African American Fathering


Crosshatched pencil lines with applied layers of watercolor and oil paints and predominately brown and dull backgrounds create an incredible background for the story of Henry “Box” Brown, a young boy who didn’t know how old he was because slaves were not allowed to know their birthdays. Early in the story as his slave master is dying, he learns he is being taken away from his family and placed with the owner of the dying master. Henry grows older and meets Nancy who lives at another slave farm and they have children. Nancy and the children are then sold and Henry begins planning for his path to freedom in Philadelphia being mailed to freedom in a wooden box. This is perhaps the most incredible story of fatherhood and loss that I’ve seen in a children’s picture book. This book is a Caldecott Honor Book and is on the top of my favorites for this annotated bibliography. This true story of Henry, the pain and loss associated with slavery and the journey to freedom should be a required reading for all children. From an African American fathering perspective, this children’s picture book relates to the roots of fathering and nurturing the “little boy within”.


Bippity Bop Barbershop is truly an endearing read for all fathers and sons. The images in this story are great. The watercolor images that fill the pages are full of black men enjoying their time at the barbershop while waiting to get their hair cut. The story is uses the “anxiety” that accompanies a boys first few haircuts to build a sense of edge. Natasha Tarpley writes incredibly using a male perspective and the father in this story is incredible in his ability to be mindful and caring for his son. From the beginning of the story, the dad sets the stage for their sense of community with each other by wearing matching jeans and shoes! They stop and get breakfast and dad shares how his son is “getting his first haircut at the barbershop today!” Be brave is echoed throughout and the young boy is unsure about being brave but dad teaches him how to “be brave” when the clippers are turned on. Tarpley does a great job of connecting this father and son story throughout in terms of “wanting to be like each other” (when asked about what hairstyle they want) but the reader can infer that this is really a root of the story. Getting a haircut is a ritual that fathers and sons share commonly on a routine basis. As the father of an
African American son, I have traveled between black and white barbers and have always been amazed at the differences between the two worlds. Typically, white barbershops are very quiet and everyone is very private “in their own little world”. In a black barbershop, there are many conversations going on between everyone (sometimes every inappropriate for my sensibilities in parenting) and games are often played, creating a much more social experience. This story certainly would appeal to fathers in terms of nurturing relationships in fathering sons.


In this incredible intergenerational offering, a collection of poems celebrates “fatherhood with honor, humor, and grace”. The most striking thing about this picture book is the artwork that graces the pages. This is Javanka Steptoe’s first book and he uses mixed media to that are overlaid to create striking images that are the backdrop for the poems. The book highlights that “family is a precious gift, and that fathers are among our most affecting hero’s. The collection and images are primarily geared toward an older audience of youngsters that are aged 7 and up. The book is a wonderful tribute to the lives of fathers and grandfathers and the imprint that has been made on the souls of children.


This is a remarkable book describing a school aged girl’s day of going to work with dad. Dad fixes her favorite meal (French toast), they ride a subway to work and read the funnies, pass a street musician playing a horn, ride the elevator to his high rise office, and she spends the day with his business partners looking at a picture of her family that she drew (hanging on the wall behind his desk). Dad announces to the woman owned business partners upon arrival, “we have a new boss, today my daughter runs the show”. This young daughter doesn’t just accompany dad to work as an observer, she actively plays a part in the work day helping him do a presentation holding up posters and graphs. The story is told in rhyme by children’s author Jabari Asim who has also authored, The Road to Freedom: A Story of the Reconstruction. It is masterly written to sound like a song when read and very affirming. The tender watercolor images of Aaron Boyd that fill the pages, are dominated in soft and brilliant orange, yellow, blue and green hues that portray a wide variety of people, shops, street vendors and park activities that are part of a multicultural city life. This book would be very helpful to fathers building an understanding of nurturing daughters.

Blended Father Parenting/Divorce

Wales Brown Building Community in Times of Tension, Final Project 2017 2
to Be Friends. Barron’s Educational Series, 31 pgs.
This picture book was originally published in Spanish, Cuando Mis Padres se Olvidaron de ser Amigos. This very well written story book contains large purple, yellow, green and blue colored images of the narrator (the daughter in the story) and her parents. She remembers the “family nights” when they all played games together and then discusses how her parents started yelling and just didn’t seem happy anymore. Afraid that it’s because of something she’s done, she is reassured that “they (the parents) just forgot how to be friends. Dad has moved out and after some time they both begin sharing in her school and athletic activities but remaining separate in different homes. The effectiveness of using cartoon people to illustrate the story instead of using animals makes this story much more palpable. Also, the big large images on one side of the book and the writing on the other side makes it easier to read. There are paper people cutouts that dot some of the pages that add to the sense of connection in this story. The author of this story works as an early childhood mental health consultant and is a Guardian Ad Litem for children in Family Court. Her one page letter, A Note To Parents at the end of the book provides support for parents to give messages of safety and support for children involved in parental separation. Fathers would find this book helpful in terms of thinking about fathering without violence or fear.


Before writing children’s books Melissa Higgins worked as a school counselor and had a private practice in counseling. In this children’s story picture book which is aimed at school aged children, it borders on being a bit preachy. It is definitely a therapy book and is probably very helpful to many parents with children that are separating and going through divorce. The book does bring up important issues such as: how to talk about why parents are separating, wondering if it’s a kids fault for why parents are separating, feeling afraid to talk with other students about parents separating, the benefits of being a children’s support group and developing some coping skills, how things are different between moms and dads house when visiting, as well as court processes and visiting schedules. The story is told using a variety of animals that are drawn in cartoon like images doing human activities. There are interspersed areas on some pages in yellow tags to give kids some perspective as to typical kinds of questions or concerns with clinical types of limits (“it’s OK to feel confused at first about things being different in-between moms and dads house”). This book speaks to fathers about teamwork between parents in co-parenting and provides some other resources at the end for follow up.

Fatherhood & Development
Beloved naturalist and children’s book author Eric Carle gives us Mister Seahorse. Mister Seahorse is moving through the ocean depths and coming across other fish who are fathers that are responsible for caring for eggs that have been laid by the mothers until they are born. Mr. Seahorse is encouraging each father along the way and giving words of encouragement and praise. Eventually, in the closing page, Mr. Seahorse releases all of the eggs he has been carrying too. One seahorse wants to come back and he assures him that he is ready to leave and needs to go, “I do love you, but now you need to be on your own”. The colorful images between sheets that provide some camouflage hiding the fish will provide young readers with some fun while the story is read. From a fathering perspective, it’s beautiful and very unique to show ways that males are responsible for carrying life and then releasing the life when matured. This is not a common thread in the literature. Mr. Seahorses reassurance provided to the reluctant baby that is told he needs to leave because he’s ready is both touching and sad. This book would be useful for fathers in thinking about the roots of fathering.


Karen Katz and her husband adopted their infant Lena from Guatemala. She began writing children’s picture books for her daughter. She always asks herself before writing a book, will a child want to read this book? Will a parent read this with their child? How will the book make them feel? What visual elements are there for capturing a child’s interest? And, will a child see something differently after the reading the book? [http://www.karennatz.com/bio2.html](http://www.karennatz.com/bio2.html). When reading *Daddy Hugs*, a bright and sweet simply illustrated tour of the day of a life of a father and his infant/toddler aged daughter, it’s hard to see why any small daughter wouldn’t be enamored with her dad and through this day full of play, love and touch. The book is framed as a counting book however it is full of love and emotion that leaves the father and child smiling. This book is a book that fathers and daughters could share with each other over and over and be magical moment each time. It was refreshing to see a father framed as providing so many care activities and being aware of development and not just playing. Fathers will find this book helpful in terms of nurturing relationships with their daughters.

**Gay Fathering**


This board book for children 2-4 years old tells the story of an active little toddler (son) and describes how he is entertained, played with and cared for throughout the day while exhausting his two dads. The story does a fair job of balancing roles (not type casting one father into a feminine role) and balances the caring and fun. At the end of the day, both of the dads are tired and the toddler “kisses them both and says, Night-night”. The star of the book that stands out is the
active little boy! It was refreshing to see dads portrayed as being able to sew, cook and have tea serving parties as well as playing. Leslea Newman was authored over 70 books and received numerous awards for her works from 1983 to present. She authored, Letter to Harvey Milk which was made into a movie, as well as another children’s picture book Heather has Two Mommies. Leslea also writes for adults and has authored works regarding community identities of lesbians, Jewish people, Gay men and HIV/AIDS. This book would be useful for dads looking at nurturing relationships in fathering sons.

Robertson, C. (Author) & Humphreys, S. (Illustrator) (2014). *Two Dads*. Sparklypoo Publications, United Kingdom, 19 pgs..

This brief picture book is told by a school aged looking son that brags about how lucky he is to have been adopted and have not one, but two dads. The watercolor images on every page show connection and love that the child’s two dads and he have for each other. The simple and caring images depict LGBT families as normal and loving and the story doesn’t rely on preaching to press an agenda. This book also shows two dads representing different racial identities (Caucasian/African American). The story repeats over and over the luck this boy feels, “I want two daddy stories, and two daddy cuddles. Two daddy smiles and two daddy snuggles. Yes what I love best when I turn off the light...is both daddies kiss and whisper night night”. This story would appeal to dads in a fathering class in looking at the world of feelings and male nurturance.


Daddy’s Roommate is a book for children to learn about fathers loving other men. In this period book (you really have to remember this book was written in 1990), the narrator (the young school aged boy) talks about how his mother and father got a divorce and now his daddy lives with Frank and they do everything together. The writing is very simple and easy to understand. The images are cartoon like and are filled with energy and tenderness. This story really works using both dialogue and image representation to tell the story that dad is gay and that’s OK. In fact, the boy’s mom tells him that daddy and Frank are gay and when he asks what this means she explains, “being gay is one more kind of love, and love is the best kind of happiness”. In several images, the mother is portrayed with the father and son and they look very happy and content and she appears very approving. Daddy and Frank are portrayed as very average looking as well as loving and caring snuggling while watching TV and putting lotion on at the beach. In researching this book, I was able to find a reference on google to the raucous this book raised by Christians as this book was acclaimed to be part of a militant gay agenda. It was a banned book for some time and looking at this really makes one wonder how this was ever considered “militant “.  
https://sites.google.com/site/thesisactivities/daddy-s-roommate

of Random House, NY, 30 pgs..
http://www.lindacehaan.com/biography.html
The Queen in this story (portraying a fathering role), is tired and wanting to step down, demands that her get up out of bed and be married so he can take over! She complains “I don’t understand you. Every prince in these parts is married. Every one of them but YOU! When I was your age, I’d been married twice already.” After telling his mom he isn’t really interested in princesses, he agrees to meet her royal line up! A queen from Austria, another from Texas, a leprechaun looking princess from Greenland and a tall India from Mumbai, all storm away from the palace after being introduced and rejected. It’s Princess Madeline’s brother who catches his eye and “it was love at first sight.” In this everyone lived happily ever after story, fun colorful retro inspired images using a variety of watercolor drawing with dune collage overlaid are used to create a queer friendly story and a sense of fun and humor. The vivid bright images, 70’s styled platform shoes worn by the Prince, swirling landscape and vivid facial expressions of happiness and disgust make the story come alive. The vibrancy of the images including the adorable court cat that is a part of the story (mocking the princesses) make this a very sweet and memorable gay story that is not at all preachy. This book was an Inside/Out Book Selection and a Lambda Library award nominee.

Homeless Fathers

This poignant and touching children’s picture book is narrated by Andrew and leaves the reader teary eyed after reading. Andrew (about five years old) and his father live in a local airport where they are oppressed and trapped. Oppressed being careful not to be noticed and living in the shadows of all the people passing through. They are not alone. A Spanish family, the Medina’s (they help watch out for Andrew) are close with Andrew and his dad. Their son Denny and Andrew are exploited by travelers they help as they try to earn money to help their parents get out of the airport. Andrew tells a tender story of bird he witnessed that was also trapped in the airport for several days that eventually found a way out and flew away home. While this story may seem unbelievable to today’s readers, it stands as a narrative that dispels myths that fathers and children are homeless “because they want to be”, and speaks to the incredible time and energy that is spent trying to “fit in”. It also speaks to the daily pain that homeless families must navigate in a world where so many others are coming and going to homes and appear happy and content. This book is aimed at children 4 and older and would be useful to fathers that are working toward “healing the father wound”.

Incarceration
**Family When a Loved One Is Incarcerated.** Albert Whitman & Company.

This story is incredibly well done and speaks too many of things that children may be struggling with in regard to a parent that is incarcerated. Several different children are followed throughout the story as it talks about their concerns and questions as well as ways that parents or caregivers can help. This story includes a variety of children from across cultural contexts. The illustrations are very well done and don’t overshadow the text creating a nice balance for the viewer. The images are drawn with pencil and have nice strong lines in the artwork. Another very nice component to this story is the diversity of caregivers that are available to children from a birth father to a grandparent and foster parent to name a few. The story provides some concrete ways that children can remain connected to parents while they are incarcerated. The end of the book contains a note to parents, caregivers, teachers and counselors, as well as tips for adults. The author of this story probably drew upon her own experiences as a youngster with a family member that was incarcerated to produce such a fine work. Fathers will find this story book helpful in terms of a time and place for fathering.


This beautiful and touching story is told through eyes of school aged African American girl who describes the ritual she and her grandmother would go through once a month when going to visit her father who is incarcerated. There is a sweet line “just-for-daddy-and-me-smile” that is told several times throughout the story that makes this story almost gospel like. This story is very rich and descriptive without being to preachy. The author does an incredible job of connecting the reader with vibrant African American culture and love. The illustrations that fill every page are likewise unbelievable. The bold colors (blues, orange and green) are rich and vibrant with large brush strokes that make the images stand out creating beautiful lines and movement. This remarkable story also includes the “bus trip” that so many others make on visiting day with inmates. This story is really focused on celebrating relationships and unconditional love. This story book would be useful to fathers in terms of nurturing relationships between caregivers/co-parents.


Anthony Curcio is a former inmate having spent 5 years in prison. He wrote this book for his two daughters’ and attempts to teach children about the consequences of their actions when doing something wrong (breaking the law) and how this can separate families from each other by “being sent to the big house”. He uses a character “rhyming roach” who also ends up incarcerated to illustrate the journey in the story among a variety of many kinds of animals to represent people. In difference to others that have reviewed this book, I found it to be confusing and overwhelming in subject matter and imagery. Illustrated by Curcio, it seemed like a Richard Scary story. He compares the consequences for children breaking rules (going to time out) to the
ways that parents break rules and go to prison. “Rhymer roach” is sent to jail for one day and reports learning big lessons. Bert Burykill (Vice Magazine) writes My Daddy is in Jail is, “written by an ex-con. It’s reportedly endorsed by PhD’s, school principals and judges as an “awesome book with an inspiring message: You are loved and will get through this”. For fathers in a fathering program this book may help in terms of a time and place for the “father wound”.


Melissa Higgins uses a family full of rabbit like looking animals, with the son in the family (Sketch) to narrate this story that is meant as a sort of primer for children about what happens when a parent is arrested and sent to jail. In the story they are interviewed by a child social services worker (portrayed as a fox) waiting for their mother to come and get them. There is an expected problem at school when another classmate reports that he saw their father being arrested. While visiting their father he explains “I messed up Sketch and what I did caused a whole lot of problems and I’m sorry, I hope you’ll forgive me”. Sketch gets connected with a mentor at school through the help of his school Social Worker and Sketch ends up waiting 6 years to be able to go fishing again with his. This is another clinical piece written by a nice former school counselor. Again, Higgins uses some very school focused solutions to helping children and this story book does not really address family loneliness and discontent. Little yellow text bars are found on some pages talking about common feelings children have about having an incarcerated parent and explaining to other kids at school. The watercolor images of all the “cute” little animals tend to take away from the story however this may be a way for younger kids to better understand even though it’s written for school aged children.

**Kids Taking Care of Dad’s**

Bob Shea is author of several children’s books and winner of the Amazon Book of the Year award, a Bulletin Blue Ribbon and a Horn Book Fanfare award (The Horn Book Club). In *Oh, Daddy!*, Shea portrays the father (a cartoonish big blue animal looking creature) as a bumbling clueless dad that can’t remember: how to get dressed, how to get in the car to go to grandma’s (late), how to eat carrots, and how to water the flowers. Thank God, dad has his smart little son that’s “as smart as 2 eight year olds”. Comically written and self-illustrated, this cute very simple short story provides insights from what a young child can teach dad. From a fathering perspective, it reinforces many widely held cultural beliefs that dads are clueless and don’t know what to do to take care of children.
**Loss & Separation**

This children’s picture book is astounding and is a story about loss, hope and promise. The narrator is an African American school aged boy that has a game that he plays called “knock knock” with his dad in the morning. When the knock knock doesn’t happen one day, this boy hopes and waits for his dad to answer a letter that he writes, thinking that perhaps his dad comes by when he is away during the day. The boy wants to have dad teach him how to: dribble a ball, shave, drive a car... Coming home one day the letter is answered and says “no longer will I be there to knock on your door, so you must learn to knock for yourself. Knock Knock down the doors that I could not”. This book is challenging to read as the emotions that are welled up as the reader continues through to the end are intense. This is definitely a book that is meant for every child that has missed a dad. Beatty wrote this book from a groundswell of feelings related to his fathers’ incarceration when he was young and the pain related to going to visit. He left the dad’s absence open ended so this story would appeal to many boys that have experienced the loss of a father. The images in this picture book are likewise incredible using a mixed media of watercolor and collage. One of the most striking images is the boy making a paper airplane of the letter he wrote and shooting this into the dark blue sky that overhangs an urban area. This book was winner of the Coretta Scott King Non Violent Change award and would be useful to fathers in terms of exploring their own histories of loss related to the roots of fathering.


This poignant and touching book was written after Susan Kerner’s husband died from cancer and she was pregnant for their child. She wrote this book due to an absence of story books describing loss. It is written in a very sweet tone and feels very touching for children to hear. The reader has no idea about what “specific loss” is being referred to which makes it very effective for any child that has a parent that isn’t there. To give you a sense of the tone of this book, the opening page sets the tone with a young African American boy looking out a window by his side with blue pajamas on with bright stars and written, “if you ask me where my daddy is, this is what I’ll say: He’s in me and around me never far away.” This book would appeal to children from almost any ethnic or minority book as there are many diverse representations of children and moms comforting them. The sing song rhyme in this story makes it easy to read. This book would be meaningful for fathers in terms of nurturing children in the world of feelings.

In this heart wrenching story, a young polar bear named Lars is separated from his father when his dad takes him out to show things like tracking, swimming and diving. After falling to sleep huddled up in snow on a berg, the ice berg cracks apart. After surviving wind storms and currents, Lars finds himself in a forest with Henry the hippopotamus. The hippo doesn’t quite know how to help Lars and after running into Marcus, an eagle. Marcus knew what to do and arranged for Lars to meet a Marcus, a whale. Marcus swims to the arctic with Lars on his back and returns him to his father who has been anxiously looking for Lars. De Beer uses some very expansive and beautiful watercolor drawings to illustrate this sweet story. One of the most striking things about these images in this story is the way that the animals convey movement and feeling. There is quite a bit of storytelling and narration so this story may be more suitable for children ages 6 and up. From a fathering perspective, this story relates well issues around overcoming barriers.


Trudy Trewin is new to children’s picture books and this entre is a delightful to read. It’s the story of Matilda Rose (a pig) and she is search of where her kisses have gone as she is expecting her father and when he arrives he always loves his “big smooocheroo”. Throughout the story she talks about kisses being “ticklish like Daddy’s whisper-kiss” or “yummy like a chocolate candy-kiss” and many other sing songy types of descriptions. In the end of the story, while crying at the airport seeing all the others kiss and wondering where hers is, she suddenly feels it and finds it when she hears her dad “s “booming voice, Matilda Rose, where’s my big smooocheroo?” This story is sweet and cheerful. From a fathering perspective it really is a loving way of fathers and daughters caring for each other.


This children’s picture book is told in rhyme and from the perspective of an Emperor Penguin egg that has not yet hatched, however it does during the story during the story. I originally had placed this in the genre of safety/security and attachment and later moved this to loss and separation. The baby penguin says “where would I be, what would I do, who in the world would me through…without you” crediting his father for holding him for months on his feet, balancing the egg and keeping him warm. However, the story starts with the baby egg reassuring his father “she’ll come back to you and me soon, you’ll see… This story is sweet and provides a way to talk with children 4 and older about penguins and the challenges they go through but it also seemed to diminish the
work that is done for the baby penguins. From a fathering perspective, it seemed to simply note
the challenge and work that the male penguins experience in bringing their young into the world
and doesn’t really honor the hard work they do in order to reproduce and survive. For fathers
this story truly is a story illustrating teamwork between parents.

Puffin Books (October 27, 1983), 37 pgs..

The Ox-Cart Man was a 1980 Caldecott award winner
and is a very traditional American story set in the nineteenth
century. The story is told with watercolor pictures that fill
each page with landscape images of early New England
throughout the seasons. Donald Hall also wrote The
Milkman’s Boy (1997), which is a story about horses pulling
milk carts to deliver milk and a young boys wish to do his
father’s work. The story is much more focused on the
production activities of the family and the father in being able to provide for the farm in the next
year. It really was something out of Little House on the Prairie and lacked any sense of the
special love that a father has for his family when away. I had really hoped this picture book
would connect the feelings of loss and separation with dad as he left and went away to sell the
family goods and speak to how he might be meeting for connection. This story is very
traditional and reinforces stereotypes of females (sewing) and males (carving). Perhaps the most
touching part of this story was the father kissing his ox on the nose as he sold him after
everything else as he prepares to walk back home to start the whole cycle over again.

Traditional fathers and particularly Caucasian dads (due to the lack of diversity in this story)
might find this helpful in terms of “them power to meet their own needs”.

**Military Fathers**

Hardin, M (Author) & Langdo, B. (Illustrator) (2010). *Hero Dad.* Scholastic, 22 pgs..

This very straightforward story is narrated by a small very young boy (who receives a
letter from his dad) and the picture book describes him as a superhero. Each age is very simply
written describing a superhero characteristic and then how his dad is different from that ability
but still a hero. “He doesn’t have x-ray vision-he has night vision”
& “he doesn’t have a sidekick-he has a platoon”, to name a few. The
story is told using images that are very simple and cartoon like using
a variety of brown’s and greens that resonate with our military. The
setting is placed against a desert backdrop that makes this story very
identifiable for audiences today with current actions in the Middle
East. This story doesn’t contain any moralizing or preaching and is
very direct about how military personnel are superheroes’ that are
keeping us safe. The letter that opens the story is being read by the
little boy in his room at the end when he explains that, “sometimes
he (his dad) has to go away on long trips because that’s what
superhero’s to do.” The simplicity in this may leave some children of service members feeling a
bit puzzled as a deployment is much longer than “a trip”, however it may be easy for other
civilian families to understand.
Multigenerational/Cultural

Mary Hoffman has written over 90 books for children and in this book provides young readers and parents with easy to read pages filled with fun and incredibly diverse cartoon perspectives of many different ways that families: look like, live, work, play, eat celebrate and get around. This book is very inclusive and is very well balanced in its perspectives. I initially tagged this as a Multigenerational/Cultural book and would include tags of: inclusivity/diversity, relationships and safety security perspectives. This book should on every family’s bookshelf for young readers. Each page is surrounded by multiple fun little images that relate to the topic on each page for children to wonder about and for fathers to discuss more perspectives. Fathers are portrayed in a variety of diverse roles including: same sex fathering, stay at home dads, homeless fathers and fathers being playful.


This fun and exciting children’s picture book is an allegorical tale regarding friendship and fright told from an Indian perspective. In this story, Captain (father goose) tells his son Chotu that they must fly around the Tadoba forest is it is the land of Babbar, an age old fierce tiger bully that once killed an entire flock of geese that he was migrating with. Forced to spend the night because he had taken the time to land and tell his son, as well as the approaching evening, all have to spend the night. While celebrating Kojagiri (a time of staying up late and having fun celebrated each year), Babbar befriends a donkey named Hasmukh and the story turns from a fear based story to one of learning and understanding as Babbar and Hasmukh try to teach each other tricks to have fun. The end fast-forwards to the future where Chotu is now captain and explains to his young son that there is nothing to be afraid of anymore when flying over the forest as he and his father where there when Babbar lost his sadness and Hasmukh lost his fear.

Kommuru writes, that his picture books are “perfect for beginning readers and they pour diversity, traditional wisdom and cultural values from India into their stories”. Beginning readers will definitely need help with reading these stories and understanding some of the storylines in this book (there are a few) required several rereading’s of the story. The colorful cartoon images, done by his wife, communicate feelings and movement throughout the story. The book has been named a Mom’s Choice Award winner honoring excellence and received 5 stars from the Pacific Book Review. Fathers would find this book useful in connection to fathering without violence or fear.

This children’s picture story is awesome! It really goes to places where very few other children’s books stories do. One important aspect in terms of developing a children’s picture story is that there be some “problem” that needs to be addressed in the story. Thunder Boy Jr. starts out quickly with the problem to be resolved, Thunder Boy Jr. doesn’t want to be named after his dad. People call his dad “Big Thunder—that nickname is a storm filling up the sky. People call him Little Thunder—that nickname makes me feel like a burp or a fart”. Thunder Boy Jr. wants his own name! He suggests that perhaps he could be called: Not Afraid of Ten Thousand Teeth or Touch the Clouds and many more. Thunder Boy asserts, “I love my dad but I don’t want to be exactly like him. I love my dad but I want to be mostly myself”. Thunder Boy’s father understands his sons wish and decides to rename him Lightening, that way their “love will be loud and it will be bright”. The images in this story are remarkable in the way that Yuri Morale pays homage to the Native American roots in this story while sprinkling it with Latin influences of humor, shapes and color that bring the text to life using large and small playful images traveling through and around every page.

When Sherman Alexie was asked what he hoped kids would take away from *Thunder Boy Jr.* he said, “you don’t have to be like your family to be a part of your family; that in fact you can extend the borders of your family. As one person, as one member of a family, you can make your unit larger with your ambitions and your ideas about yourself” (Morning Edition, NPR May 23, 2016).


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This Board Book for children 1-3 years old is sweet, playful and loving. It is classified as multicultural book as the book shows three different stories and is a Caldecott Winner. The first is a little white boy and his father. “Little Guy” runs around and is chased and thrown up high in the air where his dad eventually kisses him on his belly and the boy cries “more, more, more”. The next child, “Little Pumpkin” is an African American boy with a Caucasian looking grandmother who is chased around, caught and swung around with grandma kissing each of his ten little toes as the boy cries “more, more, more”. The book ends with Little Bird, an Asian looking girl that “falls asleep so fast”. The mother lifts her and swings her to get her ready for bed and then kisses her on either side of her nose (on her eyes) and the baby breathes “Mmm. Mmmm. Mmmm” being tucked into bed. This story is a bit confusing. Margalit Fox (NY Times columnist, 10/21/2015), wrote upon Williams death that she was deeply connected to portraying working class families, ordinary activities in daily life, immigrant
stories and social justice issues. In respect to fatherhood, this book would relate closely to the world of feelings and male nurturance.

**Relationship**


This delightful and fun children’s picture book is written by Ahmet Zappa, the son of the famous rock musician Frank Zappa. Ahmet grew up with a learning disability and writes these books for children to develop an appreciation of the fun that reading can be. The central characters in this story are a father and his son (represented as fun monsters). The dad explains to his son throughout the story that “because I’m your dad, I can…” Almost all of the scenes are outrageous things he can do to help his son break all the rules around routine and typical daily living (i.e., you can eat dinner for breakfast and breakfast for dinner, take a few days off school so we can go to NYC and eat hot dogs…). This story is sweet and fun. The images are colorful and laid against fun looking backdrops. In essence, this book is a validation to fathers about “breaking the rules” and being a great friend to their son. This story may be an important part of using in a class with mothers and fathers understanding co-parenting and the ways that fathers sometimes see things differently than mothers. This book is geared to 3-6 year olds.


This fun and entertaining tale starts off fast with a busy King that blows his son a kiss goodnight without much preparation for going to bed as the King is busy. The kiss flows out of the window missing is son the Prince (the King commands a Knight to chase after it). The kiss flows throughout the land crossing bears, wolves, owls and a dragon, none of which are happy or nice initially and after the wandering kiss crosses each group, they are all calmed and happy. In the end, the King decides that he will “promise to stop always being in a hurry …, and slowly read them a bedtime story from beginning to end” . The images, also done by David Melling are remarkably magical, mystical and playful! David grew up drawing and studied next to his father who was a sculptor. The dragon in the story is reminiscent of Pete the Magic Dragon and Melling does an effective job of conveying the change of feelings of the forest animals from sad and angry to very happy and sweet. This is a fun book to share with children and would be very helpful to fathers considering the world of feelings and male nurturance.

This story is a kind story told by the narrator, a small boy (early school aged looking) that talks about his favorite day of the week (Friday) when he and his dad take a weekly jaunt to the diner for breakfast. On their way to the diner they watch buildings being built, count dogs, say hello to strangers and mail letters. Dad has to help him up to the mailbox opening! This sweet story is told by Yaccarino in hopes that other dads will establish rituals like this with their sons so build relationship. The images are very linear in their design with a lot of lines and the colors and representations have a sense of a 50’s feel to them. The National Center for Children’s Illustrated Literature quotes Yaccarino, “the images in a picture book are the driving forces that tell the story. The words tell only what the pictures can’t”. The images in Every Friday definitely convey the close sense of relationship and love that the portrayed father and son have for their special time with each other. From a fatherhood perspective, this books speaks to a time and a place for fathering.


This sweet and endearing story is a conversation between and father bear and his son. The watercolor pictures are vibrant and bold and convey a lot energy and movement throughout the story. Little bear wants to make his dad proud by trying new things that growing bears are supposed to be learning. Little bear tumbles down while trying to climb a tree and daddy bear nudges “you can do it!” They gather honey together and look for a shelter for the winter. At the end of the story little bear falls to sleep while trying to say “I love you dad”. Dad returns the assertion, “I love you too”. This story is very charming and would be enjoyed by children aged 4-7. For fathers, this story would be helpful to fathers in thinking about the world of feelings and male nurturance.


This beautiful children’s picture book is a story about a father and his son’s journey on a bright summer day where dad is looking for a perfect spot to paint and his son is trying to catch bugs. While dad is unsure about spots that they have come up upon to sit and paint, his son is busy looking at the world around him. This picture book is probably geared more toward children 6 and older. The watercolors are amazing in their detail and ways of conveying the tranquility that is honored as this father and his son walk in the woods. It’s when his son makes a mistake trying to catch a frog and falls into the stream that dad finds the “perfect spot”. From a fathering perspective this story would be meaningful in terms of fathers nurturing sons.

This is an fun, odd and strange offering from Sweden. Else-Marie is a rather typical girl and her seven daddies are far from typical. They are doll sized and all look the same (wearing black top hats, grey pin stripped pants and tan all weather coats) but work together taking care of Else-Marie. The muted watercolor illustrations are very playful and fun. The book actually borders on a retro kind of offering and I really haven’t seen anything like it in quite some time. The mother and seven daddies all look very old compared to the school aged girl. The daddies resemble something out of Leave it to Beaver and the story revolves around Else-Marie being embarrassed because her seven little daddies who are always together, must pick her up from school one day and she’s afraid the other kids will laugh at her and make fun of them. The daddies of course do just fine and the kids at school like her daddies. I read this book over several times and spent a lot of time thinking about it and others have as well.

Forrester (2017) cited below, writes that this book could be used in queer discourse which is very easy to understand. Else-Marie’s daddies and family structure is very non-traditional. There is nothing in the book that obviously relates to queerness but the images and story line do suggest some very gay themes in terms of surrogacy and the daddies are really caring for Else-Marie. Researching this, some images were controversial and needed to be changed when being published in the USA. I myself found the one image of Else-Marie sitting on the toilet and the daddies banging on the door quite comical. The book does abound with fun and odd images of the daddies all huddled around Else-Marie being read a story (The Little Prince) and sitting at the dining room table with mom disengaged.


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**Safety & Security/Attachment**


Jeffrey Brown writes autobiographical comics and humorous graphic novels. Darth Vader and Son was found in the adult fiction section of my library. For me and my sons, we loved this book! The play on scenes from Star Wars movies and the way that Darth
Vader and Luke (a 4 year) interact throughout the story with Luke testing Vader and Vader trying to be an average dad was funny and delightful. Luke drops an ice cream and Vader give him his (empathy). Luke doesn’t like the eggs that Vader has made for him for breakfast and would much rather have C3PO cereal (negotiation). While trick or treating, two dads answering the door (gay fathers?) ask little Luke (dressed up as a Storm Trooper) “Aren’t you a little short for a Strom trooper? This picture book has fascinated children aged 4-22 in my office setting with dad’s and sons visiting. This is definitely a coffee table book that will delight young and old. The images are hand drawn and use images that easily connect Star Wars lovers with content and provide charming, cute and endearing messages as Vader tries to be a dad.


Marion Bauer is an accomplished picture book and fiction writer has an incredible website that has many resources for young people and teachers to aid in writing. In this wonderful and endearing picture book, simple and clear understanding statements about the strengths of dads from the perspectives of a variety of animals are on the left hand side. Words describing: safety, strengths, care and concern are large and easy to read. The accompanying illustrations on the right side of each page fill the spaces with beautiful striking oil paintings that are very realistic looking and connect each father creature with his young one. This book is aimed at children aged 2 and up. Even teenagers love the romantic looking images and ways that strengths of dads are pointed out in the natural world. The last page of the book shows a beautiful picture of a dad and his son with his son exclaiming “that’s why my daddy is the best of all”. In fathering work, this book would be useful in helping dads to explore some strengths and ways that they may have experienced their fathers, exploring the roots of fathering.


This is the story of Justin, who has his feelings hurt when a friend calls him a name (pig-faced punk). When Justin goes home he finds a stone like figure that could fit in his hands waiting for him called “the hurt”. As Justin disappoints his father by tracking mud in the house and then his father doesn’t recognize him for anything he does “right”, the hurt begins to grow and eventually eclipses him in his own room where the hurt stays. When Justin tells his dad about “the hurt” and how it’s taken up all the space in his room, his father takes him on his lap and lets him know that only he, Justin can let the hurt go and it will shrink away. In short time, Justin is able to place the hurt outside his bedroom window because “the hurt doesn’t make a very good friend”. This story of a father helping his son deal with anger and despair by teaching him that he’s in charge is a powerful message. The story is told in plain line images and the sad unhappy look “hurt” is very well done. It is a story about feelings and reconciliation. Fathers would find this story helpful with youngsters in terms of talking about the power to meet their own needs.

The Apple Pie that Papa Baked was A Children’s Book-of-the-Month Club Main Selection. This book is phenomenal in both the artistic design and the rhythm of the words that tell the story. Artistically, Jonathan Bean uses silhouettes consisting of red brown and a darker brown to tell this well written story that seems like a song. The images of the farm house and field reminded me of The Wizard of Oz. The story is built upon the “apple pie that papa baked” and almost becomes like a song through the structure of storytelling and reminded me of Sondheim’s’ Into the Woods. The crescendo in the story is built around the sky, earth, tree, wind and sun that all had a part in growing the apple for the pie that papa baked. “These are the clouds, heaped and round, that dropped the rain, cool and fresh, that watered the roots, deep and fine that fed the tree, crooked and strong...that went into the pie that papa baked”. everything in this story is connected or attached to something else. Nothing stands alone. With each addition, the story is again recounted. The story is full of life with the girl’s, the cat, a cow and horse and flying bird. The most striking image of all is “this is the world blooming with life” with all of the physical aspects of the growing story incorporated into the air of the world swarming but in succession. This is a striking and beautiful picture book that can be read again and again. Fathers would find this book complimenting them in thinking about a “time and a place for fathering”.


Hazel Hutchins and Ruth Oui have partnered on many children’s picture books and are very popular in their homeland in Canada. The watercolor story images were striking in this book and would provide a parent with many opportunities to just gaze at the pictures alone. The opening story image portrays the father is in his toddler son Jeremy’s room, that is filled with fun stuffed animals and figures on the window sill, dresser and bed. The little boy in the story is hiding from his dad among the toys and asks “how did you ever know me?” Jeremy’s dad responds “I’d know you anywhere.” Thus begins the possibilities posed by Jeremy. If I became a moss green frog would you know me? Or an Octopus, or a sheep among thousands, a cloud or blade of glass among thousands, would you know me? So Jeremy becomes a monster and his dad as well, and they both after saying they’d know each other, creep up on mom who is reading a book to paly with her. The story is told in rhyme, and do so effectively, speaks to a very deep seated sense that parents have about being able to pick their children out among the hundreds of others in our lives! As a father I have often joked about how I can spot my children walking on our busy urban street from blocks away just by knowing the gate in their walk. This tender and loving story that recounts the connection between a father and his son would be an effective book for dad’s that are considering the roots of fathering and the world of male nurturance and care.

Jane Yolen and illustrator John Schoenherr both tapped into early childhood memories of going on an Owl Hunt while tapping into inspiration for this story. A young girl and her father go out into the cold "long after bedtime" in the light of full moon in search of an owl to meet up with. The young girl follows in her fathers’ foot tracks “while their feet crunched over the crisp snow and leaving little gray footprints that followed”. The little girl is well aware of the need to be quiet and also that “sometimes there is an owl and sometimes there’s not”, a lesson learned from her brothers who had done this with dad before. The watercolor images that fill the pages are said to have been based on the farm that Schoenherr lived on as a child. The sweeping sprawl of the woods carries the reader through the story from page to page and the breathtaking expanse of the mature trees grabs the readers’ eyes, lifting upward of the page looking for an owl! Yolen is an accomplished writer that can really set the stage through her writing for the journey she is going to take the reader on. This work would be very meaningful to fathers in terms of nurturing relationships with their daughters.


Daddy’s Lullaby is a quiet book that is set in the evening after everyone else has gone to sleep, except the baby. After walking in with the family cat and sharing some milk from a bottle, he holds the cat gently hugging going upstairs of a dimly lit home to look at his sleeping family only to find the baby awake. Picking up the baby, he checks in to find brother and mom sleeping and takes the baby downstairs where he sings his lullaby to the baby “rock-a-by- baby in daddy’s arms, daddy will hold you safe from harm”. He falls to sleep with the baby only to woken in the morning by mom, son and cat. This story is quiet and soothing and the accompanying illustrations set a tone for the end of the day and ready for bed. The tender real life looking paintings that illustrate this story make it a very romantic and sweet experience for the reader. For fathers, this story may be a bit over idealized however the story would help with dads that are thinking about nurturing relationships with children/infants.

**Single Fathering**


This book was a Caldecott Honor book and is a classic styled bedtime story. This board book is not specifically aimed at single fathering however was included in this genre because the only characters are dad and
his son and there is no mention of mom. The field of single fathering picture books is very sparse so this was another reason it was classified as a book read for single dads. This sweet book counts down from 10 (small toes all washed and warm) to 1 (big girl already for bed) with other sweet mentions for each other number in the countdown between an African American girl and her father. This getting ready for bed book is sweet and tender and is formatted to be a good educational tool as well as bedtime reading. The left side of each page is stark white with the number (counting down from 10 on each page). The other side has bold, bright colorful pictures of a black father and his daughter being hugged, held, patted and kissed. From a fathering perspective, this book helps dad’s to coach young children through routines. It was amazing and atypical that attention and focus was made on a father and his daughter in 1983 when this book was published. This book is aimed at the 1-3 year old age group.


The book is large, larger than any other book I’ve read. The images are simple and boldly colored in purple, pink and blues. The pages are mostly sheet white with the bold images that are outlined in a heavy black line imposed on them. The 10 little children? They all appear to be toddlers however dad takes them all to school every day. It’s difficult to tell who’s male or female or what happened to the mom, however this doesn’t really matter to the story. The goal of this story written, by the French children’s author Benedict Guettier, is to portray the daily life of this father and the care he provides to his 10 little children. He provides all the care; cooking and transporting while secretly working on a special project at night after all are in bed. He is building a ship. The plan is to leave the children with their grandmother until he comes home but after one night at sea and the children don’t appear unhappy about this but do look a bit perplexed. He realizes that his whole identity is about caring for his children as his first morning on ship he sets out 10 little cups, but for whom? The children aren’t there so he returns for them to bring them with him on this voyage. As a single father I understand the desire to get a break and remember it took a long time before I was able to leave my children and go away for fun. In the beginning, when I did get away for a few hours, all I did was think about getting home to them. From a fathering perspective this book relates to nurturing sons and daughters.

**Spanish**  
I disappointingly didn’t find any stories that were “Spanish” and have identified this as a need in the field of children’s picture books. This was quite surprising to find and a bit of a concern given the significance of Spanish people’s in our culture. I am sure there are Spanish stories however they are not apparent or easy to find.

**Teaching Skills/Play**  
Feiwel & Friends; an imprint of Macmillan, N.Y., N. Y., 22 pgs..

Entertainer extraordinaire Jimmy Fallon offers moms and dads an opportunity to help their children learn animal sounds. This is not really a book about fathers and is much more about teaching. The book is cute and very simple with the father animal on one side of the page being called dada and the smaller child on the other page responding in their animal sound. Very sweet, this book is for very early readers. The images in the book are simple and stand out against paisley low toned looking backgrounds.


Stephanie Jorisch (Illustrator) dedicates the book “to the little boys in dads”. Master children’s picture book storyteller Jane Yolen, author of over 300 storybooks, tells the story from a little boys’ perspective and he brags about how much his father knows about the names of everything. The images and places are mostly related to the natural world. The beautiful watercolor images are light and playful. Every page is dedicated to the young son asserting how much his father knows and what an expert his father is the way: things are called, the way they feel, how the look, how tall and short, how they sound and how the sting or bite. This book would provide fathers with multiple opportunities to talk with 2-5 year olds about many different things in the world around them. This story will leave fathers and children feeling very secure about how smart dads are and how much they may know!


Douglas Wood (https://douglaswood.com/) is a writer, speaker, musician, environmentalist and Motorcycle enthusiast from Minnesota. He is also the author of one of my most favorite and cherished children’s picture books Old Turtle that is embraces a wide range of theology and multiculturalism in the telling. In this children’s picture book which has others accompanying it (What Moms Can’t Do, What Teachers Can’t Do, What Grandma’s Can’t Do & What Santa Can’t Do). Wood’s story is told using sweet and subtle watercolor pictures of an alligator/dinosaur looking dad and son doing many activities that dad just can’t do well and only because he’s trying not to outshine his son. “Dads can’t pitch a baseball very hard or hit one very far” and “dads seem to have trouble holding onto their money” are just a few of the examples offered here for how Wood examines the interplay between the love a dad has for his son trying not to outshine him and make the child feel strong and very able. I really love the way he plays on some of the very typical ways that dads are sometimes stereotyped. Look at the example offered her about dads not being able to hold onto money, well it’s because his son wants a robot magazine! This book is sweet and charming and relates well to fathers in nurturing relationships between fathers and sons.

This very simple book illustrated very light pastels of various animals is really a coaching guide for fathers to have fun with their babies reading. The end of the story book has a list of pointers for fathers about how to read with their babies. “hay baby, I love the way you tug on my ear and pull on my beard” is followed by others “The way you” situations. Fathers may have fun with this very simple book in making animal sounds and wiggling and giggling. This is a very short and “coaching” kind of book. The most important message of the book I at the end where Dr. Gary reminds dads that the most important thing we can do is help our babies feel loved and safe. Fathers of babies may find this book helpful to them in terms of playing as well as fun and games.


Anyone reading children’s picture books has had to cross a “Little Critter” book at some point. These stories are delightful for children. In *Just Go To Bed*, one of over 300 children’s picture books that Mercer and his wife have written about the Little Critters, Dad is trying over and over to set a limit with his son and get him to come inside, take a bath and get ready for bed. With humor and delight, Mayer uses soft and simple watercolors images to set his stories and the action filled images of his son who has a lot of trouble following the rules. It’s all very comical and from a sense of fatherhood, tells the story of the position that so many dads are put into which is “being in charge”. Mercer Mayer writes that “it’s a lot of fun to be an old kid” and that’s exactly what story after story conveys. In *Just Go To Bed*, dad eventually “loses it” and just exclaims “just go to bed” after his son has run and hoped all around. Eventually the “Gate Keeping mom” says, “shhh! And dad says go to sleep” and it’s all settled. It’s really sweet to see his friend mouse that sits back on the sidelines enjoying all of Critters antics. Mayer feels his stories with love, connection and care. I didn’t feel like an annotated bibliography of fatherhood would be complete without a Little Critter story for Mayer’s. This book would appeal to children ages 2-4 and would appeal to fathers in trying to provide discipline as well as fun and games with children.

Carle, E. (Author & Illustrator) (1986). *Papa, Please Get the Moon for Me*. Little Simon; Board 33 pgs..Another incredible picture book for children four and older by Carle helps children learn a bit about the moon. In this story, Monica accompanied by her long haired black and brown cat, reaches out her bedroom window for the moon that looks so close to her. She asks her dad
(Papa) to get the moon and he gets a long ladder and climbs a high mountain only to find the moon is too big. The moon lets Papa know that it will eventually be small enough for him to manage (as the moon decreases). In this touching story, nothing is impossible for a dad to do and dad will find a way to make his daughters' wishes come true. The beautiful and typically large oil paint lines that Carle uses in this picture book are very effective in creating a sense of ebb and flow. In fact, the pages are even doubled for folding up or out to create a sense of height length for the reader. Eric Carle has always astounded parents and children with ability to connect us to the earth and living things. I really enjoyed the way this story ended as the moon disappeared. Rather than Monica be sad (she is confused), he has the story end with her watching the moon grow again back into a big full moon. Fathers would find this book inspiring in terms of nurturing daughters.

**Visiting with Dad**

I originally classified this book in the genre of teaching skills and play with dad however this story of children’s picture book hero Clifford is really about visiting with dad. Bridwell, author of over 40 story books about Clifford, the Big Red Dog, tells this story from the perspective of Emily, a child in the home with Clifford. She describes how he ran away from the house during her birthday party to find his dad who he missed very much living in the country. This story is full of action and Clifford (who is much larger and skilled than his father), outshines his dad and helps his dad be successful with all the things his dad wants to teach him about being a good dog. Clifford’s dad tries to teach how to fetch, how to dig a hole, how to sort through garbage cans, and catching a Frisbee. This story is meant for toddlers 2-4 and is a happy and fun story. The story leaves a question at the end though about what happens to Clifford now? Why or how does he get back home? Does he still get to see his dad? How does it feel to leave his dad again? This story leaves the reader with a sense of loss at the end as both Clifford and his dad had such a great learning time with each other and getting to know each other. This story may be helpful to fathers discussing loss of their own father with their children or the things they wished they had been able to do with their dad (healing the father wound).


A Day with Dad is told by a Swedish writer and illustrator. This story book is fun and touching. The illustrations are pencil drawn and appeared to have been colored with pastels of charcoal creating a crayon looking color. The boy in the story greets dad at the train station with his mom in hand and then goes off for a day of fun eating, going to the movies and the library and then returning to the train.
station. Throughout the story, everywhere they go, the boy tells everyone he meets this is “my
dad”. When they get to the train station for the goodbye, the boys’ father says, “this is Tim. He
is my son. He is the best son anyone could have”. I was most notably affected by the goodbye as
the writer talks about how dad’s waving hand gets smaller and smaller as the train leaves. This
story is an all too common recounting of how many fathers visit with their children for a limited
number of hours and spending the time “taking kids to places”. This story holds a place for
fathers that are working between spouses on visiting. It lacks any mention however of co-
parenting.


Alex narrates this story of a young school aged boy living
between two homes. Ideally, Alex’s life is the same in-between
two homes. Everything he has at his mothers’ home he has at his
fathers’ home. Alex is portrayed in very sweet looking watercolor
drawings with many of the belongings that he needs in-between the
two homes. The story is very simply written and would appeal to
children aged 3 and older. Alex lives with mom in the city and dad
at the beach. He has two doors and two different places to hang his
coats. He has friends at each home. He has two different phone
numbers to call, one at dads to call mom and one at moms to call
dad. This picture book is simply written and will appeal to young
children. My biggest reserve about this book is what about the
differences? Many children between tow homes have trouble with
the differences between parenting and the differences between the two homes. This book is
aimed at helping children to accept that they will have two homes between their parents. Fathers
would benefit from learning about how important it is to keep things the same (co-parenting)
between two homes.