



Greg Pizzoli is winner of the 2014 (Theodor Seuss) Geisel Award for *The Watermelon Seed* (Disney/Hyperion).

His acceptance remarks were delivered at the ALSC Book and Media Awards Program on Monday, June 30, 2014, during the American Library Association Annual Conference.

For more information about the Geisel Award, visit <http://bit.ly/geisel-award>.

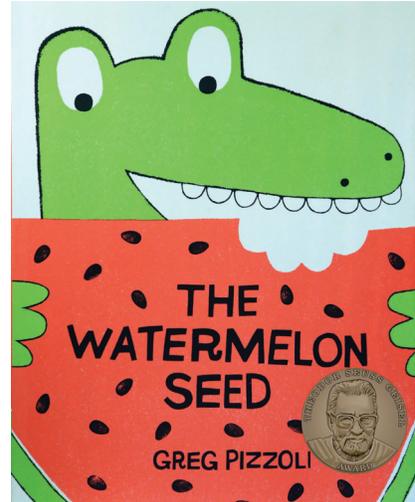


Geisel AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

Thank you all for being here today and for this wonderful award. I want to start off by thanking the American Library Association and the Geisel Committee, and I'd like to single out Penny Peck, who was the one to call me with the news, and assure me, over and over again, that she wasn't messing with me. Thanks very much.

I have a lot to be thankful for these days, and many people to thank. I meet a lot of people at the library, or at a bookstore, and they congratulate me on my book and its success. Often it's a red-eyed and sleep-deprived father who claims he's read the book forty times in the last two days, but still, it's always nice to hear that it's out there and making connections. People give me reasons to be thankful on the Internet a lot, too. Someone will tweet me a photo of their two-year-old sleeping on the couch, with their arms wrapped around *The Watermelon Seed* like a teddy bear. Or they email a video of an older sister reading the book to her younger brother. Those always surprise me, and they really make my day. Thanks for those.

You guys probably know all about this stuff. You're librarians, some of you work in publishing, some of you are parents, this kind of thing may be old hat. But being relatively new to the



field, and not yet having kids myself, it always comes as a surprise. This was definitely the case when I got an email from a six-year-old named Hayley. Obviously typed up by a parent, but in Hayley's words. If you'll bear with me, I want to read this one email. It's short.

Dear Mr. Pizzoli,

The Watermelon Seed is the funniest book I ever heard. It is the best.

*From Hayley
Six years old*

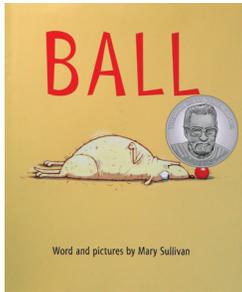
This email meant a lot to me. It struck a chord, partly because I think Hayley is funny. She borrowed some of my phrasing ("It is the best") but also, saying it's "the funniest book she ever

Author, illustrator, and screen printer Greg Pizzoli received his BA in Literature/Studio Art from Millersville (Penn.) University in 2005, and an MFA in Book Arts/Printmaking from University of the Arts, Philadelphia, in 2009. *The Watermelon Seed* is his first picture book, and he has two new titles coming out in 2014—*Number One Sam* (Disney-Hyperion) and *Not Very Scary* (Farrar), written by Carol Brendler. Pizzoli has also won two Portfolio Honor Awards from the Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

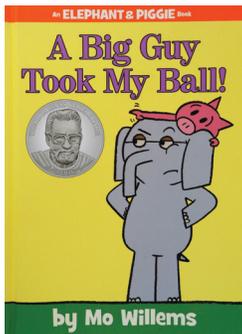
FUN FACT: Greg spent two years as a full-time volunteer in AmeriCORPS after finishing college.



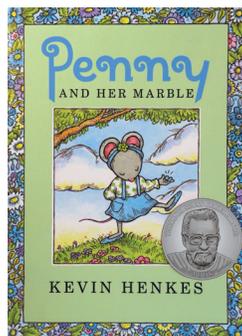
2014 GEISEL HONOR BOOKS



Ball. Sullivan, Mary.
Illus. by the author.
Houghton



A Big Guy Took My Ball!
Willems, Mo.
Illus. by the author.
Disney/Hyperion



Penny and Her Marble.
Henkes, Kevin.
Illus. by the author.
Greenwillow

Geisel AWARD ACCEPTANCE SPEECH

HEARD”—ya know, cause she can't read. Her mom read it to her. I wrote back to Hayley, thanking her, and just joking around. Her mom wrote me back the next day and said that Hayley was thrilled to hear from me, and that at six, she was really struggling to learn to read. She had felt defeated and discouraged and ready to give up on books. She got *The Watermelon Seed* as a gift and read it with her mom ten times in one night.

Again, for many of you, this might seem like old hat, it's part of what we do, why we're here. But still, it was a surprise for me. All those days and nights spent writing, reading, draw-

ing, revising—in all of that, part of me didn't realize . . . didn't yet know . . . that this book could be somebody's first. The book that changed reading for them. Changed reading from an impossible task to an incredible journey.

In making books, especially books for young readers, I have been given an extraordinary opportunity to connect, to share, and maybe in a small way, to help someone like Hayley, to discover.

For this wonderful award, and for that incredible opportunity, I'd like to say once again, thank you.

2014 THEODOR SEUSS GEISEL AWARD COMMITTEE

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