the Philippines. Among some of the letters are poems, photographs, drawings and beautifully made collage art. I appreciate each and every thoughtful message and creative effort and I am very glad to know that you enjoy my books!

In this newsletter I want to answer your new questions and to update the earlier editions of Caterpillar Express. All of my previous newsletters have been posted on the Official Eric Carle Web Site, www.eric-carle.com, where you will also find more information about me, my new book projects, and exciting news about The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art.

So let's start off with new questions:

Who are your favorite children's book authors and illustrators?

I admire the work of many picture book artists, including Leo Lionni, Mitsumasa Anno, Lisbeth Zwerger, Maurice Sendak, Ezra Jack Keats, Jerry Pinkney, and Chris Van Allsburg. I am drawn to work that has an individual and distinctive style and to work that comes from an authentic place within the soul of the artist.

What is your favorite book that you did not write?

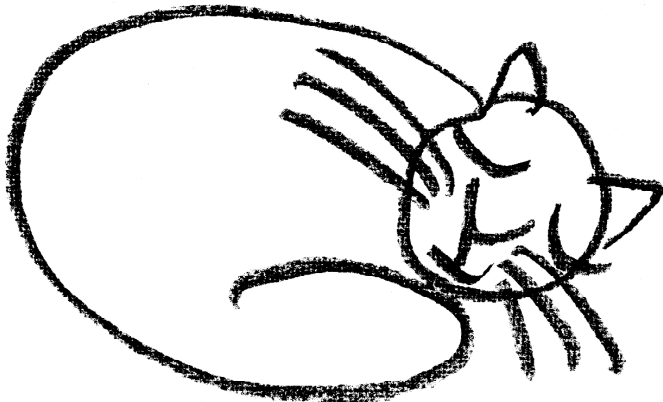
One of my favorite books for children that I did not write is *Leo the Late Bloomer*, which was written by Robert Kraus and illustrated by Jose Aruego. I like this book because in some ways I identify with the main character and I also love the illustrations.

How many books have you written? I have written and/or illustrated more than 70 books!

What kind of tissue paper do you use? I have tried many brands of tissue paper and am now using a long-fibered, ph-neutral, white tissue paper from Kate's Paperie in New York City. I prepare the paper with a matte medium before I paint the paper with ordinary acrylic paint that can be found in any art store. By the

way, I do not use Kleenex facial tissue papers. Someone once tried this and had the most difficult time.

What is your favorite animal or insect? My father loved animals and it is from him that I inherited a love for all kinds of creatures. However, I do love cats.



Where do you live? I live in a small city called Northampton in the western part of Massachusetts.

How old were you when you first started to create books for children? I was in my late 30's and still working as a graphic designer in an advertising agency when Bill Martin Jr asked me to illustrate his *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* I was 39 years old when *1, 2, 3 to the Zoo*, the first book that I did on my own, was published, and 40 when *The Very Hungry Caterpillar* came out.

How old are you now? I was born in 1929 and I just turned 74 years old.

Why are there double pages in *The Very Busy Spider*? There are folded pages in my book *The Very Busy Spider* because the raised spider web could not have been printed on both sides of a single sheet of paper, otherwise the pages would have stuck together. This is called "French Fold."

How do I find books of yours that are no longer in print? You might be able to locate out of print titles by doing an out of print book search through your local bookstore or through an on line company such as bookfinder.com.

Do you research your books before you write them? Yes, sometimes I do. For research materials, I use books of nature photography from the library and from my own collection. More recently, I have also used the internet as a resource.

Where did you get the idea for *The Grouchy Ladybug*? First I did a "blind" book, "blind" meaning a book without words or pictures. The "blind" book had pages that increased in size from small to big. The smallest page, I thought, could be a ladybug; the biggest page, I thought, could be a whale. Now all I needed was a story. That's how this idea was born.

Have you won any awards for your work? Yes, I have. Quite recently, I was very honored to be selected by the Association for Library Service to Children, a division of the American Library Association, as the thirteenth recipient of the Laura Ingalls Wilder Lifetime Achievement Award. Another special honor was that a school in Germany was named after me, *Eric Carle Schule*. There is also a list of awards I have won on my web site.



What was your favorite book when you were a child? I did not have very many books as a child. But I had a large, extended family who were always talking and telling stories. I now realize that this is where my ability as a storyteller came from.

And here are some updated answers to questions that have been included in previous newsletters:

Do you have any pets? My wife Bobbie and I have shared our home with a number of pets over the years. Most recently, we had a cat named Annie who unfortunately became ill and passed away just a few weeks ago. Annie was a lovely, long-haired cat and we enjoyed her company.

Where do ideas come from? A child once told me that ideas come from both your “outside” and your “inside.” That struck me as a perceptive and accurate response. It seems to me that what is outside and what is inside are the basic elements in constructing a story, creating a painting or composing a piece of music. Some ideas for my books have been there, inside me, in my unconscious perhaps, for a long time and then are triggered by an outside event. Usually it's a combination of things: memory, design, dreams, experiences, things I've seen or heard.

How do I get started writing and illustrating books for children? When people ask me this question, I tell them about the four magic letters:

DO IT!

I encourage people to have faith in themselves and create their own stories and illustrations. But, no guarantees, though.

Will you come and visit our school? While I no longer visit schools (so that I can spend more time in my studio making books) many children and teachers feel as though they know me better after watching the video *Eric Carle: Picture Writer* in which I demonstrate how I make my collage illustrations and talk some about my life and work. You should be able to order this video from your local bookstore.

What are you working on now? I tend to not talk about works-in-progress until they are done. It's part superstition and part habit. But mostly I think that there is a kind of gestation period that each book goes through and while a book is still being made, it is best to not talk too much about it. I can say that I am currently working on a new project and some vague ideas for others.

The Museum News: Since the last newsletter came out, The Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art has been constructed and opened to the public. The Museum's opening weekend in November, 2002 was attended by 9,000 people of all ages from all over the world and was a tremendous success. The energy and enthusiasm about the Museum have continued well

into this year. We've had more than 60,000 visitors as of August, 2003 and have held numerous exhibits and events. The building itself is a beautiful, spacious and light-filled space with a large main hall, three galleries, a café, an art studio, an auditorium and a gift shop. We hope you will be able to come and visit! For more information about upcoming exhibits at the Museum, how to become a member and more, please visit the Museum's web site, www.picturebookart.org.

Two New Books of mine came out in 2003 both of which were collaborations. While I tend to prefer to do both story and illustration, over the years I have worked on projects with writer friends like Bill Martin Jr with whom I collaborated on *Brown Bear, Brown Bear, What Do You See?* and *Polar Bear, Polar Bear, What Do You Hear?* In August 2003, our third “bear” book, *Panda Bear, Panda Bear, What Do You See?* was published. In this book, I included painted backgrounds hoping to provide a sense of the natural surroundings where these endangered animals live. I also wanted a graphically unifying effect throughout the book that connected the individual pictures.



Also published in 2003 in the U.S. from Orchard Books (Scholastic Inc.) was *Where Are You Going? To See My Friend!* which I had the honor of creating with Japanese picture book artist Kazuo Iwamura. This book is truly unique in that it can be read in English and/or in Japanese. After meeting for the first time in Japan in 2000 when I was Mr. Iwamura's guest at the *Iwamura Kazuo Ehon-no-Oka Art Museum*, also a picture book museum, he and I began to work on an idea I'd had for a long time. I was intrigued by how in Japan, books traditionally start from what we in the West call the

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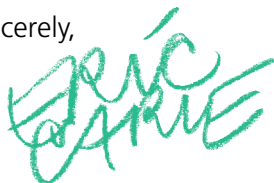
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"back" of the book; of course to the Japanese it is the "front." Anyway, I wanted to start the book from the "front" in my style and in English, and for Mr. Iwamura to start at the "back" in his style and in Japanese. The end of the story would be in the middle of the book where the two stories meet. We sent our book idea back and forth via mail, fax and e-mail. Then Mr. Iwamura came to the U.S. and we spent a very memorable few days working on this project, talking and drawing pictures. This was an experience I will always treasure.

Many thanks again for your fine letters and e-mails and for your interest in my work.

Sincerely,



P.S. You can send letters to me at PO Box 485, Northampton, MA 01060 and e-mail to me at fanclub@eric-carle.com. And please visit my web site, www.eric-carle.com, for more information and earlier editions of The Caterpillar Express.