



# Tell me a story

## Fresno Art Museum exhibit celebrates children's book illustrations

△ "Tell Me a Story" is an exhibition organized to directly relate to the storybooks read by third-graders throughout the Valley. It includes the original artwork of six illustrators selected for their unique and appealing visual interpretations of stories based on legends, folk tales and social issues. Above is art from "Wolf!" by artist Pascal Biet, which is on display through June 10.

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**A** soulful green cockroach. A studious wolf wearing reading glasses. A boy in Mexico who dreams of new sneakers while working the dry land with his father.

These are some of the images in the "Tell Me a Story" exhibit at the Fresno Art Museum, which celebrates illustrations from children's books. It's artwork that can unlock literacy, learning and appreciation of the visual arts in young minds.

By the time the exhibit closes in June, 7,000 third-graders in Fresno and Sanger will have visited the museum during the current school year to experience "Tell Me a Story." Another batch of third-graders will come in the 2018-19 academic year, when the work of different illustrators will be on display.

"We've had kids say, 'I really like it here. I want to come back,'" says Susan Yost-Filgate, the museum's education director and curator of "Tell Me a Story." Yost-Filgate developed the exhibit — a tie-in with what students are reading in their classes. She picked six stories from the anthology third-graders use in their language arts lessons. Then, she contacted the illustrator of each story and asked them to loan the museum four to six illustrations from the stories.

All agreed, and one even produced new illustrations for the exhibit. The new illustrations came from Pascal Biet, who no longer had the originals. He did the artwork for a story of a howling wolf who can't frighten a barnyard of animals engrossed in their books. It's appropriately entitled "Wolf!"

You can't help but smile as you examine some of the illustrations. Take, for example, Boris Kulikov's "sleeping cat" stretched out on a staircase banister in "The Castle on Hester Street." The feline listens with one

open eye and a Cheshire grin to a grandfather telling exaggerated tales of coming to America.

An illustration for another story is heartbreaking. Colin Bootman shows a librarian in 1951 Alabama pointing to the exit because an African-American child has entered a whites-only library. The story is "Finding Lincoln."

Other illustrators with displayed work are:

- Michael Allen Austin in "Martina the Beautiful Cockroach: A Cuban Folktale" — the story of a wise cucaracha grandmother helping her granddaughter in the ways of love.
- Perky Edgerton in "Bravo, Tavo!" — about the boy who needs new sneakers.
- G. Brian Karas in "Clever Jack Takes the Cake" — a story of a boy who brings an unexpected gift to a princess on her 10th birthday.

"Tell Me a Story" will be on display until June 10, and beginning July 14, "Tell Me Another Story" will open with the work of six other illustrators. The new exhibit — also drawn from the anthology used by third-graders — will run until June 23, 2019.

When students view the illustrations, it's "such a thrill" because they've already read some of the stories, says Carolyn Hodge, a teacher at Birney Elementary School, only a few blocks from the museum. Children also learn about the basic elements of design and do a hands-on art project at the museum. Later, they do art and writing projects in their classrooms.

Hodge says going to the exhibit exposes her students to art, artists and a museum in their neighborhood.

"Tell Me a Story" is the fifth exhibit the Fresno Art Museum has developed under Ensuring the Arts for Any Given Child, a program of the Kennedy Center in Washington, D.C. [CV](http://centralvalley.com)