
1. Summary – A sweet little mother goose is out for an afternoon stroll when she meets an elegantly dressed fox who invites her along for a stroll, then into the woods to his house. When they arrive, the fox invites her to help him make soup, and she gladly accepts. All throughout the story, an increasingly frantic bunch of six little chicks warns “That is not a good idea!” Finally, when the fox asks the goose to lean in and taste test the soup, she pushed him in instead and he is cooked in the soup. The goose then invites her six little chicks to dinner, and they insist that they tried to warn the fox that he was making terrible decisions.

2. Awards – Mo Willems Presents That is NOT A Good Idea has been nominated for several state and local awards, many of which will be selecting their winners later this year.

Starred Reviews by Horn Book, School Library Journal, Kirkus Reviews, Booklist, Publisher’s Weekly, and Bulletin of the Center for Children’s Books.

Semi-finalist for the Irma Black Award through Bank Street College
ALA/ALSC Notable Books 2014

3. Book Review
   • Sara Lissa Paulson, The American Sign Language and English Lower School, New York City, quoted in the School Library Journal (April 1, 2013)
     “This charmer is lovingly composed as an homage to silent movies and the concept of picture books as the "theater of the lap." Readers will become totally involved as they watch, along with several chicks, a drama unfolding, certain to end in tragedy. A gentlemanly fox and a demure, peasantlike goose meet…Heightened expressions dramatize their meeting, and it is desire at first sight. "What luck! Dinner!" reads the ornate intertitle (white type on a black background) on the following spread…Young listeners will get involved and cry out, too. The wily goose's actions, defying common sense, arrive at an absolutely unexpected and riotous surprise ending. Children and adults will relish being taken for such a thrilling, suspenseful ride again and again.”

4. Author/Illustrator Webpage: MoWillems.com

5. Author & Illustrator are the same person.

6. Discussion Questions: Include the following:
   a. 3 or more questions to ask children BEFORE they read the book
      i. What do you know about silent movies?
      ii. What kind of person do you think the fox is?
      iii. What do you think the goose is doing when she meets the fox?
      iv. What is the role of the little chicks going to be in the story?
   b. 3 or more questions to ask children DURING the reading of the book
      i. What do you think the fox really wants to do with the duck?
ii. What are the chicks doing, what is their part in the story?
iii. Who are the chicks talking to when they give their warning, what is the bad idea?
c. 3 or more questions to ask children AFTER they have read the book
   i. Who was supposed to be listening to the chicks’ warning?
   ii. What else do you think the chicks could have done to make their warning stronger?
   iii. Who was the character who was making all of the bad decisions? What were some of those bad decisions, what event were the chicks trying to prevent?

7. Activities to use with the book including:
a. **Reading/Oral Language** – put the students in groups and assign one student to the part of the fox, one to the part of the mother duck, and a few to the part(s) of the chicks and have them read/act the story out loud to the class.
b. **Writing** – have students write a story about a time when they did something that was a very good or very bad idea; have students re-write Mo Willems’s story about what they think the Fox should have done that would have been a better idea.
c. **Math** – Recipes often include measurements, and what if the mother goose had not had enough soup for all her children, how could she have re-measured the fox’s soup to have enough? For example, if the fox put one and a half carrots into the soup, how many would the goose need if she wanted to double or triple the recipe? Or, how many cups of water would she need if 1 ½ cups of water made enough soup for one chick, and she has four chicks to feed?
d. **Science** – Science safety, what is not a good idea? If students will be working on science experiments in class, review safety rules with them by asking what might or might not be a good idea.
e. **Social Studies** – [perhaps more appropriate for older students] Pick a particular era in history, whether something from a current unit or an era the student is particularly interested. Have the student look up some information about the era or event and have them list good or bad ideas during that time period. For example, in the era of Industrialization of America, a good idea could be Ford’s Model T but a bad idea could be child labor.
f. **Art** – Mo Willems uses a deliberately simple artistic style in his stories. Focus on the characters and have students practice drawing them on different backgrounds. As an accompaniment, maybe have them re-write the story or write a new story using the same characters.
g. **Drama** – Have students make finger puppets or popsicle puppets for the various characters and act out the story from *That is NOT A Good Idea* or create a new story to tell their classmates.
h. **Cooking Food** – What works best in soup? Have students make a list of their favorite soup ingredients and make a brand-new soup that is as realistic or ridiculous as they can imagine. Then, have them name their soup and teach the class Rachel Ray-style how to make the soup.
i. **Music** – Allow students to pantomime scenes set to piano music, like old silent movies. The scenes can be from *That is NOT A Good Idea*, or from any other book or story. Or, have students write a chorus for the baby geese to sing, either using their lines from the book or using new words.
8. Related Books:
   - *Loula is Leaving for Africa*, by Anne Villeneuve
   - *Battle Bunny*, by Jon Scieszka
   - *Honestly, Red Riding Hood Was Rotten!: The Story of Little Red Riding Hood as Told by the Wolf*, by Trisha Speed Shaskan
   - *Open this Little Book*, by Jesse Klausmeier
   - *Mr. Tiger Goes Wild*, by Peter Brown
   - *Odd Duck*, by Cecil Castellucci
   - *The King of Little Things*, written by BilLepp & illustrated by David T. Wenzel

9. Other Books written by the Author/Illustrator
   - *Don’t Let the Pigeon Drive the Bus*, Written & Illustrated by Mo Willems
   - *Knuffle Bunny: A Cautionary Tale*, Written & Illustrated by Mo Willems
   - *My Friend is Sad*, an Elephant and Piggie book Written & Illustrated by Mo Willems
   - *Leonardo, the Terrible Monster*, Written & Illustrated by Mo Willems
   - *Hooray for Amanda and Her Alligator!* Written & Illustrated by Mo Willems

10. Author & Illustrator are the same person.

11. Related websites –
   - Teacher’s blog called *Rubber Boots and Elf Shoes* – this page contains resounding praise for Mo Willem’s work, and this particular post gives suggestions for worksheets and group activities that relate to *That is not a Good Idea*.
     - [http://rubberbootsandelfshoes.blogspot.com/2013/07/mo-brilliance-that-is-not-good-idea.html](http://rubberbootsandelfshoes.blogspot.com/2013/07/mo-brilliance-that-is-not-good-idea.html)
   - This is the Mo Willems page on the University of Missouri’s eThemes website. The page contains external links to other webpages that have author interviews and information about some of his characters, as well as lesson plans and activities for his books for preschool and kindergarten students.
     - [http://ethemes.missouri.edu/themes/1802](http://ethemes.missouri.edu/themes/1802)
   - This is the TeachingBooks.net webpage for Mo Willems that contains author interviews, resources for *That is NOT A Good Idea*, as well as his other books, and links to external sources such as Mo Willems’s personal website and blogs that contain more information about his books.
   - Harper Collins *That Is Not a Good Idea!*
     This website has activity pages for this book with excellent interdisciplinary ideas as well as some that incorporate other Mo Willem’s books with this book.