

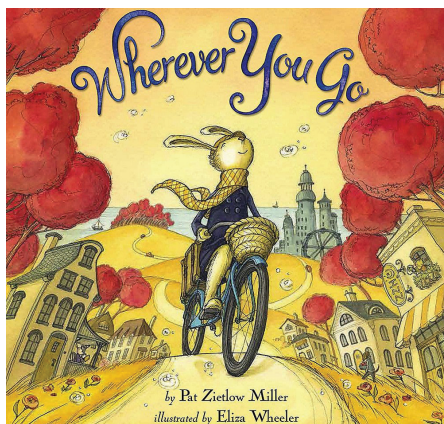
# Wherever You Go: A Literacy-rich Adventure for Young Readers

By Lynn Mendelsohn

*Wherever You Go* is a whimsical, rhythmic travel adventure for the whole family by Pat Zietlow Miller. The premise of the story, which features rhyming stanzas, is that when you want to seek, explore, learn, and grow, roads will guide you out into the world and back again. In the author's playful imagination, roads take on a human, highly adventurous spirit—zooming, racing, bending, reaching, merging, pausing, remembering and returning. Eliza Wheeler's inspired illustrations, featuring a bunny on a beach cruiser, help propel the story forward with the visual energy and excitement of a picture book. In this fast-paced poem, both children and adults experience what Bunny experiences: the thrill of traveling the world's roads under one's own power; the joy of experiencing rich encounters in a wondrously diverse world; and ultimately, the need to return home where it all began until the road calls again. This story appeals to our innate and inevitable human impulse to explore, connect with others and uncover "other" truths about our planet. While experiencing this adventure, children can also absorb valuable early literacy concepts with attentive family members and caregivers.

Zietlow Miller introduces directional opposites in her book when she says, "Roads...go. Over a hill, under a bridge, deep in a valley, high on a ridge." Parents can reinforce and expand on

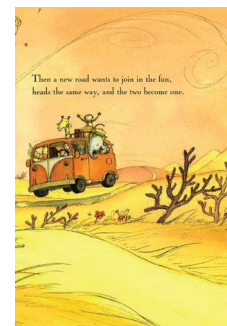
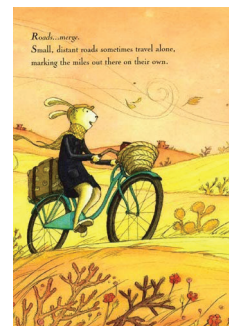
these concepts while taking their own adventurous walks or bike and car rides with their young children. They can comment and emphasize while traveling; "Let's go over that bump, through that tunnel and park under that tree." Caregivers too can expand on the author's intention here, drawing on their children's prior knowledge while playing outside or taking a nature walk—"Let's jump over that log, go through that hedge and sit under that tree." Early educators can also extend young children's understanding of these concepts by exploring them in other read-aloud books—encouraging young children to discuss where their bodies are in space and where book characters' bodies are in space; "Where is the troll hiding and where is he in relation to the Billy Goats Gruff?" Relevant literature, like *Wherever You Go*, coupled with intentional teaching moments on the parts of parents and caregivers, transforms the learning process for young children into something enjoyable,



desirable, memorable and lifelong. Zietlow Miller uses traditional rhyming words with a traditional end-of-word rhyming structure like "bridge and ridge" or "stream and dream." She also challenges young readers with rhyming homophones like "high and sky" or "bays and amaze."

Throughout this book, the author introduces young readers to wonderful vocabulary words. Parents or teachers can explain them at home or in the classroom through multiple read-alouds, story retelling and discussion. For example, Zietlow Miller's road-related vocabulary words include *zigzag*, *detours*, *merge*, *stoplights* and *crosswalks*. Her travel-related words include *journey*, *ramble*, *roam*, and *explore* as well as *harbors*, *bays* and *landmark*. Sample questions a parent or teacher might ask their young readers are, "What is a landmark?" or "Do we have any landmarks in our city?" Several of these words, stoplights, crosswalks and landmark, are compound words—containing two little words pushed together to create a new word. This is another concept parents and teachers can help young children understand and master while reading this and other literacy-rich books.

*Wherever You Go* is a well-written book, which promotes early literacy at home or in the preschool classroom when coupled with parent-teacher involvement. Infants and toddlers can appreciate this book, savoring the rhythm, intonation and overall sound of the English language, which is a component of early literacy for very young children. Paired with Eliza Wheeler's superb and gender-neutral animal drawings, the youngest of our readers can sense there is something exciting and compelling moving this story forward. Older preschoolers and kindergarteners, with help from their parents and caregivers, can enjoy Bunny's entire exhilarating adventure. They can begin to understand and decode the rhyming words, absorb new vocabulary and plan their own family travel adventures. *Wherever You Go* stirs the imagination, invigorates the senses and captivates all readers. It just might be a great bedtime story. Readers might be worn out following Bunny's adventures but drift off to sleep contentedly thinking about new roads and adventures ahead; sweet dreams!



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Funded by The Children's Board of Hillsborough County, in partnership with CALM, HCC & QEEs

