“Variety is the spice of life.” and makes for a good literature program. As teachers, we guard against choosing too many readers written by the same author, even if that author is excellent. Why? Because authors often tend to use similar vocabulary words and employee a similar style of writing from book to book. If the story is interesting, and the vocabulary and style worthy of emulation, then a bit of repetition is not bad. But, the more varied the authors and the topics, the more well rounded the students.

This also applies to the books you choose for young children; the more diversified the topics, the style of writing and the type of illustrations, as long as the majority are nicely done, the better it is for their brain and character development. When Ryder was fixated on construction vehicles, I certainly read him a variety of books along that theme, but I always made sure others came into the mix. Below, my latest “hodgepodge”:

1. **Milo and the Mysterious Island** Written and illustrated by Marcus Pfister. In an earlier issue I had recommended *Milo and the Magical Stones*. This book, like the first in the series, gives the child the choice of a happy ending and a sad ending. These books contain gentle but, clear lessons on the value of sharing and working together.

2. **Good Morning, Good Night!** Published by Piggy Toes Press and illustrated by Melanie Mitchell. This “touch and feel” bedtime book is sweet and offers soft tactile stimulation on each page as you greet “good morning” and then wish “good night” to various animals. “Good morning, little chick! Are you saying a nice hello- to the wiggly worms and flowers- beneath the grass below? Good night little chick! Snuggle in your comfy nest. Your day has been so busy, now it’s time for you to rest.”

3. **Eye Guess, a foldout Guessing Game** written and illustrated by Phyllis Limbacher Tildes. This book is probably better suited for 3 and up: it introduces a number of animals by first giving a written riddle and a drawing of a portion of the animal’s head, including the eye. After the child tries to answer the question, “Can you guess who I am?”, then he can open up the flap and see a very nice painting of the animal in its environment, along with the name. “I waddle on land, but I paddle in a
puddle. With my wide, webbed feet, I can swim and dive. I open my eyes under water to look for food. Can you guess who I am?"

4. **Angelina Ballerina** by Katharine Holabird, illustrated by Helen Craig. The first in this series of stories is recommended for several reasons. First, the delightful illustrations (watercolor and ink?) throughout the book are full of details and make for numerous "Can you find...." opportunities. Second, the story is about a little mouse who has a passion for dancing... isn't it just like a 3-4 year old to get taken over with some imaginative role and be that person, animal, etc. for hours on end...if not days and weeks?! And thirdly, it is a great lesson for those adults who nurture children... if your child has an overwhelming need to do something, then find a way to channel that energy in a positive direction.*

These next two have similar titles and approaches, but different authors:

5. **On the Night You Were Born** by Nancy Tillman "On the night you were born, the moon smiled with such wonder that the stars peeked in to see you and the night wind whispered, 'Life will never be the same.' Because there had never been anyone like you...ever in the world." Thus begins this thoughtful tale of how the world greeted your child's birth. Each page shows a gentle moon smiling down upon a part of the world celebrating your child. The pictures in this book are stunning— the text, simple and sweet.

6. **On the Day You Were Born** by Debra Frasier “On the day you were born a forest of tall trees collected the Sun's light in their leaves, where, in silent mystery, they made oxygen for you to breathe...” The illustrations in this book are simple, yet creative paper collages and despite the more abstract concepts introduced throughout, most young children will enjoy the overall gesture of the story. That said, it appears to have been written with older children in mind. There is even a section in the back, "More about the World around You" that discusses topics alluded to in the text such as animal migration, gravity, and photosynthesis, etc.