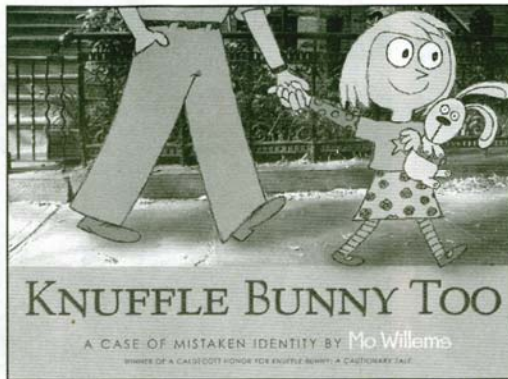


Brooklyn family

BROOKLYN'S BEST GUIDE FOR PARENTS

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Profile



The author will be on tour to promote his new book, *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*

'Knuffle Bunny' returns – with the author, too

Mo Willems to appear at the Brooklyn Book Festival

By Meredith Deliso

In his award-winning children's book *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, published in 2004, author and illustrator Mo Willems introduced readers to two-year-old Trixie and the titular bunny as she and her father ran errands around their Brooklyn neighborhood.

Willems is following up his Caldecott Honor winning, bestselling effort with *Knuffle Bunny Too: A Case of Mistaken Identity*, which follows Trixie as she begins preschool, knuffle bunny in tow.

The author will soon kick off a nationwide tour promoting the publication of his new book, which includes an appearance at the Brooklyn Book Festival on Sunday, September 16.

Like the first *Knuffle Bunny* book, the sequel uses a mix of black-and-white photography and vivid, hand-drawn cartoon illustrations to portray Trixie's world – her school, Brooklyn neighborhood and iconic images such as Grand Army Plaza in Prospect Park.

Willems, who has lived in Brooklyn for the past 14 years, found inspiration in his own Park Slope neighborhood for the children's book.

"I wanted the story to be as real as possible, so I placed it firmly in the reality of

my neighborhood," said Willems. "The fact that Park Slope is so architecturally interesting is certainly an added bonus."

Through humorous situations, Willems portrays the daily frustrations and joys that both children and parents experience. The first *Knuffle Bunny* book found Trixie unable to express that she has lost her treasured knuffle bunny, and her flustered dad unable to understand what "Aggle, Flaggle, Klabble," and "Wumpy Flappy" means.

Knuffle Bunny Too follows Trixie's first day of preschool, when she goes to show off her bunny and finds that someone also has the same exact one. Multiple bunny time outs and much squabbling and tears ensue, but there's a happy ending by bedtime.

For Willem, who has a young daughter, both *Knuffle Bunny* books are semi-autobiographical. The word "knuffle" is even a relic of the author's childhood, a mis-



Author and illustrator Mo Willems

spelling of the Dutch word *knuffel*, meaning to hug or snuggle, that was used in his household when he was growing.

"[*Knuffle Bunny Too*] is more based on our family personalities than an actual event," said the author. "The *Knuffle Bunny* books are, hopefully, a sympathetic view of how we'd like to interact with each other."

The prolific writer and illustrator, whose previous works include his 2003 debut children's book *Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!* (which received a Caldecott Honor in 2004), *The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog* (a *Publishers Weekly* Editors' Pick) and *Time to Pee* (a National Parenting Publications Gold Medalist and an *Entertainment Weekly* 'Book of the Week'), is one of the today's most highly regarded children's book authors. The *New York Times* has called him the biggest new talent in children's books in the '00s, with comparisons made to Walt Disney and Charles Schulz for his pigeon character, which makes a cameo in all of his children's' book.

Willems began his writing career on the beloved children's show *Sesame Street*, which won him six Emmy Awards for his writing. He also created Cartoon Network's *Sheep in the Big City*, headwrote Cartoon Network's *Codename: Kids Next Door*, and animated over 60 shorts for festivals, HBO, Nickelodeon, and *Sesame Street*.

In addition to his children's work, Willems' drawings, wire sculptures and ceramics have been exhibited in galleries and museums nationwide, and was a commentator on BBC Radio for several years.

New York fans will have the opportunity to meet Willems as he tours the country celebrating the publication of *Knuffle Bunny Too*, as well as the third and fourth installments of his *Elephant & Piggie* series for early readers, *There is a Bird on Your Head!* and *I Am Invited to a Party!*

"The kids seem to have enjoyed the first two, so I'm hoping that they'll laugh at this one," said Willems on the latest books in the series, which pairs a sometimes reckless pig with a very cautious elephant.

Willems will be at Books of Wonder in Manhattan, located at 18 West 18 Street, on Saturday, September 15, from 12 p.m. to 2 p.m.

The following day, he will be at the Brooklyn Book Festival, held at Brooklyn Borough Hall and Plaza (209 Joralemon Street), as part of the children's program. He will appear alongside fellow Brooklyn children's book authors Jon Scieszka, Myla Goldberg, Randall de Seve, Tad Hills, Alyssa Satin Capucilli, Mari Takabayashi and Kam Mak. The festival will also include performances of classic children's works by troupe actors. For more information on the festival, call 718.802.3852.