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# Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus!

The Musical!



**January 7-23, 2022**

**Spotlight: Literacy** is a Playhouse program supported by

**Cole-Belin Education  
Foundation**



**JOHN DEERE**



**BRAVO**  
GREATER DES MOINES

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# Getting to Know You

Pigeon says "I never get to do anything!", and he desperately wants to drive the bus. If you could do one thing that you really, really wanted, what would it be?



**Payton Boesch** (*2nd Pigeon/Duckling/Bus Engine/Bus/Mom/Puppy*) If I could do one thing I really, really

wanted to do, it would be to perform with the Broadway cast of *Wicked*.



**Madi Brauer**

(*Choreographer*) If I could do one thing that I really, really wanted to do it would be to have the magical power to

finish all my chores with the snap of a finger. Now I just need to learn how to snap.



**Jessie Curry** (*Stage Manager*)

If I could do anything, I would stage manage *Fantasmic* at Walt Disney World!



**Maddie Davis** (*City Worker/Teenager/Backup Duckling*)

I would love to take a trip to New York City. I've always wanted to go there! I would

also love to go to a store and buy all the things that I want there. It would be so fun to go on a shopping spree!



**Tina Haase Findlay** (*Music Director*)

I would be a champion figure skater and do quadruple jumps and spins all over the

world! I suppose I should learn to skate first, though.



**Peter Dean** (*Director*)

I've always wanted to write a book. I've never had anyone tell me I CAN'T write a book. I

think I'm just not as confident as the pigeon in knowing what I want to write about!



**Greg Millar** (*Bus Driver*) One thing that I would really, really like to do is be a baseball player. Because I grew up in Chicago I would really want

to play for the Cubs.



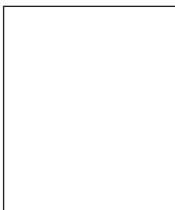
**Brett Spahr** (*Pigeon*) I feel very lucky to be a teacher. If I could do anything else in life, I would love a job voicing cartoon characters for a movie studio. What fun!



**Julianne (JP) Ungs** (*Little Old Lady/Backup Duckling*)

I have always wanted to go swimming in the ocean somewhere tropical. I love to swim and seeing all the colorful fish would be so cool!

**What about you?** What is one thing you really, really want to do? Has anyone told you that you couldn't? Why? Draw your headshot below and write about it.



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# Meet the Author & Playwright:

## Mo Willems (b. 1968)



IN HIS OWN WORDS  
*excerpted from  
interviews*

The pigeon in  
*Don't Let the  
Pigeon Drive the  
Bus!* is just pure

child. I know, certainly from my childhood, that all I was being told was, "No. No, no, no." So, it's so great to be able to yell "No!" I think it's very punk rock. I go to a library, and I've got 500 kids yelling at the top of their lungs, "No!" to me in a library. That just rocks. It's a very super-cool thing.

The trick is to be able to deny this character what it wants more than anything else and, at the same time, have sympathy for that character. I think it says a great thing for the empathy of children and adults who laugh at this — that they can deny this bird and still like him.

I was determined to do books. I worked on what I thought were the great American children's books, and they stank. But I was making these little doodles, and this character started bugging me — the pigeon, it turned out to be. He demanded more and more of my day. I'd just spend the day doodling this pigeon. Finally, I put him in a sketchbook. Every year I'd put out a very small sketchbook that I would send to family, friends, and clients. That was pretty much it.

I got an agent maybe three or four years later. She said, "Yeah, you know, you're right. Your books do stink." Then I gave her the pigeon sketchbook. And she said, "But I think there's a book in that. I think that that's a book."

So, I was very lucky. I didn't see it, necessarily, as a children's book. I just saw it as a funny pigeon.

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## Doodle Dos

We know that the Pigeon started out as a doodle. Use the space below for your own doodles. Who knows what characters you might come up with?

# Who's job is it?

*Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* is a type of play which uses songs and music to help tell the story. It takes a lot of different people, doing different jobs, to put on a musical. The following jobs are just a few of them. Match each one with their description.

- |                      |  |
|----------------------|--|
| 1. Director          | a. decides what all the actors wear onstage  |
| 2. Music Director    | b. teaches the music to the actors   |
| 3. Choreographer     | c. writes all the music in a show  |
| 4. Stage Manager     | d. in charge of running everything backstage   |
| 5. Dance Captain     | e. a cast member who makes sure everyone knows all the choreography or dance steps             |
| 6. Costume Designer  | f. imagines what the stage will look like and brings it to life                                |
| 7. Set Designer      | g. writes or adapts the story so it can be performed onstage                                   |
| 8. Lighting Designer | h. guides the overall artistic vision, in charge of the whole team                             |
| 9. Composer          | i. creates and teaches all the dance steps in the show   |
| 10. Playwright       | j. makes sure the audience can see all the actors onstage, creates special effects with lights |

Answers: 1, h; 2, b; 3, i; 4, d; 5, e; 6, a; 7, f; 8, j; 9, c; 10, g

## A Smidgen of Pigeon

Believe it or not, pigeons are very intelligent birds. Although sometimes considered a pest, pigeons have quite a noble history!

- Pigeons are one of the only animals to be “self-aware.” That means they can recognize themselves in a mirror!
- Pigeons are one of the first known domesticated birds. They appear in works of art dating back to somewhere between 3000–4500 BC.
- Because of their superior navigational abilities, pigeons have been used to carry long-distance messages. They have been known to use the sun as a guide and have an internal magnetic compass. They saved thousands of lives during both World War I and World War II.
- Genghis Khan himself had a network of pigeons that he used to communicate with both allies and enemies.
- Pigeons have been taught to read the difference between random letters and actual words.
- Although often called dirty, pigeons are actually very clean animals.
- The fastest recorded flying speed of a pigeon is 92.5 miles per hour!
- Pigeons are very social animals and often can be seen in flocks of more than 20 birds.



# Don't Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Word Search!

Find the characters and words from the show and circle them.

B	D	P	R	U	P	E	Y	R	H	N	C	D	T	B
U	K	U	X	E	N	U	E	L	X	O	E	S	F	M
M	O	M	C	G	G	V	P	D	M	E	O	X	A	L
H	B	I	I	K	I	A	N	P	S	G	R	T	I	R
S	V	N	X	R	L	S	N	D	Y	I	T	T	R	E
N	E	U	D	P	D	I	R	E	B	P	T	Q	P	K
I	J	S	G	X	B	I	N	E	E	L	Z	S	L	R
S	U	Z	X	N	B	G	D	G	E	T	Z	E	A	O
B	I	F	J	C	Y	W	P	O	J	U	Y	N	N	W
M	Z	E	W	A	A	V	L	J	E	E	K	G	E	Y
A	F	F	T	R	P	D	M	W	Z	I	F	I	V	T
A	Q	G	N	A	L	C	Z	Z	X	B	B	N	B	I
J	D	M	Y	A	C	H	O	T	D	O	G	E	J	C
J	U	F	D	N	A	M	S	S	E	N	I	S	U	B
D	R	Y	K	E	E	W	D	L	Q	G	B	C	Q	T

Airplane  
Engine  
Businessman  
Mom  
Engine

Teenager  
Little Old Lady  
Bus Driver  
Puppy  
Duckling

Birdseed  
Hot Dog  
City Worker  
Pigeon

# Think About It!

What do you do when you really want something? Did your parents or grown-ups say no? Why do you think they say no sometimes?

**“The difference between children and adults is that they’re shorter — not dumber.”**

**—Co-playwright and Lyricist Mo Willems**

How do you handle being disappointed when you don’t get your way? What advice would you give the pigeon about handling his disappointment?

The pigeon has some really big emotions and has a hard time controlling them. Do you have big emotions, too? Are they hard to control sometimes? What do you do when that happens?

Do you feel sorry for the Pigeon? What do you think would happen if we let him drive the bus?

## READ IT!

***Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! The Musical!* is based on the book *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus! (Naturally)***

Read the book and compare and contrast it to the play. What was added to the play? Was anything changed? Are the characters the same or different? How does the music add to the play?

**Read these other books featuring our favorite pigeon:**

*Don’t Let the Pigeon Stay Up Late!*

*The Pigeon Needs a Bath!*

*The Pigeon Wants a Puppy!*

*The Duckling Gets a Cookie!?*

*The Pigeon Finds a Hot Dog!*

*The Pigeon Has to Go to School!*

**“To make a 40-page book into a sooper giant musical, we added fun, funny characters; rousing music with clever and often touching lyrics; a big bus that may or may not work; and an enormous fluffy puppy (pro tip: always add a puppy!).”**

**—Co-playwright Mr. Warburton**

**Don’t Let the Pigeon Jump Rope in Space**

The pigeon can’t drive the bus because, well, he doesn’t know how! What else shouldn’t we let the pigeon do? See how many different ways you can end this sentence: Don’t let the pigeon \_\_\_\_\_.

Go here for your very own “Official Certificate of Excellence in Not Letting The Pigeon Drive the Bus! [https://pigeonpresents.com/content/uploads/2017/08/pigeon\\_certificate.pdf](https://pigeonpresents.com/content/uploads/2017/08/pigeon_certificate.pdf).

# Pigeon Portraits

Have you ever wondered how to draw a cartoon? Well, wonder no longer. You, too can draw the Pigeon by following these simple steps.

*"When I design a character, it's very important to me that a four-year-old can reasonably draw that character. I want those characters to become so alive that kids create their own comics and their own books, in the same way that I started out drawing Charlie Brown. I'm designing this character to be as simple as possible, so that a four-year-old can draw it and at the same time, putting him or her in these crazy positions."*

— Mo Willems



1. At the top of your page, make a circle for Pigeon's head. Now draw another, smaller circle inside it. You've made a donut!



2. Now darken in the eyeball inside the small circle. Where you place the eyeball (in the middle, up, down, or to the side) will determine how the Pigeon feels!



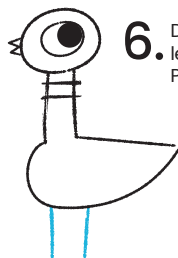
3. Now make a sideways letter "M" for the Pigeon's beak. (If you'd rather make a sideways letter "W", go for it.)



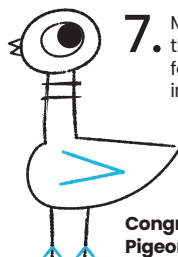
4. Draw two straight lines down for the Pigeon's neck, and two straight lines across for his collar. (This is always more fun with sound effects!)



5. Now comes the patented Mo Willems "circ-angle" for the Pigeon's body! A circ-angle is a circle that halfway through changes its mind and decides to become a triangle.



6. Draw two lines down for his legs (just like you did for Pigeon's neck).



7. Make three letter Vs: two for the Pigeon's feet and one for his wing (which goes inside the circ-angle).

**Congratulations! You drew the Pigeon! Show your pals!**

## FUN PIGEON FACT!

Pigeons descend from birds that build their nests high up in rocky cliffs. That's why pigeons prefer to nest in skyscrapers instead of trees.



Activity from Hyperion Books for Children



Greg  
"Bus Driver"

Page  
Brett  
"Pigeon"



Don't Let  
the Pigeon  
Drive  
the Bus!  
The Musical!

## AUTOGRAPHS

Maddie  
Davis

Lou  
Kamsey (.mp3)

"The fun thing about writing  
a play that is different from  
writing a book is, it is a lot  
more collaborative."

—Co-playwright and  
Lyricist Mo Willems

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