

SPRING 2015

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Two great contests!
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CONNECTICUT family MAGAZINE

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Brain games

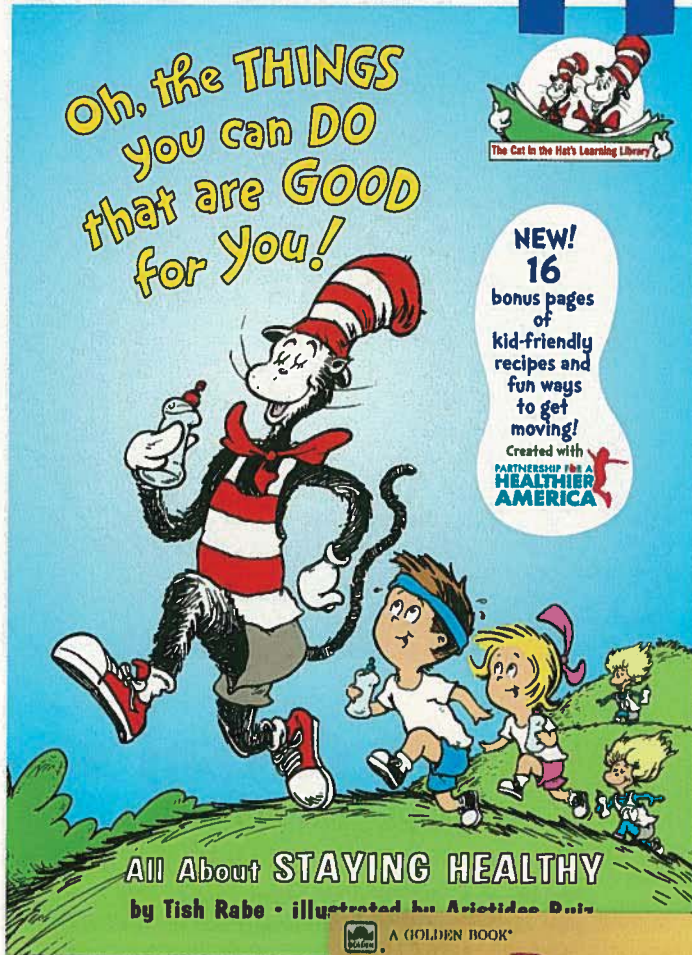
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Catch up with the latest apps, summer safety and a special camp!



Books that rhyme all the time



Mystic resident is the writer behind the Dr. Seuss "Learning Library"

There's no telling what will spark a bestselling children's author's imagination. For Tish Rabe, it turned out to be a mischievous kitten. When she was seven years old, her mother told her to keep an eye on the little kitten. There was an antique teapot in the kitchen, and she was worried that the kitten would knock it over.

As soon as she went out the door, the kitten ran into the kitchen and jostled the teapot. It crashed to the floor, shattering into dozens of pieces.

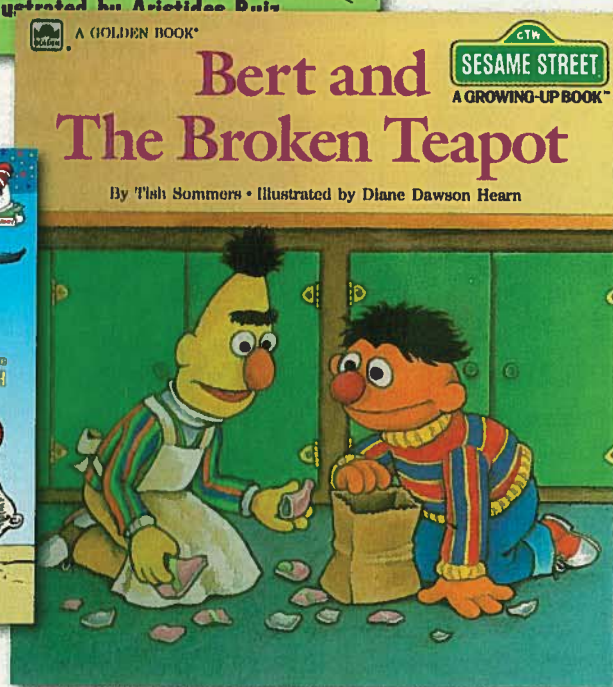
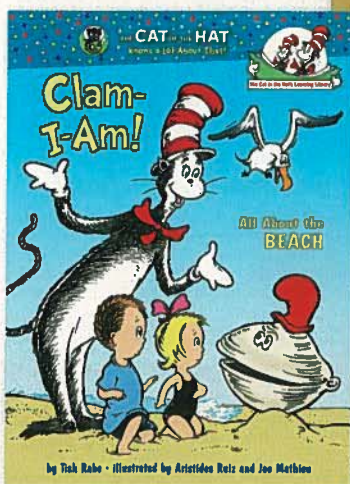
When her mother came in and saw the kitten, the broken glass and the look on her daughter's face, she used words to comfort her that would prove to have a lasting effect: "I love you more than any teapot."

Remembering this childhood incident helped. Rabe, who was working on the PBS children's TV program *Sesame Street*, pitch

an idea for her first children's book. When she told the story about her kitten to a roomful of editors, there was a long pause and then one of them asked if she could write it "as a story for Bert." In *Bert and the Broken Teapot*, which was published in 1985, Bert breaks David's favorite teapot, but learns that their friendship is more important than any material thing.

"After *Bert and the Broken Teapot* was published, I started writing for everybody," says Rabe. "*Sesame Street*, Disney, *Blue's Clues*, Clifford, you name it!"

As she tells students during her many school visits, she did not set out to become a children's book author, but she did plan to pursue a creative path in life. She attended Ithaca College's School of Music,



graduating with a degree in vocal music performance and planned to become a professional singer.

In 1974, Rabe accepted a job in New York City, at the music production office at Sesame Street. She was soon given an opportunity to sing with the Muppets, including a performance as a "Grouchette" backup singer on the Oscar the Grouch tune *Swamp Mushy Muddy*. She also traveled to China in 1982 to film the NBC special *Big Bird in China*.

"Working at *Sesame Street* was inspiring because it was so creative," she says. "Everyone just made things up all day and they felt passionately about the need to help underserved children learn to read and write. It's one of the reasons I am so involved in promoting early childhood literacy today."

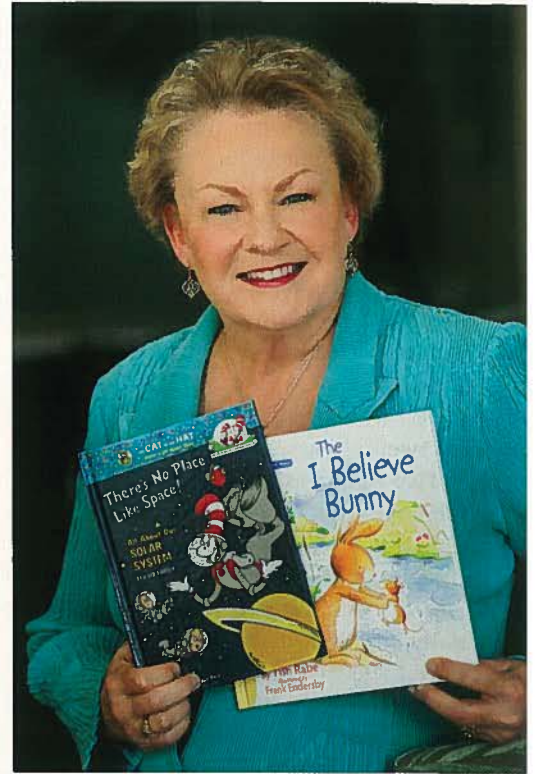
Taking advantage of her musical background, Rabe has also written more than 250 children's songs for Disney, Nickelodeon, and PBS Kids. She has also been

a head writer and scriptwriter for many children's television series and was the senior producer for *3-2-1 Contact*.

After years of writing for licensed characters, Rabe wanted to create a dinosaur character of her own. She submitted a manuscript to Random House written completely in "Seussian" rhyme. "Maurus O'Raurus, a brachiosaurus, had the best voice in the Dinosaur Chorus. He liked to play tennis and swim in the sea / but mostly he liked to eat fresh broccoli."

After submitting the idea, she received what she describes as "the good news and the bad news." The publisher turned down Maurus O'Raurus, but offered Rabe a chance to continue the work of Dr. Seuss.

The renowned children's author had expressed an interest in writing educational rhyming books on scientific topics for early readers, but died before he got a chance to finish the first one. His widow wanted his vision to come to life and asked Random House to find someone to take over



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the project. Rabe's rhyming book crossed their desks at just the right time. After she was selected to write the words, she was paired with illustrator Aristides Ruiz to create books for a new series called *The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library*.

"No one knew if the books would be popular," says Rabe, "but teachers and students love them. My first books were *Is a Camel a Mammal? All About Mammals* and *Fine Feathered Friends: All About Birds*. In 2018 I will have been writing these books for twenty years."

Tish Rabe has written more than eighteen books for *The Cat in the Hat's Learning Library* as well as twenty-five books based on the TV program *The Cat in the Hat Knows a Lot About That*, which airs daily on PBS Kids. Subjects for her books have included space, deserts, the human body, bugs, butterflies and birds. In January, 2015 First Lady Michelle Obama read one of Rabe's favorite books, *Oh the Things You Can Do That Are Good For You*, which was created with the Partnership for a Healthier America, to a group of children at the White House.

Here is one of the many fun ways Rabe introduces science vocabulary to her young readers:

**When birds want to go
on a winter vacation
they all take a trip
and they call it migration**

The first step in writing these books, which are aimed at first and second graders, is for Rabe to research the topic. Then she works all the facts into Seussian rhythm and rhyme. It can sometimes be challenging, but it has also proved a useful way for children to learn.

"I always learn something from doing the research, and the kids love learning fun facts," she says. "I have also been told by teachers and librarians that the lilting, rhyming text helps some challenged students remember the scientific information."

In addition to her work on the Cat in the Hat books and many other titles, Rabe works tirelessly to promote childhood lit-

eracy and has become an Advisory Board Member for the nonprofit organization Reach Out and Read (see page 12).

"When I first met with the Executive Director of Reach Out and Read Connecticut, she told me that they needed some simple board books they could give families that were designed for caregivers to read to their children when the caregivers struggled with reading themselves," Rabe remembers. "Over the years I had wanted to create books that included simple questions that children could answer to get them even more involved with the books and help them learn to read faster. I knew it would take me years to get this to a big publisher, so I put together Tish Rabe Books, LLC here in Connecticut and created them myself."

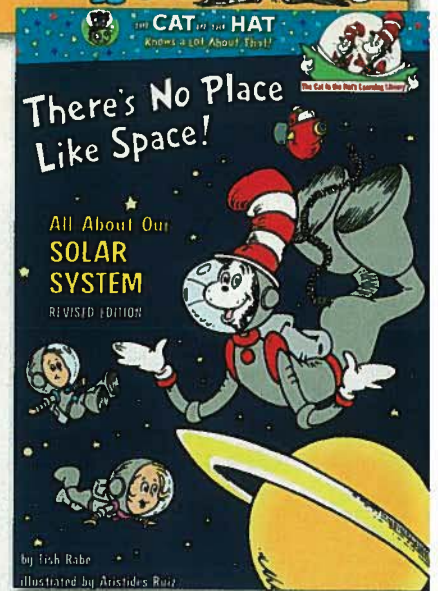
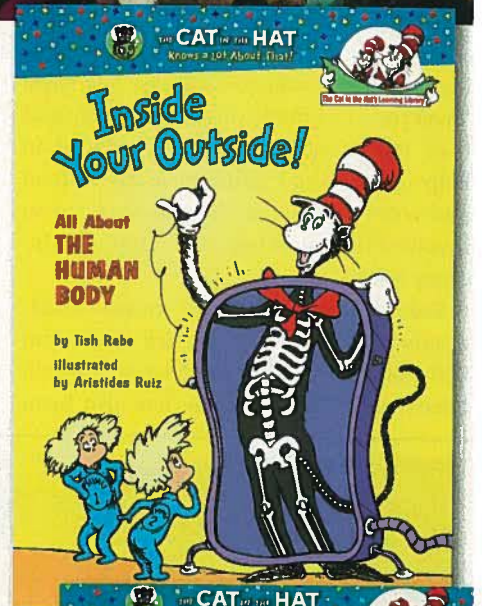
The first book, *Love You, Hug You, Read to You*, was soon followed by the bilingual Spanish/English version, *Te amo, te abrazo, leo contigo*.

Rabe moved to Mystic in 2011 and splits her time between this community and New York City. She conducts interactive presentations about writing for children at libraries and community groups, and visits local schools to inspire children to keep reading and writing.

"I always sing during my presentations, which a lot of people find surprising," she laughs. "I talk about writing, but I always let the students know this was not Plan A in my life. I started out to be a singer, but my path changed and theirs will too."

These are not the only places she is able to sing. She headlines a local quartet called Tish Rabe and Friends, which performs jazz and contemporary country music. The group makes regular performances at the Sidedoor Jazz Club in Old Lyme, the Steak Loft in Mystic, and various venues in New York City. •

— Dirk Langeveld



For more information on Tish Rabe, her books, her music, and Reach Out and Read, visit tishrabe.com.

Oh, the poem you'll write!

WIN!

Students and Teachers—

this is your chance to get in on the fun!

Dr. Seuss author Tish Rabe has started a rhyme! Teachers, have your classroom complete the poem by writing about what they do to stay healthy for a chance to win a great prize!

Hello students and teachers!

You can write your own poem in Dr. Seuss rhyme.

Silly or serious?

Either is fine.

Use this opening stanza or write something new.

You will all have fun writing whatever you do!

Dr. Seuss loved to rhyme and I know you can, too. He used rhyming words and I've listed a few!

Run, sun, done, one, fun
Ball, wall, hall
Bike, hike, like
Play, day, okay, way, say away
Slide, ride, glide, outside
Lunch, munch, bunch
Go, grow, know, show

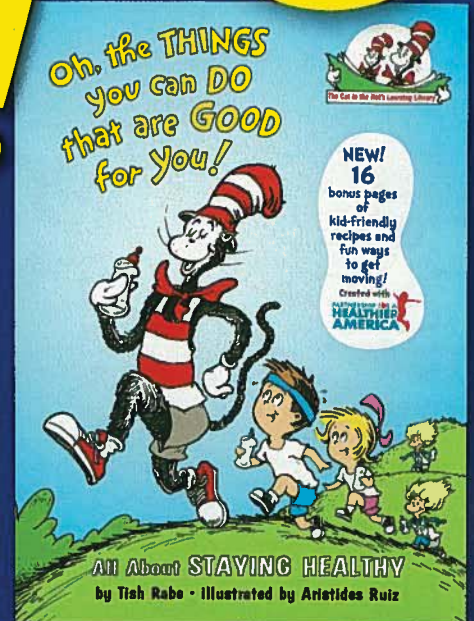
How Does Our Class Stay Healthy?

Use the following sentences to start your classroom poem, or get creative on your own!

**Staying healthy is very important—it's true!
Here are some fun things our whole class can do...**

For more information and to submit your poem, visit

theday.com/healthy



Poem submissions will be accepted through Monday, May 11, 2015. The winning classrooms will be announced on May 18, 2015.

First Prize

Tish Rabe will visit your school for an Author Visit!

Second Prize

Tish Rabe will write a Magical Milestones poem about your class!

Oh, the Things You Can Do that Are Good For You! was recently celebrated at a Let's Read! Let's Move! event at the White House with First Lady Michelle Obama, as a result of a partnership with Dr. Seuss Enterprises, Partnership for a Healthier America, and Random House Books.

In celebration of the literacy partnership, Random House Children's Books released a newly revised edition of *Oh, the Things You Can Do that Are Good for You!* which explains the importance of eating right based on the latest USDA MyPlate recommendations; staying active; getting enough sleep; and a host of other daily activities. The sixteen pages of new material include simple, fun suggestions for children to increase their activity throughout the day, plus eight healthy, kid-friendly recipes.