

Author Spotlight

With

Phyllis Limbacher Tildes



How did you go about researching the nursery rhymes for *Will You Be Mine?*

I own quite a few nursery rhyme books. Some are from my own childhood, others I collected before and after our son was born. One of my favorite books is *Granfa' Grig Had a Pig and Other Rhymes Without Reason from Mother Goose*, compiled and illustrated by Wallace Tripp. In the 1950's Iona and Peter Opie did a marvelous job researching and collecting nursery rhymes that were then published by the Oxford University Press. My editor also sent me some poems I had not seen before. So to make my story work, we chose some well-loved favorites and some less familiar rhymes.

Did you begin compiling nursery rhymes with a love story in mind, or did that naturally fall into place during your research?

The love story evolved during the initial text and layout sketch phase called "thumbnails" that included the "Hoddley, poddley..." poem in which "cats are to marry poodle dogs." Since my love-struck cat and demure poodle showed up in a few spreads with other poems I had chosen, my editor, Emily Mitchell, suggested that we push that story line and try to make the whole collection of rhymes about their romance. I was already attempting to make each Mother Goose poem connect to create a story. The love story idea sent me searching for additional poems that would work with this theme. "Bonnie lass, pretty lass, will you be mine?" was a natural choice and gave us the title.

Of the nursery rhymes in *Will You Be Mine?*, which is your favorite? Why?

The rhyme that makes me smile each time I read it aloud is "Six little mice sat down to spin, pussy passed by and she peeped in..." I love how polite the conversation is between the busy but wary mice and Mistress Pussy who is offering to help make the jacket for the bridegroom. And of course the sing-song rhythm of the rhyme is so appealing as well. I had fun illustrating that page with just a suggestion of Pussy's snout peeking in from the bottom.



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What was the illustration process like for *Will You Be Mine?*

I absolutely loved illustrating this book. I was revealing a style of illustration and type of characters that my readers had not seen in my previous seventeen picture books. I am known for very detailed, realistic renderings of animals and nature subjects. *Will You Be Mine?* is more graphic, stylized, and humorous than many of my other books.

It was fun to create the poodle, cat, pigs, and other animal characters, and a challenge to keep them consistent throughout. Matching the flat gouache paint colors of their clothes from page to page was not easy. I made little color swatches with notes to refer to so that I knew exactly what colors I would need to mix for jackets, pants, dresses, and the furry faces that showed up on more than one page.

Another challenge was to match the activities of the characters to the text. We all know “This little piggy went to market...” It was easy to make the marketing pig the chef for the wedding, but what would I have the other pigs doing? I finally came up with the wedding related jobs. The pig staying home arranged the flowers. Two pigs tested the roast beef and other menu choices from the chef. And the happy pig running “wee, wee, wee, all the way home” just bought the hats for the bridesmaids on sale.



What are your favorite subjects to draw?

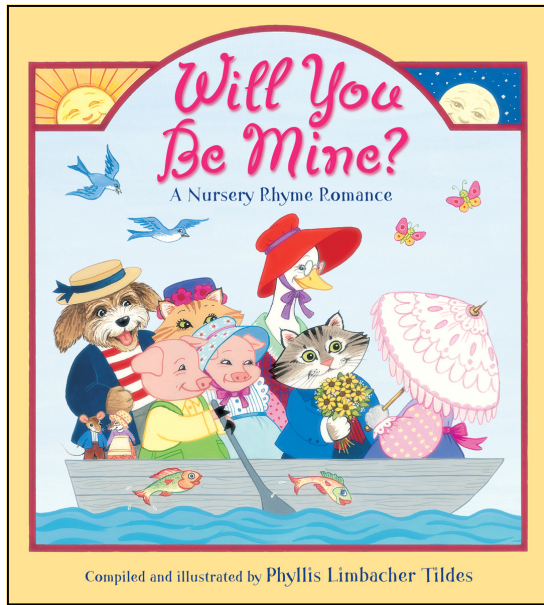
It is difficult for me to say what subject is my favorite as I have so many. I love to draw and paint animals and recently find myself doing commissioned pet portraits in oil. Wildlife is a favorite subject to both research and paint, so many of my books are about nature. Since childhood I have enjoyed drawing people—especially children. But when I need a respite from the rigors of illustration and detailed art subjects, I prefer painting landscapes. In recent months I have tried my hand at sculpting in clay. My subject was a three year old child. I can’t wait to do more.

What inspires you to write/illustrate children’s books?

Since I was about eight years old, I have wanted to write and illustrate children’s books. I started drawing at two years old. My very first drawing was a butterfly. My father loved to share his joy of the natural world with me. We spent many hours exploring the woods behind our home. I loved to draw birds, flowers, and people. My early stick figures showed relationships between the characters, and visual stories began to emerge as I developed my abilities. In elementary school, I wrote little poems and stories to go with my pictures.

After many years as a graphic designer, my dream of becoming an author/illustrator was finally realized on my fiftieth birthday, with the Charlesbridge publication of *Counting on Calico*. Although it was about a cat, some pages included birds, moths, butterflies, and lady bugs. With other titles such as *Eye Guess*, *Animals Black and White*, and *Animals in Camouflage*, it is obvious that my main inspiration has been the natural world. I hope to instill a sense of wonder about nature and a sense of humor about human nature.





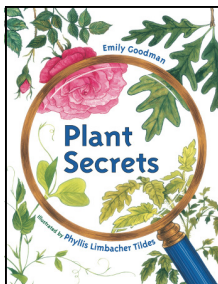
Will You Be Mine?

A Nursery Rhyme Romance

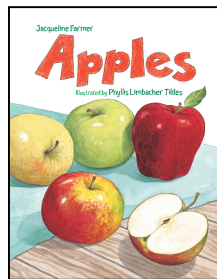
In this charming story told through Mother Goose rhymes, a dapper cat and a demure dog meet, fall in love, wed, and honeymoon to London to meet the queen. Using well-known rhymes such as “Hickory Dickory Dock,” and less familiar ones such as “Pretty John Watts,/ We are troubled with rats,” Phyllis Limbacher Tildes describes the world in which these romantic leads live. Various rhymes illustrate how the whole town gets involved: one little piggy goes to market to buy the food, six little mice weave coats for the gentlemen, and the whole town dances by the light of the moon in a post-ceremony celebration.

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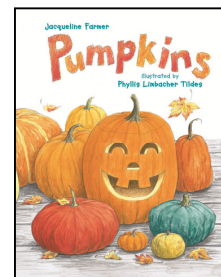
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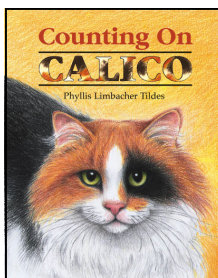
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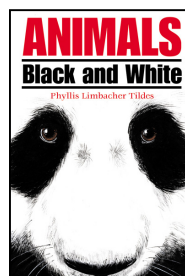
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