

Paper Plate Education

"Serving the Universe on a Paper Plate"

Bad Moons Rising

A random sampling of children's books at a small local library reveals frequent errors in how moon phases are depicted. Below are excerpts from just a few of the books and brief descriptions of the stories. What do you see wrong with these pictures? (Click on the thumbnail image to enlarge.)

Compare your observations with [comments](#) about shortcomings and errors in the illustrations. With younger learners for whom this is too advanced, use the images to begin or to support dialog about the moon. Assume these scenes occur in northern mid-latitudes. See [More Faux Phases I](#) and [More Faux Phases II](#) for additional book excerpts.



Meanwhile, illustrator Clement Hurd keeps a keen eye toward astronomy and depicts the moons accurately in the classic children's book *Goodnight Moon* by Margaret Wise Brown, as shown at the [Good\(night\) Moons Rising](#) web page.

Make a [Moon Finder](#) to show the position of the moon for any given phase and time. The [poster text](#) accompanying these images is reprinted from the *GLPA Proceedings*, 1997, p. 161.

	Title Author/Illustrator Publisher	The Story	What's wrong with this picture?
	<i>So That's How the Moon Changes Shape</i> Allan Fowler Children's Press, Inc.	Different moon shapes are labeled.	
	Title: Author: Illustrator: [See correction below.]	Cranes arrive to lift Percy the train out of the water when "it was nearly dark" and a crescent moon is visible.	
	<i>Wake Up and Good Night</i>	Shortly after "the	



Author: Charlotte Zolotow
Illustrator: Leonard Weisgard

Harper & Row

golden sun is down," a crescent moon is visible above the buildings.



My sun is on the left & soon
The hills are gone and all go down
A tiny shining sunset has
Another heaven in its place.
Just wait! The sun will set and give
And so to watch the sunset's light
The sun sets the hills are gone.
And, when, then.

Half a Moon and One Whole Star

Author: Crescent Dragonwagon
Illustrator: Jerry Pinkney

Aladdin Books
(Macmillan Publishing Co.)

The morning sun is rising while, above it, "half a moon...falls and fades and will go soon."

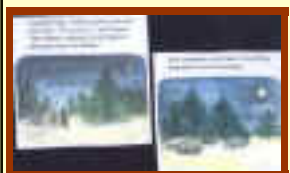


So That's How the Moon Changes Shape

Allan Fowler

Children's Press, Inc.

A diagram depicts the phases of the moon that result from the moon's "traveling in a big circle around the Earth."



Norton's Nighttime

Author/Illustrator:
Jane Breskin Zalben

William Collins Publishers, Inc.

Three animals walk through the woods at night, with the moon visible throughout the hike.



The Midnight Ride of Thomas the Tank Engine

Author: Rev. W. Awdry
Illustrator: Owain Bell

Random House, Inc.

The book cover shows a full moon low on the horizon while a watch indicates the time is midnight. Throughout the book, the train makes a midnight run while a crescent moon is visible in the Christmas-time sky.

Around the Clock with Harriet

Author/Illustrator:
Betsy and Giulio Maestro

Harriet is going to bed at 8:00 p.m. with a crescent moon visible out



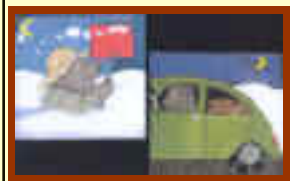
Crown Publishers, Inc.

the window.



Not known.
(Please [contact us](#) if you know this information.)

A silhouetted family views a crescent moon, presumably in the late evening. The text states, "Soon...the new moon will rise."



Edward's Overwhelming Overnight

Author/Illustrator:
Rosemary Wells

Dial Books for Young Readers
(Penguin Books)

The mother bear is shoveling snow with a crescent moon visible. Later that night the father bear is driving behind a snowplow with a crescent moon visible.



The Going to Bed Book

Author/Illustrator:
Sandra Boynton

Simon & Schuster

The animals on a ship are preparing to go to bed, with a crescent moon "on the rise."



Pyxx

Author/Illustrator:
Robert Wahl

Price Stern Sloan

After ushering some children to bed, a boy speaks to the moon "as the moon rose over Tangled Hill."



P.J. Funnybunny Camps Out

Author: Marilyn Sadler
Illustrator: Roger Bollen

Random House, Inc.

Several animals are in a tent "soon [after] it got dark" with a crescent moon seen outside.



Nine O'Clock Lullaby

Author: Marilyn Singer
Illustrator: Frane Lessac

Harper Collins

A scene from nine o'clock in the evening in New York is compared with concurrent scenes in other parts of the world. The moon is visible in several scenes.

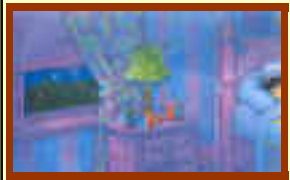


It's Time to Go to Bed

Author: Joyce Segal
Illustrator: Robin Eaton

Doubleday & Company, Inc.

Baby polar bears prepare to go to bed with a crescent moon visible.



Goodnight, Gorilla

Author/Illustrator:
Peggy Rathman

G.P. Putnam's Sons

A woman goes to bed with a crescent moon visible out the window while the clock is at 10:35 p.m.



Why Does the Moon Change Its Shape?

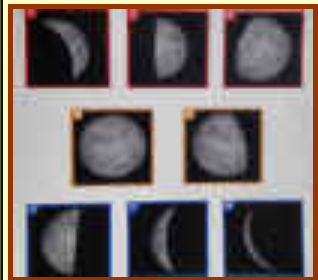
Author: Patricia Murphy

The Rosen Publishing Group, Inc.

Two images are described as the near side and far side of the moon.

A series of images depict the phases of the moon.

Image accompanies description of a lunar eclipse.



Correction: The book showing Percy the train being lifted out of the water was erroneously attributed. We apologize to Owain Bell, who was *not* the illustrator of that book, as we had suggested. We invite you to [contact us](#) if you can correct the information on title, author, illustrator, and publisher for that book. 7-8-03

Note: The images above are the copyrighted property of the respective creators, as cited. The images are reproduced here for educational purposes under the "Fair Use" premise of U.S. copyright law.

Please send examples both of bad moons and of good moons rising, preferably with a digital image and complete information for each column in the table above. Thank you.

Contributed by [Chuck Bueter](#).

GLPA Proceedings, 1997, p. 161.

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