The awkward, ugly duckling suffers ridicule and rejection until he emerges triumphant as a beautiful swan—the most beautiful swan of all! Preschoolers will love this beloved fairy tale that teaches self-esteem.

**Meet the Writer**

**Vicky Shiotsu**

Like the brave little duck in her favorite fairy tale, *The Ugly Duckling*, children’s author, Vicky Shiotsu, followed her dreams, leaving her native British Columbia for Los Angeles. Vicky recalls biking to the library each week as a child to pick up a new volume of fairy tales. Now enjoying a fulfilling writing career, she loved penning these new takes on her old favorites.

**Meet the Illustrator**

**Paul Eric Roca**

Paul Eric Roca has illustrated *The Ugly Duckling* many times, but he doesn’t mind. He likes that the tale teaches not to judge by appearances. That doesn’t mean he can’t appreciate a magical transformation, though—the garden in his home in the Philippines feels like a jungle one moment and a sanctuary full of magical fireflies the next.
**The Gift of Reading Aloud**

Reading aloud to your child is fun for you both. Plus, it’s the best way to encourage a lifelong love of reading and promote the skills necessary for school success. Here are some tips.

**Begin at the Beginning**

- Set aside a special time to read aloud each day and stick to it.

- Choose a comfortable spot: the couch, your child’s bed, a picnic blanket under a shady tree, a “reading hideaway” created by throwing a sheet over the table, etc.

- Vary the reading materials: different genres (fairy tales, fiction, non-fiction, poetry), children’s magazines on topics from nature to sports, joke and riddle books, newspapers and comics, etc.

- Invite your child to help plan your reading routine.

**Experience the Fun**

- Read slowly and with expression. Use different character voices.

- Talk about the pictures.

- Stop to answer your child’s questions. Discuss any unfamiliar vocabulary.

- Encourage your child to chime in on repetitive phrases, complete rhymes, and predict what might happen next.

- Follow the words with your finger to reinforce important reading basics, such as text is read from left to right.

**A Family Library**

Your neighborhood library is a treasure! But a home library demonstrates the value of books to your family. Used book stores, garage sales, and flea markets are all great places to pick up inexpensive books that your family will treasure for years!

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**Favorite Fairy Tale Activities**

Here are some hands-on activities to spark enthusiasm for learning and get your child excited about reading.

**“Me Recipe”**

Talk with your child about how the duckling felt when all the other animals were teasing him. Ask your child if he or she has ever been teased and how they felt. Tell your child that one way people deal with teasing is to have confidence that they are special in various ways. Create a blank body outline of your child. Inside, have your child feature all of the unique ingredients that make him or her special by drawing pictures or symbols to represent each quality. Then, have your child add personal details to the body outline.

**Handprint Swan**

Paint your child’s palm, fingers, and thumb of one hand with white paint. Then, with your child’s fingers held together and the thumb spread away from the rest of the fingers, have your child press his or her hand on a piece of blue construction paper. When the prints are dry, provide orange and black markers for your child to add eyes, a beak, and feet. **Variation:** For a mess-free version, eliminate the paint and trace your child’s hand in the same position on a piece of white construction paper instead. Then, have him or her glue it on a piece of blue construction paper and decorate.

**Duck, Duck, Swan**

Play this variation of the popular playground game, “Duck, Duck, Goose,” with a small group of children. Have children sit in a circle. One child walks around the outside of the circle gently touching each child on the head saying, “Duck, duck…” When the child comes to someone he or she wants to chase him or her, the child touches that child’s head and says, “Swan.” The “swan” gets up and chases the other child around the circle back to his or her spot. The second child begins the game again.
One day, a mother duck sat on her nest near a pond. Crack! The eggs began to hatch.

As each yellow duckling came out, the mother duck quacked with happiness.
Soon, only one egg was left. It was much bigger than the others. When it finally hatched, a large gray duckling came out.

“He’s so ugly!” said the other ducklings. “Hush!” said their mother. But she was worried.
The days passed. No one ever played with the poor, ugly duckling. His brothers and sisters laughed at him. The other animals made fun of him too.
Every night, the ugly duckling cried himself to sleep. He decided to run away. “Maybe I can find a family that will love me,” he thought.
The ugly duckling left the pond. He came to a lake and saw two wild birds.

“Do you know any ducklings that look like me?” he asked.

“No,” said the birds. “You are the ugliest duckling we have ever seen.”

Then, the birds flew away.
The ugly duckling set out again. He came to the home of an old woman. When she saw him, she said, “What luck! Now I will have fresh duck eggs every day.”

But when she found that the duckling could not lay eggs, she sent him away.
The ugly duckling went back to the lake. He lived by himself for many days.

One evening, he saw some birds flying. They were white with long, lovely necks. “If only I could be beautiful like them,” he sighed.
Winter came and the days grew colder. Snow fell and the lake turned to ice.

The ugly duckling almost froze to death. Luckily, a kind farmer found him and took him home.
The weeks went by, and finally spring arrived. The duckling had grown so large that the farmer set him free on the lake.
The ugly duckling saw some birds on the lake. They were the same beautiful birds he had seen before.

Suddenly, the birds started to glide toward him.
Shyly, the ugly duckling lowered his head. He saw himself in the water. He looked just like the beautiful birds!

At that moment, some children came. “Look at the new swan!” they cried. “He is the most beautiful one of all!”
The young swan was filled with joy. He was not an ugly duckling at all!

One of the other swans said, “Come join us!” Then, the four swans swam away and lived together happily ever after.