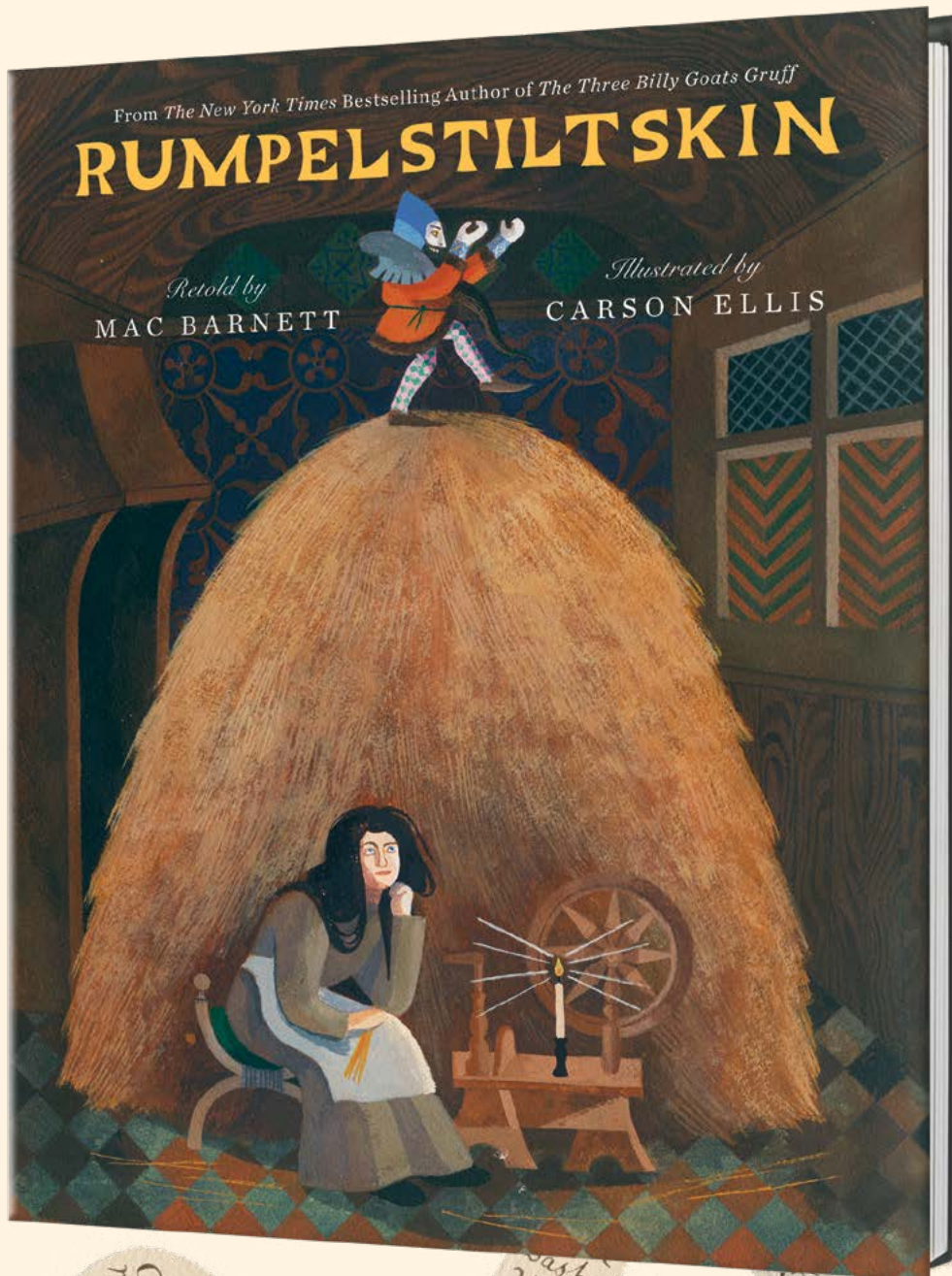


# READING GUIDE

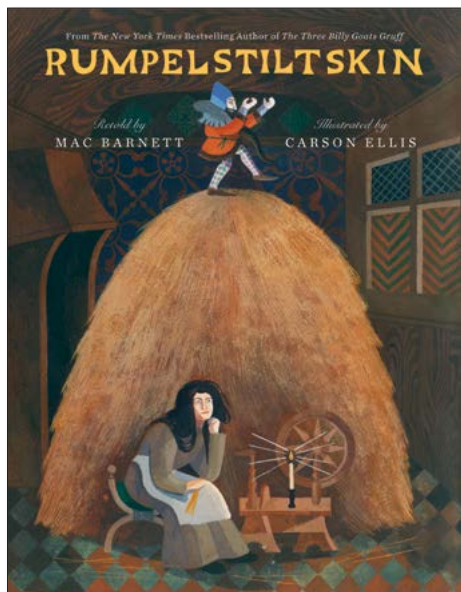
# RUMPELSTILTSKIN

By *MAC BARNETT* and *CARSON ELLIS*

AGES 4-8  
GRADES P-3



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## About the Book

Once upon a time, a girl grew up in the woods. When her boastful father claims she can spin straw into gold, the king demands the girl perform this impossible task. She has no other choice than to accept a strange deal from a mysterious little man. But when the little man returns to collect his debt, the fiendish trickster Rumpelstiltskin discovers that he is the one who has been tricked!

There are many ways to approach a picture book! With witty, subversive storytelling in words and pictures from Mac Barnett and Carson Ellis, this retelling of *Rumpelstiltskin* is a perfect choice for a lively read-aloud. The prompts and activities in this guide can be used to supplement this initial reading, expand readers' visual and textual literacy skills, and inspire further exploration.

## A Picture Book Readaloud Framework

Use these tips and suggestions to guide your reading and discussion!

### Before You Read

Take time to look closely at the cover and ask children what they notice. What do they think the book will be about? Do they think the book will be silly or serious? Who do they think is the main character? What is it about the art that makes them think that? What questions do they have about the book based on what they see? Then, open the book to look closely at the endpapers, then the title page. What do they notice about these parts of the book? What new information do these parts offer, or what new questions do they raise?

### As You Read

After reading the text on each page or spread, pause to look closely at the page(s) together and invite children to share what they notice. Encourage them to connect those observations to what they remember from previous pages, or what they think will happen next. Invite them to share questions based on what they've seen so far. Be open to "out of the box" observations and questions, and leave space for children to briefly discuss them before turning the page.

### After Reading

Provide time for children to look closely at the cover again. Now that they have read the book, do they notice anything new when they look at the cover? What significance do the objects and characters on the cover have now? Why do they think the artist chose to include those items and characters on the cover? Ask them to consider the questions they had before and during reading. Did those questions get answered by the end? If not, what possible answers can they come up with?

This guide draws inspiration from the Whole Book Approach, an interactive storytime model created by Megan Dowd Lambert in association with the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Learn more in *Reading Picture Books With Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking about What They See* by Megan Dowd Lambert (Charlesbridge).

# Reading the Art in *Rumpelstiltskin*

## Cover and Jacket

**Tip:** The book's jacket and case cover (what's under the jacket) serve as previews of the story inside. Sometimes the jacket and case cover match, and sometimes they are different.

**Example:** *The position and size of the haystack tell me it's the center of the action, and the way that Rumpelstiltskin is balanced on it and the sight line of the seated figure tells me that Rumpelstiltskin is a character to pay attention to.*

**Exploration:** What do you notice about the illustration on the jacket? What figures or parts of the cover draw your attention? If you are able to remove the jacket to see the case cover underneath, is it the same art as the jacket or different? Are the jacket and case cover telling you the same thing?

## Framing and Negative Space

**Tip:** In this book, some illustrations are framed with neat, finite edges that end before the edge of the page, some illustrations have no frame or margin and appear to extend (bleed) past the edge of the page, and some illustrations use negative (blank) space around an image without a frame. Those visual choices can inform or reinforce what is happening narratively and emotionally in the story. Many picture book artists use this style intentionally: consider Maurice Sendak's *Where the Wild Things Are* and David Weisner's *The Three Pigs*.

**Example:** *When Rumpelstiltskin learns that the queen knows his name, the double-page spread showing a close-up of his face against negative space creates a feeling of immediacy.*

**Exploration:** Select an illustration (or two) to look at. Is the illustration framed by a border, or does it use negative space? What does that help convey about the scene?

## Form and Movement

**Tip:** Think of a two-page spread as a journey, moving the reader and characters from left to right along to the next page turn. Pay attention to the art's placement around the gutter (the seam where the left and right pages connect)!

**Example:** *The miller's daughter is often facing towards the right, and her path forward to the next page turn is often blocked by people, objects, or the gutter itself.*

**Exploration:** In what parts of the story is the miller's daughter's path forward blocked? What is happening in the scenes when she is either facing left or straight ahead? What do those illustrations suggest about what will happen next?

## Spot the Spot Art

**Tip:** The smaller black-and-white illustrations that accompany the text are called spot art, or spot illustration. Spot art can cue readers to pay special attention to the text around it, and can even share additional information to clarify or contradict the text.

**Example:** *One page features a spot illustration of plants positioned between two sections of text: the miller's lie that his daughter can spin straw into gold, and the king's reaction to this claim. The spot illustration, which reminds us of the miller's daughter and her love of nature, creates a visual pause at the moment in which her life changes forever.*

**Exploration:** On every page with a spot illustration, invite discussion about what the spot art represents. Why did the artist choose that character or object for that page? Why might the artist have chosen to use spot art there instead of a full-color illustration? How important is the position of the spot art on that page?

## Discussion Questions

1. Why do you think the book is called *Rumpelstiltskin*? Can you think of other possible titles?
2. In *Rumpelstiltskin*, names are very important. What does your name mean to you? What do you like about your name?
3. Whose names do we learn in the book, and whose names do we not learn? Why do you think the queen made the narrator promise *not* to tell anyone her name? What is powerful about sharing your name? What is powerful about not sharing your name?
4. Sometimes, fairy tales are told in very old-fashioned language. This book tells the story of *Rumpelstiltskin* from a first-person perspective and uses more casual language. Why do you think the author chose to tell the story this way?
5. On the first page, we learn that the miller's daughter "grew up in the woods, / climbing trees and whittling sticks and / catching tadpoles with her bare hands." What does this description tell you about her? What do the illustrations tell you about her?
6. Why does the miller lie about his daughter? What do you think he hopes will happen after telling that lie? Do you think he gets what he wants? What do you think his daughter wants?
7. In the jacket copy, author Mac Barnett said that he and artist Carson Ellis were inspired by Tudor artwork. Look at some images of Tudor-era tapestries and portraits. Pay attention to the colors, patterns, shapes, and clothing that are shown. Where do you see Tudor art reflected in the illustrations of *Rumpelstiltskin*? How do you think the Tudor setting shapes this retelling of *Rumpelstiltskin*?
8. How do the illustrations use height, perspective, and distance to convey how big or small something is?
9. Do the illustrations show everything that the author describes in words? Is there anything in the illustrations that isn't in the words of the story? Why do you think the illustrator might have chosen to show something different? Are there some things that can be shown better in art than in words?
10. How did this book make you feel? Were there any parts that made you laugh?
11. Some objects and images are repeated in illustrations throughout the book. Can you spot any? How are they shown differently in each part of the book? (Hint: you can look for frogs, deer, candles, and more!)



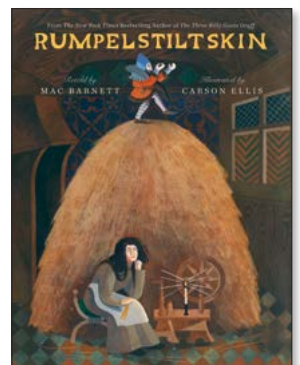
## Extension Activities

1. Explore at least one other retelling of *Rumpelstiltskin*, and compare and contrast it to this version. Is the miller's daughter named in that retelling? What other information does that retelling share (or not share) about her? How is the character Rumpelstiltskin depicted in the illustrations? How is the king depicted in the illustrations? How does the text tell the story compared to this version? In some versions of the story, Rumpelstiltskin splits himself in two instead of stomping a hole through the floor. Which ending do you like better, and why?
2. Create a massive scroll of names! They could be all the names you can possibly imagine, or they could be all the names of people you know. See how long your list can be when you work together with others. Then, display your impressive list!
3. Spinning wheels are used to turn fibers into yarn, which is often woven into fabric. Using construction paper, pick two different colors and practice weaving! See an example of how to do this at [maam.massart.edu/weaving-with-paper](http://maam.massart.edu/weaving-with-paper) or find other instructions in a crafting book or on another trusted website.
4. Now it's your turn! What fairy tale would you choose to retell, and why? Make a list of the key characters, events, and objects from the original story, and then brainstorm how your retelling will be different. Who will narrate your version? Will the words be silly or serious? What art style will you use? Will your version have a different ending than the original? After you finish brainstorming, use words and pictures to retell a scene (or the whole story) from your chosen fairy tale.



# Picture Yourself

The narrator of *Rumpelstiltskin* describes the miller's daughter as someone who enjoys nature and climbing trees, and she is pictured smiling while whittling and catching frogs. What is something you like to do for fun? What would you include in a picture of yourself to show what you like? Use the space below to make a self-portrait.



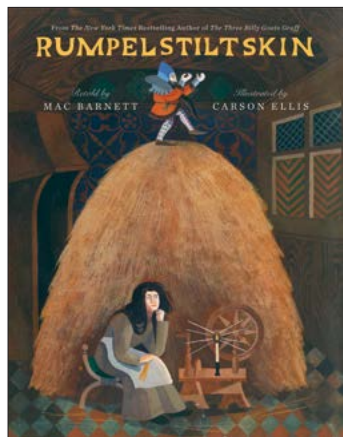
# Words Have Power

In *Rumpelstiltskin*, words hold a lot of power. The miller, the king, Rumpelstiltskin, and the queen all say things that have very serious consequences. What are some of the things they say, and what are the consequences for themselves and for other characters? Complete the T-chart below by choosing one or more statements made by a character of your choice, and listing the consequences of their words.

Words	Consequences



## Praise for *Rumpelstiltskin*

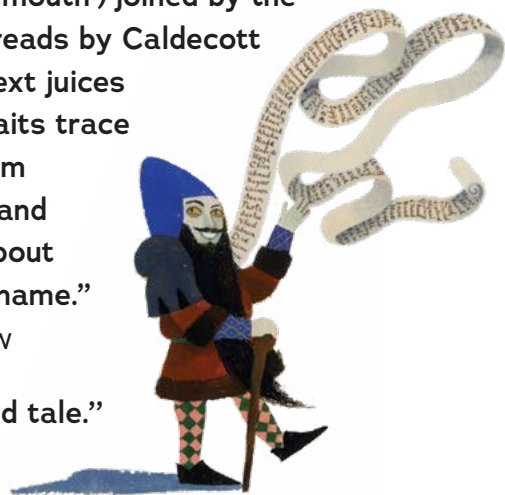


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Ages 4–8 • Grades P–3  
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★ “Two acclaimed creators retell a fairy-tale classic. Employing a conversational style, Barnett offers a fresh and immensely entertaining take on an old story . . . Deeply familiar but infused with 21st-century smarts; expect cries for repeated reads.”  
—*Kirkus Reviews*, starred review

★ “Following his reimagining of ‘The Three Billy Goats Gruff,’ Barnett retells ‘Rumpelstiltskin,’ his wisecracking lines (the miller is ‘a nice enough guy, but he had a big mouth’) joined by the medieval elegance of gouache spreads by Caldecott Honoree Ellis . . . Short, punchy text juices the tale’s momentum, while portraits trace the miller’s daughter’s journey from frog-catching child to regal royal and back again in this haunting tale about the power of knowing someone’s name.”  
—*Publishers Weekly*, starred review

“A satisfying version of an oft-told tale.”  
—*Horn Book Magazine*



## About the Creators

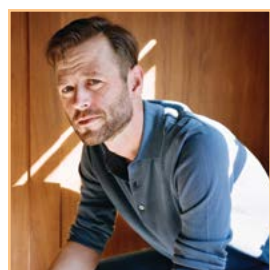


Photo © Chris Black

**MAC BARNETT** is the *New York Times* bestselling author of many picture books, including the *New York Times* bestseller *The Three Billy Goats Gruff*; *The Wolf, the Duck, and the Mouse*; the Caldecott Honor Book and E. B. White Read Aloud Award winner *Sam and Dave Dig a Hole*; the Shapes Trilogy (*Triangle, Circle, and Square*); and the Caldecott Honor Book and Boston Globe-Horn Book Award winner *Extra Yarn*. Mac is also the author of the middle-grade series Mac B., *Kid Spy*. He lives in Oakland, California.



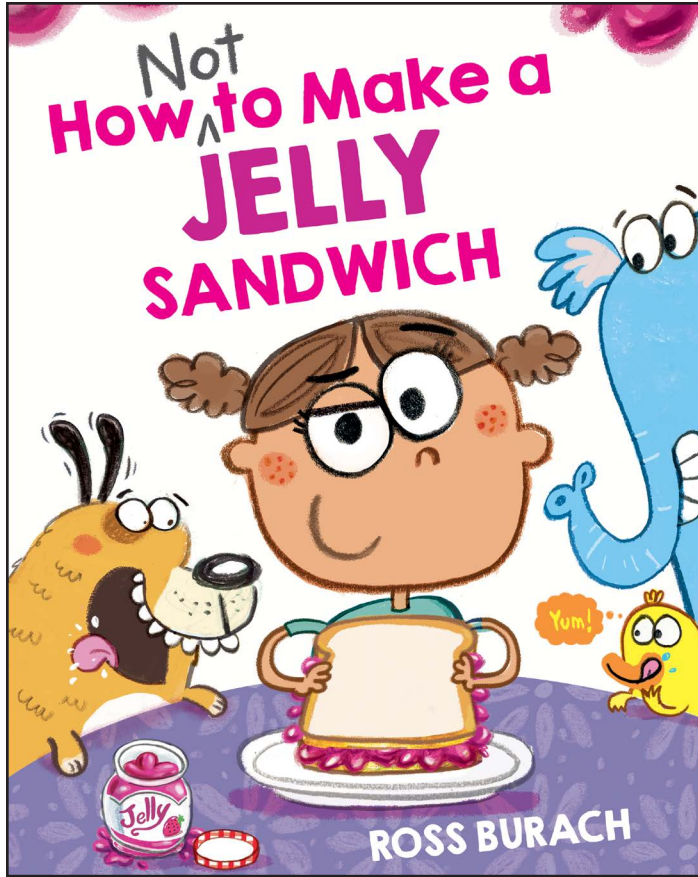
Photo © Jason Quigley

**CARSON ELLIS** is the author and illustrator of the bestselling picture books *Home* and *Du Iz Tak?*, a Caldecott Honor book and the recipient of an E. B. White Read Aloud Award. She has illustrated a number of children’s books, including *What Is Love?* by Mac Barnett, *The Shortest Day* by Susan Cooper, *The Mysterious Benedict Society* by Trenton Lee Stewart, *The Composer Is Dead* by Lemony Snicket, and the Wildwood Chronicles series by her husband, Colin Meloy. She lives on a farm with her family in Oregon.

About the writer of this guide: Kazia Berkley-Cramer is a children’s librarian outside of Boston, MA. They hold an MS in Library and Information Science and an MA in Children’s Literature.



# Not How to Make a JELLY SANDWICH



HC: 9781338877090 • \$19.99  
Also available as an ebook  
Ages 4–8 • Grades P–3  
Available April 2026

## About the Book

Prepare for outrageous fun and shenanigans in this madcap comedy from the creator of the beloved *Very Impatient Caterpillar* series.

Why be simple when you can be silly?

Frankie has her own way of doing things—the FUN way!

In her world, the ordinary becomes more enjoyable with a little original thinking. If you want to make a delicious jelly sandwich, for example, just follow Frankie's five simple steps:

1. Disguise yourself as a duck
2. Spin with an elephant
3. Bathe a dog
4. Organize a joust
5. Train a hamster

Taking inspiration from the classic elementary school assignment, writing a “how to,” this playful, twisty adventure, filled with ingenious ideas, is an unbridled celebration of imagination and creativity.

## About the Author

**Ross Burach** is the creator of the riotously funny *Very Impatient Caterpillar* series that includes *The Very Impatient Caterpillar*; *The Little Butterfly That Could*; *Goodnight, Butterfly*; and *Make Way for Butterfly*. All the books combine humor with curriculum-friendly science topics and relatable social-emotional themes. Ross's other acclaimed books include the picture book *Truck Full of Ducks*, the board books *I Love My Tutu Too!*, *Potty All-Star*, *Hi-Five Farm!*, and *Hi-Five Animals!*, named the best board book of the year by *Parents Magazine*, and the Acorn early reader series *Bumble and Bee*. He also illustrated Audrey Perrott's *Moo Hoo* and *Baa Haa*. Ross lives with his family in Brooklyn, New York. You can visit him online at [rossburach.com](http://rossburach.com).



Photo © Joshua Keay

Find more storytime resources for this book at [bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!](http://bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!)



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# Not How to Make a JELLY SANDWICH



Use the tips and activities included in this toolkit to support a group reading and discussion of *How NOT to Make a Jelly Sandwich* by Ross Burach!

## Read-aloud Tips

### Before You Read

Take time to look closely at the cover and ask children what they notice. What do they think the book will be about? Do they think the book will be silly or serious? Who do they think is the main character? What is it about the art that makes them think that? What questions do they have about the book based on what they see? Then, open the book to look closely at the endpapers, then the title page. What do they notice about these parts of the book? What new information do these offer, or what new questions do they raise?

### As You Read

After reading the text on each page or spread, pause to look closely at the page(s) as a group and invite children to share what they notice. Encourage them to connect those observations to previous pages or what they think will happen next. Invite them to share questions based on what they've seen so far. Be open to "out of the box" observations and questions, and leave space for children to briefly discuss them as a group before turning to the next page.

## Discussion Questions

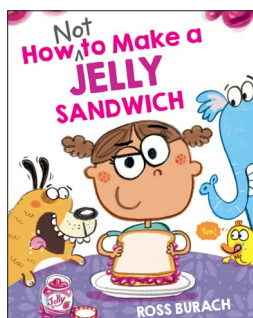
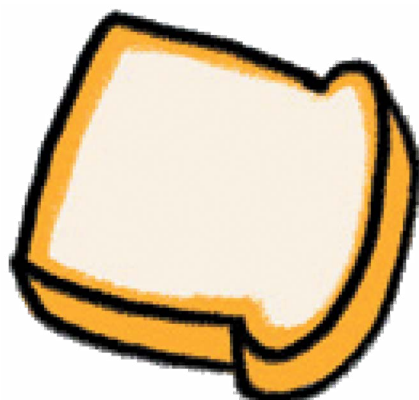
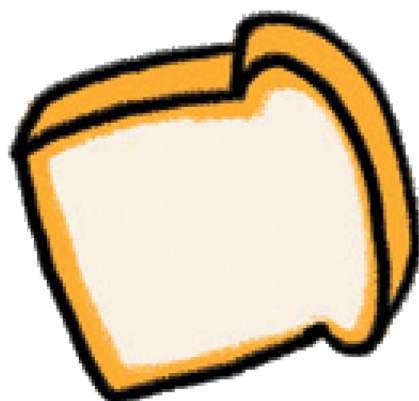
1. What do you think this book is about? What do you notice about the text and art on the cover?
2. What about the illustrations tells you that this will be a silly book?
3. What do you think about the difference between the recipe steps and the way Frankie follows them?
4. What did you expect Frankie to buy at the grocery store? What do you think about the way she actually gets the bread?
5. Do you think that the facts and tips in Frankie's notebook are helpful?
6. How many steps do you think it takes to organize a joust? What do you think those steps are?
7. How do you like your sandwiches to be cut?
8. What other types of sandwiches might you want Frankie to make? How might the steps to make those sandwiches be the same or different?
9. On the back cover, Frankie has brainstormed a list of other "how NOT to . . ." ideas. What other "how NOT tos" would you like to see on that list?
10. The back jacket flap has a section called "How NOT to Write an Author Bio." What would you say (or NOT say) if you used those instructions to write a bio for yourself?



Some prompts in this toolkit draw inspiration from the Whole Book Approach, an interactive storytime model created by Megan Dowd Lambert in association with the Eric Carle Museum of Picture Book Art. Learn more in *Reading Picture Books with Children: How to Shake Up Storytime and Get Kids Talking about What They See* by Megan Dowd Lambert (Charlesbridge).

# Build a Sandwich!

You are a chef and can use anything (it doesn't have to be food) to make any sandwich you want!  
Use the space below to build your dream sandwich.



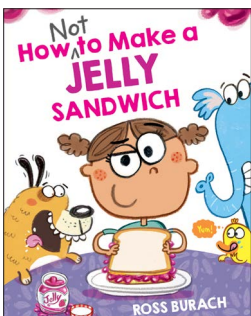
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Find more storytime resources for this book at [bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!](https://bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!)

# How NOT to...

Now it's your turn. Take inspiration from Frankie and write a list of steps for how to brush your teeth the FUN way!

## Step 1



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Find more storytime resources for this book at [bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!](https://bit.ly/JellySandwichStorytimeToolkit!)

