



at

by Karen Antikajian



I have just serendipitously encountered an author/illustrator team that has impressed me with their skill and versatility. Author Pamela Duncan Edwards and illustrator Henry Cole have produced many excellent books in four very different styles.

I first heard one of their books at a Reading Institute. It was Four Famished Foxes and Fosdyke, one of the four that is fantastically filled with alliterative words. The colorful, cartoon-like illustrations added to the fun.

When mom fox takes off for five days in Florida, the five foxes are left to find food for themselves.

"What fun!" cried Frank. "We'll filch fowl from the farmyard."

"We're fierce! We're fearless!" agreed Floyd, Fred, and Flo.

"Frankly," said Fosdyke, "I'm rather fond of French food."

"Flibbertigibbet!" yelled Flo.

"What a fool!" added Frank.

"What a failure to foxhood," the ferocious four cried.

"Fiddlesticks," said Fosdyke, as he flambéed some fungi. "A fox is a fox, whatever the food."

But, somehow the fowl are forewarned and the four foxes' plan is foiled again and again. Meanwhile Fosdyke keeps fixing fabulous feasts.



Another wonderfully written book in a similar style is The Worrywarts. Wombat, Weasel, and Woodchuck want to wander the world. But every decision is filled with worries.

What if we're running away and we're not watching where we're going and suddenly we're wading up to our waists in water? What if a wave shooshes over us and a wallowing walrus swims up and swallows us? WHAT THEN?

A third book is called Dinorella - A Prehistoric Fairy Tale which is a delightfully different Cinderella story.

Dora, Doris, and Dinorella lived down in the dunes in a dinosaur den.

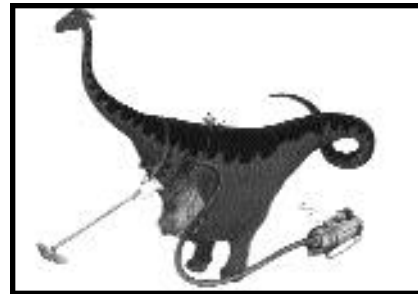
Dora and Doris did nothing all day. They dumped debris around the den. They never did the dusting or the dishes.

Dinorella was dainty and dependable. Dora and Doris were dreadful to Dinorella. All day they demanded...

"DINORELLA, dig the garden."

"DINORELLA, fetch us drinks."

"DINORELLA, start the dinner."



The fourth book, called Some Smug Slug, has a slightly simpler text and more realistic illustrations that show the world and other creatures through the slug's eyes. A butterfly fills the page, a robin won't quite fit, and a frog's eyes are enormous.

A slug sets off on a summer Sunday stroll.

Slowly the slug started up the steep surface, stringing behind it scribble sparkling like silk...

For one single second in a sunbeam it slumbered; its sleek skin was soft like shantung.

These books could be used with all ages. Four Famished Foxes and Fosdyke is especially good for older students. After being immersed in this much alliteration, students may want to try their own alliterative paragraphs or stories.

An unusually powerful book with dark, moody, intense illustrations is BAREFOOT, Escape on the Underground Railroad. The text is simple, but very moving. Since the slave's face is never shown, he serves as a symbol for the whole group of runaway slaves.

The BAREFOOT didn't see the eyes watching him as he ran onto the overgrown pathway.

His breath came in great gasps. In the hours since he had run from the plantation, he had traveled faster and farther than ever in his life. He was fearful of what lay before him. He was terrified of what lay behind.

The heron's keen eyes had spotted the Barefoot moving furtively toward the pathway. The heron's warning cry had been a signal to the other animals.

They had seen many Barefeet along their pathway. And they had seen some of them being led away in ropes by the Heavy Boots.

Livingstone Mouse is written and illustrated in an entirely different style. It is a tale of a small mouse leaving home and searching for the greatest place in the world to build his nest. Before he leaves he asks his mom where that place is. She replies that she has heard China is very nice. So, he sets off to find China. Every time he thinks he has found this perfect place, he finds something wrong with it. An animal tells him that it isn't China and sends him off in another direction. Although this is a pattern book, it is filled with rich, descriptive language and many synonyms for the generic words "said" and "went." It is a wonderful example of word choice and what can be done with a simple plot.

Livingstone scampered in the direction the beetle had pointed. He found himself in front of a tall, white shape rising majestically into the air. Up one of its slopes ran a rope ladder.

"That's fantastic," said Livingston. This must be China."

He ran up the rope ladder and down into the dark interior.

If you could see the illustrations, you would know that he has just found an old high top sneaker. Once he's inside, he realizes that it is just too smelly!



This book would work well for a lesson on author style. Students could discover the various ways the author turned a simple pattern book into an interesting adventure story.

There is a sequel to this book called Bravo, Livingstone Mouse. It is another well written pattern book with interesting dialogue and humor, but it lacks the wonderful descriptive language of the first Livingstone Mouse.

The last of the books by this versatile duo that I have read is in yet another style. This is Honk! The Story of a Prima Swanerina.

Ever since Mimi the swan happened to see a ballet performance through the window of the Paris Opera House, she was fascinated. She learned the positions and practiced every day. But, when she found a ticket stub and tried to attend a performance of Swan Lake she was refused admittance...until finally -

Mimi was on stage.

"Great costume," whispered one of the dancers.

"Love the shoes, dear," whispered another.

And then the music started. Mimi demi-plié. She danced en pointe. She chasséd. Her feet flew across the floor. She remembered everything she had ever practiced.



Other books listed for this talented team are The Wacky Wedding: A Book of Alphabet Antics, Warthogs in the Kitchen: A Sloppy Counting Book, and Ed and Fred Flea. I haven't read these. All of the books reviewed are available in paper except for The Worrywarts.

Teach your children a love of reading and
you have given them a most precious gift.

Roger Lewin