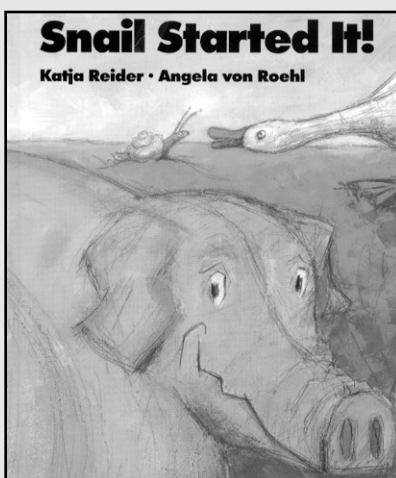
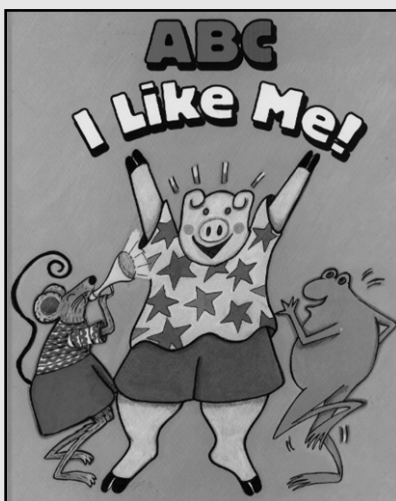
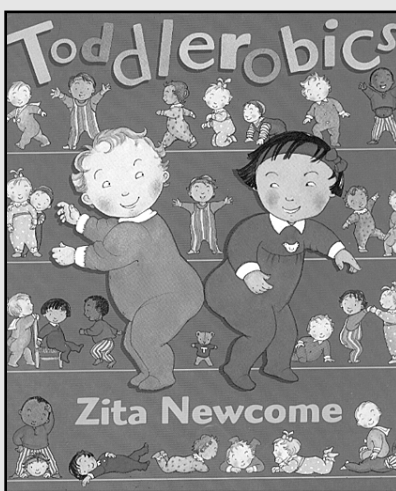
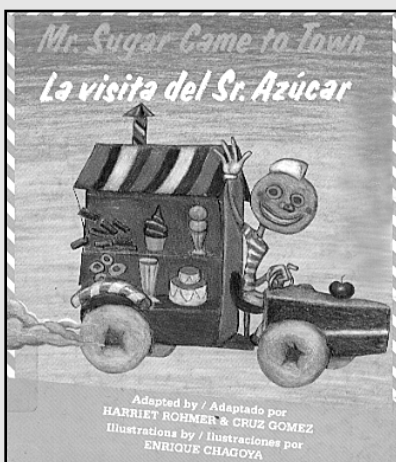
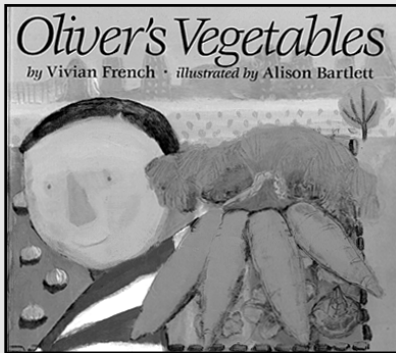


BOOKBASKET

By Ben Peterson



"I like me"

Children's books teach positive attitudes that help prevent obesity—from celebrations of healthful eating and exercise to acceptance and respect for people of all sizes

Being different, especially physically different, can be a difficult, sometimes painful, experience for a child. Children who are taller, shorter, fatter, or thinner than average can be the subject of ridicule from their classmates and often end up hating their distinguishing characteristic. To combat this destructive phenomenon, the following children's books teach children, through cheerful, entertaining stories, to embrace their differences, be proud of themselves, and respect the differences they see in others. The stories also attempt to encourage healthy living for children of all sizes by offering vibrant, humorous tales about the joys of eating right and exercising.

Sunflower Sal, story by Janet S. Anderson, illustrations by Elizabeth Johns. Sal is a big girl, already bigger than her grandmother and her mother. She usually enjoys her size but sometimes, because her big hands can't stitch a quilt like her grandmother, she feels too big and clumsy. When she reveals her problem to her father, he tells her that if she thinks big, she'll find a solution. After discovering that she loves to plant sunflowers, Sal follows her father's advice and thinks big. She devises a plan to plant sunflowers across the countryside, creating a giant quilt that everyone can enjoy. Johns' oil paintings succeed in showing readers Sal's sun-drenched landscape filled with golden sunflowers and warm smiles. Anderson's tender story reminds children that by thinking big, they can overcome their problems. Ages 6 to 9. (Albert Whitman & Company, 1997)

Oliver's Fruit Salad and **Oliver's Vegetables**, stories by Vivian French, illustrations by Alison Bartlett. Like many children, Oliver is not a very adventurous eater. In both of these charming stories, Oliver learns from experiences with his gardening grandparents that fruits and vegetables can be delicious. In *Oliver's Vegetables*, Oliver visits his grandparents declaring that he only eats French fries. His grandfather makes him a deal that in order to eat fries he must find the potatoes in the garden. But if he finds another vegetable instead, he has to eat it without complaining. Because Oliver doesn't find the buried potatoes until the end of the week, he is forced to eat (and finds to his amazement that he loves) carrots, spinach, rhubarb, cabbage, beets, and peas. In *Oliver's Fruit Salad*, Oliver tells his mom that his grandfather's farm-grown fruit is better than fruit she buys in the store, but it doesn't matter anyway because he doesn't like fruit. His visiting grandparents again save the day by teaching him to make fruit salad, a dish he ends up loving. Both of French's stories attempt to inspire children to eat—and perhaps



FROM SUNFLOWER SAL

even enjoy—vegetables and fruit. Bartlett's colorful acrylic illustrations prove a powerful accompaniment, celebrating fruits and vegetables in all their vibrant glory. Parents can take the opportunity after reading either of these stories to talk with their kids about the health benefits of eating fruits and vegetables. Ages 4 to 7. (*Oliver's Fruit Salad*, 1998, *Oliver's Vegetables*, 1995, Orchard Books)

Mr. Sugar Came to Town/La Visita del Sr. Azúcar, story adapted by Harriet Rohmer & Cruz Gomez, illustrations by Enrique Chagoya. Grandma Lupe is the best cook in the neighborhood with her delicious tamales. But when Mr. Sugar and his magical sugar truck come to town, young Alicia and Alfredo begin to stuff themselves instead with his tasty sweets. As they eat the sugar-filled goodies, they begin to get fat and develop holes in their teeth. Grandma Lupe saves the day when she unmasks Mr. Sugar as the monster that he is and sends him away, telling the children that although they may love Mr. Sugar, he doesn't love them. Written in both Spanish and English, this silly story was adapted from a puppet show produced by the Food and Nutrition Program for farmworkers in Watsonville. Chagoya's pencil and pastel illustrations add to the story's silliness by making Mr. Sugar all the more heinous. Despite the silliness, parents, like Grandma Lupe, can use this story to teach children that sugar, although tasty, is bad for their health. Ages 6 to 9. (Children's Book Press, 1989)

Toddlerobics, story and illustrations by Zita Newcomb. "Hats off, coats off, all rush in—everybody ready for the toddler gym." This book for young children follows a multicultural group of cute babies as they cheerfully demonstrate exercises such as "Heads, shoulders, knees, and toes." Although far from an exercise manual, it does promote healthy living by demonstrating how much fun exercising can be. Ages 3 to 7. (Candlewick Press, 1996)

I Like Me and **ABC I Like Me**, stories and illustrations by Nancy Carlson. These two books promote self-esteem

through the monologue of an especially cheerful pig. *I Like Me* starts with the positive declaration, "I have a best friend. That best friend is me!" The jovial pig continues, relating all the wonderful things she can do with herself, including drawing pictures, eating good food, and keeping clean. She admits that sometimes she makes mistakes but she tries again, and sometimes she feels bad but then cheers herself up. *ABC I Like Me* marks the return of the lively pig, accompanied by some fascinating friends, in an alphabet book. In this book, she goes through the alphabet telling the readers about herself, from "I am Awesome, Brave, and Cheerful." to "Yawn... I need a good night's sleep, so tomorrow... I can Zoom on!" Both of Carlson's upbeat picture books help children appreciate their own special traits. The stories also lend themselves to fantastic companion projects such as children writing their own "I Like Me" stories. Ages 4 to 8. (*I Like Me*, Viking, 1988; *ABC I Like Me*, Viking, 1997)

Snail Started It!, story by Katja Reider, illustrations by Angela von Roehl, translated from Swiss by Rosemary Lanning. This circular tale demonstrates how cruel words can make someone feel bad about themselves and, alternately, how kind words can help make someone happier. Snail begins the tale when he tells the pig that she is fat. Being happy with who she is, the pig tells the snail that she likes being big and round; but, after thinking it over, snail's comments make her sad and upset. As a result, when the pig sees the rabbit, she tells him that he is too timid. The insults continue from animal to animal until they return to the snail who, upon hearing himself insulted, realizes the error of his ways. He apologizes to the pig, telling her that he likes her just that way she is. The apologies follow the same route and everyone settles down to sleep contentedly, happy with themselves once again. Reider's thoughtful tale, accompanied by Von Roehl's humorous pastels, reminds children to be happy with who they are and to respect, not insult, others for being different. Ages 6 to 9. (North-South Books, 1997)