Here are some great books to read during the day or before bedtime. Each is rich in visual images and in warm thoughts. So grab a couple, snuggle up with your little one and enjoy!

1. **If You Were My Bunny** Written by Kate McMullan with simple, but effective illustrations by David McPhail. This sweet little board book has an extra surprise in that much of it can be sung to the tunes of well known lullabies. “If you were my duckling and I were your mama duck, I’d paddle toward the shore at sunset and you’d follow right behind. Then I’d tuck you into a nest lined with my softest feathers and quack you a nighttime tune.” (to the tune of *Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star*: “Dearest duckling, close your eyes, Crickets chirp your lullabies....”)

2. **Going to Sleep on the Farm** Written by Wendy Cheyette Lewison with pictures by Juan Wijngaard. The brilliance of this book is the artist’s continual shift in his point of view as he takes us on a journey through the barnyard during sundown. The beautiful illustrations are supported by a text that is gentle and melodic. “A pig curls up with her family or friends. Where one pig starts, another pig ends.”

3. **Ship of Dreams** Written and fantastically illustrated by Dean Morrissey. Every single picture in this amazingly beautiful book is from individual oil paintings created by Morrissey over a 5 year period; each is so detailed, it could have been painted by a contemporary of Rembrandt’s. The story is about a little boy and his journey with the Sandman. The Sandman, who captures shooting stars and grinds them up into golden sand (for little children’s eyes at bedtime) or melds them into stars, says to Joey, “Every time a child is born I make a new star and hang it in the sky above the town where they were born.”

4. **No Matter What** Written and Illustrated by Debi Gliori. This “tell me how much you love me book” (a favorite theme for all young children) is written in rhyme with some nice images. On a page where the little one is surrounded with tape, glue and broken objects, he says, “But does love wear out? Does it break or bend? Can you fix it or patch it?
Does it mend?” (Mother’s response:) “With time together, a smile, and a kiss—love can be mended with things like this.”

5. **The Crane Girl** - Veronika Martenova Charles is well known in Eastern Europe as a popular singer: here she shares, quiet successfully, two of her other talents—writing and illustrating. This is the story of Yoshiko, who after the birth of her baby brother, is convinced that she is no longer loved. Lonely, unhappy and longing for a new family, she begs a group of cranes to take her in. Together, the cranes swoop and whirl in a magical moonlit dance that transforms the little girl into one of their young. For some time Yoshiko is off living the life of a crane, then one day she stops in the family garden and finds out how much she was truly loved. I am very careful about stories that address feelings around the birth of a newborn...many are very poorly done and can even cause problems...but, this one is handled so gently and the ending is so sweet, I recommend it—even if you have an only child.