

# Peachtree Pointers

Ω SUGGESTIONS FOR TEACHERS AND LIBRARIANS Ω

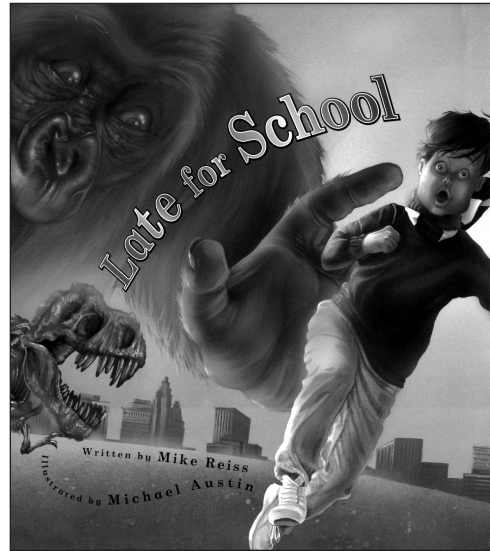
PEACHTREE PUBLISHERS, LTD. 1700 Chattahoochee Avenue Atlanta, Georgia 30318

## Late for School

Written By Mike Reiss

Illustrated by Michael Austin

ISBN: 1-56145-286-6 / Hardcover / \$16.95  
9-7/8 x 11 / 32 pages / Children's, Ages 4-8



### About the Book

Smitty is never late for school. Not when his shoes get stuck in a sea of thick, black tar. Not when the sky rains snowmen down on the New York City streets. Not when he uses his coat for a sail to catch a gale and is swallowed up by a whale. Or when he encounters a robot from Mars eating up cars...or a very, very hungry T-Rex!

With rhyming language and a vivid imagination, author Mike Reiss demonstrates that, for some children, getting to school on time can be an adventure. Illustrator Michael Austin's humorous, exaggerated images colorfully bring to life the mischievous fun of the text. The surprise ending will delight young readers as they cheer on Smitty and his heroic efforts to beat the school bell.

### Themes

- Rhyming words
- Telling time
- Real vs. Make-believe (Fact/Fantasy)
- NYC landmarks and facts
- Character Education: Punctuality, Responsibility, Honesty, Effort, Patience, Resourcefulness, Creativity/Imagination, Determination

### Awards

- 2003 Parent's Guide to Children's Media Award
- 2004 Annual Exhibitor of the Society of Illustrators

### Praise for the Book

"With photorealistic precision, Austin depicts an exaggeratedly panicked young scholar from a variety of canted and slanted points of view as he runs, flies, sails, and flails his way down city streets... Children tardy and timely will laugh at this droll recitation."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

"Featuring a catchy cadence, Reiss's rhyming tale and Austin's pleasingly exaggerated artwork introduce a fresh-faced narrator... The narrative gives way to kid-pleasing nonsense as absurd incidents conspire to threaten the student's perfect punctuality record... Austin's wild and wily air-brushed illustrations make use of electric hues and skewed perspectives; large scale views present the earnest, wide-eyed hero manifesting an array of entertaining facial expressions. A surprise ending—complete with graphic details—wraps up this satisfyingly silly caper."

—*Publishers Weekly*

## Before You Read

■ Ask students why it is necessary to be on time for school. Discuss some positive character traits necessary for being on time for school. Students could think of some advantages of being on time and some consequences for being late.

■ Students could name some landmarks in New York City: Times Square, Statue of Liberty, Empire State Building, Central Park, Brooklyn Bridge. (Point out these locations on a map of the city.)

■ Ask students to tell the difference between real and make-believe. Have them give a few examples of each.

## As You Read

■ Read the front cover inside flap of the book. Point out the verse from the book that reads, "But I've never been late for school!" Ask students to relate to that phrase. Students could share a story of a time when they were late for school. Other students may give some suggestions for how their classmates can get to school on time.

■ Discuss the artist's different perspectives; ask students how the different viewpoints make them feel – does it make the story more exciting? Students may pick out visual clues for what Smitty might encounter next in the story.

■ Point out landmarks of New York City in the story.

■ Ask students to think about which parts of the story could really happen and which parts are make-believe.

■ *Rhyming Words:* As you read, students could use a nonverbal signal like raising their hand or tapping the tip of their nose every time they hear words that rhyme. After each page, students could identify two rhyming words.

## After You Read

### Language Arts

■ Students could come up with different endings for the story. They may write different events that could have taken place during the story, or write about a normal day and compare and contrast it with the day in the book.

■ Students could write their favorite sentence or part from the book on Sentence Strips (strips of paper with handwriting lines). Next, students

draw a picture to go with the sentence. Lastly, all students stand in front of the room with their Sentence Strips and get in sequential order. Each student reads his/her sentence aloud.

■ Look through some magazines and find pictures of different types of transportation. Discuss which ones could get you to school on time and which ones may be impractical. Cut the pictures out and categorize them into Practical and Impractical ways to get to school. Have students write about why one mode of transportation is practical or impractical for a journal assignment.

### Spelling

■ Choose some words from the book that rhyme and add other words to this word family. Using ten words from a word family, students can practice these words by:

- ...writing them in sentences,
- ...drawing pictures to go with each word,
- ...racing to the board and correctly writing the words faster than another group,
- ...doing jumping jacks as they spell the word (jumping with every letter said),
- ...playing spelling bingo,
- ...playing a memory game using the words, or
- ...putting the words in a crossword or hidden puzzle activity sheet.

### Math

■ AM vs. PM Game: Is it Morning or Night?

Give students two index cards and instruct them to write AM on one and PM on the other in large capital letters. As you make up daily scenarios, students hold up the appropriate card. (Please stress that AM is usually in the morning and PM is always in the afternoon and night.)

*Possible scenarios:*

- You are brushing your teeth to get ready for school. (AM)
- You are riding the bus home after school. (PM)
- You go to the carnival and the lights shine brightly in the darkness. (PM)
- You are finishing your homework just before going to bed. (PM)
- You are eating cereal for breakfast. (AM)
- You are sleeping. (AM or PM)

■ **Picture Graph/Pictograph:** Students could construct a graph using pictures of different modes of transportation:

1. Students think of ways they get to school. They draw a large picture of their mode of transportation (car, truck, school bus, tennis shoes), and color and cut out the picture.
2. Sort the pictures by mode of transportation.
3. Count the number of pictures for each mode.
4. Line up all the pictures in vertical rows, with one row for each mode of transportation. This should form a graph, with transportation modes listed along the bottom, and number of students listed along the side.

Using this graph, students would be able to see how many people ride the car or bus home and how many people walk home. Math problems can be created using this graph. (*Example:* How many students walk home? How many more students ride the bus home than the car? How many students ride the car home and walk home?)

## Art

- Draw or make a collage of a theme or element from the book (cityscape, time, snowmen, King Kong, spiders, dinosaurs, zoo animals).
- Draw or paint another obstacle Smitty may have encountered on his way to school.
- **Multimedia:** Using a large magazine picture of an element from the book, students could create an overlay of torn construction paper in different colors to cover the picture and give it a new texture. Instead of torn paper, beans, glitter, macaroni or rice can be used.

## Science

- **Wild Animals:** pick out some different animals from the story and do some research on these animals. Find out where they live, what they eat, how many babies in a litter, would they make good pets... Students may work individually or in a group on this project and do group presentations.

## Social Studies

- Use NYC facts and discuss some different landmarks and places of interest in this city. Have older students research history and facts about

the landmarks and/or the city and present their information to the class.

- **Map Reading:** Use a map of NYC and discuss different parts of a map and incorporate map-reading skills.

## Character Education

- Ask students to answer the following questions (and identify the character traits displayed):
  - 1) Was Smitty doing his personal best?
  - 2) How was Smitty resourceful throughout the story?
  - 3) How does Smitty show creativity during the story?
  - 4) Could Smitty have been more responsible? How?

## Fun New York City Facts

- New York City (NYC) is made up of five boroughs: Brooklyn, Queens, Staten Island, the Bronx, and Manhattan.
- NYC was briefly the United States capital from 1789 to 1790. It became the largest U.S. city in 1790 and still holds that record today.
- There are 6,374 miles of streets in NYC and 722 miles of subway track.
- NYC has over 1,700 parks and 94 museums.
- Population: Manhattan 1,537,195 (NYC all five boroughs: 8,008,278)--2000 Census
- NYC is one of the largest and most famous cities in the world. Its nickname is "The Big Apple."
- Area of Manhattan (island): 22.7 square miles
- Legend has it that Peter Minuit, a Dutch trader, paid \$24 worth of beads and other trinkets to purchase the island of "Man-a-hatt-a" from its Native American inhabitants in 1621.
- There are more than 16,400 parking meters in Manhattan.
- Manhattan traffic crawls at an average of 6.2 miles an hour on midtown city streets.

## NYC Landmarks

### Broadway

- Broadway, one of the most famous streets in NYC, starts in lower Manhattan and ends in Albany, NY. It is one of the world's longest streets at 150 miles long.

## Brooklyn Bridge

■ The Brooklyn Bridge was the first steel cable suspension bridge ever built. Every day, approximately 170,000 vehicles cross the bridge.

Construction of the Brooklyn Bridge started in 1869 and took 14 years to complete. On opening day (May 24, 1883), 150,300 people crossed the bridge and 1,800 vehicles paid the 5 cent fee and crossed the bridge.

## Central Park

■ Central Park is the largest park in Manhattan (843 acres). The park has several lakes, theaters, ice rinks, fountains, tennis courts, baseball fields, many playgrounds and is also home to the Central Park Zoo and the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

## Empire State Building

■ Built in only 1 year and 45 days, The Empire State Building is visited by more than 2 million tourists each year. At 1,250 feet in height, it is the tallest building in NYC. Many films and books have featured the Empire State Building, but the film that made it even more famous was the classic King Kong movie produced in 1933.

## Macy's

■ Macy's, the world's largest store, covers 2.1 million square feet of space in the heart of NYC and stocks over 500,000 different items.

## Madison Square

■ Madison Square, located in the Flatiron district, is one of the most historic squares in New York City. The district's 21-story Flatiron Building, constructed in 1902, got its name because of its triangular shape that resembles a flat iron.

## New York Post

■ The *New York Post*, established in 1803 by Alexander Hamilton, is the oldest running newspaper in the United States.

## New York Stock Exchange

■ The New York Stock Exchange began in 1792 when 24 brokers met under a buttonwood tree facing 68 Wall Street. Today it is the world's

largest exchange with an annual trading volume of \$5.5 trillion. The trading area of the New York Stock Exchange is about two-thirds the size of a football field.

## Statue of Liberty

■ The French government presented the Statue of Liberty on July 4, 1885, as a gift to America for celebrating its 100th birthday of Independence. It is made of 300 copper sheets molded and riveted to the steel and iron framework. The statue stands 302 feet tall (with pedestal), the length of the upraised arm with torch is 45 feet, and the index finger is eight feet long. Its crown can accommodate up to 30 people. Copper oxidizing gives the statue its green color.

## Times Square

■ Times Square, named for the Times Building built there by the *New York Times* in 1904, lies between 40th and 53rd Street and 6th and 9th Avenue. In celebration of the new headquarters building, the *New York Times* publisher threw a New Year's Eve party with a fireworks display—starting a New Year's Eve tradition which still continues today.

## World Trade Center

■ The WTC was a complex of seven buildings in Lower Manhattan. World Trade Center Buildings One and Two, nicknamed the Twin Towers, were the tallest buildings in the world when they were constructed. Acrobat Philippe Petit successfully walked a tightrope between the rooftops of the World Trade Center towers in 1974.

■ On September 11, 2001, the World Trade Center was destroyed by terrorist attacks. Before that time, the Twin Towers ranked among the top 10 highest buildings in the world and dominated the skyline of lower Manhattan.

## Yankee Stadium

■ Yankee Stadium opened April 18, 1923 with a home run from Babe Ruth, and became known as "The House That Ruth Built." Located in the Bronx, it now attracts more than three million Yankee fans per year.



*All facts presented in this guide were obtained using the Internet and are believed to be true and accurate.*

## Sources

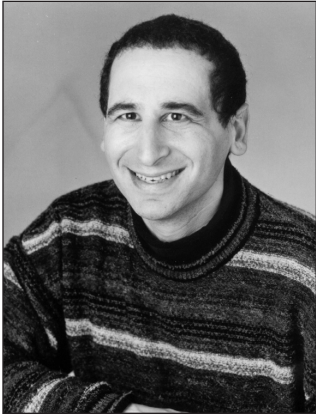
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### Other Children's books featuring NYC landmarks

- *Stuart Little* by E.B. White (1945)
- *James and the Giant Peach* by Roald Dahl (1961)
- *The House on East 88th St* (1962) and *Lyle, Lyle, Crocodile* (1965) by Bernard Waber
- *Eloise* by Hilary Knight (1969)
- *The Cricket in Times Square* by George Selden (1970)
- *From the Mixed-Up Files of Mrs. Basil E. Frankweiler* by E. L. Konigsburg (1977)
- *Flying Over Brooklyn* by Myron Uhlberg (1999)

## Notes:

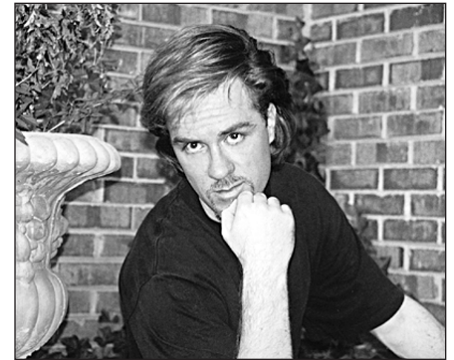
## About the Author



**MIKE REISS** has garnered top awards as a television writer, including four Emmys and a Peabody for his work on *The Simpsons*. His other television credits include *The Tonight Show with Johnny Carson*, *It's Garry Shandling's Show*, *Alf*, and *The Critic*. Reiss is also the author of the best-selling children's book *How Murray Saved Christmas*, as well as *Santa Claustrophobia* and *The Great Show-and-Tell Disaster*. A former president of *The Harvard Lampoon* and editor of *The National Lampoon*, Reiss now lives in Los Angeles.

## About the Illustrator

**MICHAEL AUSTIN**, a graduate of the University of Southern Mississippi, is an art director. He has illustrated *Late for School*, *13 Monsters Who Should Be Avoided*, and *The Horned Toad Prince*. Austin lives with his wife in Georgia. Visit Michael Austin's website at [www.austinillustration.com](http://www.austinillustration.com).



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