

Story Monsters Ink

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The Literary Magazine for Teachers, Librarians, and Parents



ONE TO READ:

DR. ROOCHI ARORA

HEATHER FAWCETT

TAKES READERS ON
A NEW ADVENTURE

JOEY BENUN

ENCOURAGES KIDS
TO THINK BIG

SUSAN TRAUGH

INSPIRES READERS TO
TURN THEIR STRUGGLES
INTO SUCCESS

HEATHER BRADLEY

SHARES HER LOVE OF READING
THROUGH HER WRITING

A FEW WORDS WITH

CAROLE P. ROMAN

DEEDEE CUMMINGS

BOOK LOVERS
SUPPORT LITERACY

**MONSTERS
AT THE MOVIES**

NIMONA

JUDY NEWMAN

BIG SISTERHOOD!

Q&A

SARA SHEPARD

THE BOOK BUG

LAUREN CASTILLO

**CONRAD'S
CLASSROOM**

IT'S ALL ABOUT
THE BUMBLEBEES

LIV ON LIFE

SUPPORT YOUR
LIBRARY





MEET THE TEAM

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One to Read:

Dr. Roochi Arora

by Marcella Comerford

Dr. Roochi Arora saw a distinct need while observing her oncology patients and took on the incredibly important task of helping parents and guardians talk to their children about a cancer diagnosis. Arora said the help was undeniably needed, but just not available to families struggling with broaching this topic in a way that was the least scary and intimidating for everyone. Arora said she was finding parents weren't communicating at all about their illness, because they just didn't know how, and didn't have the tools.

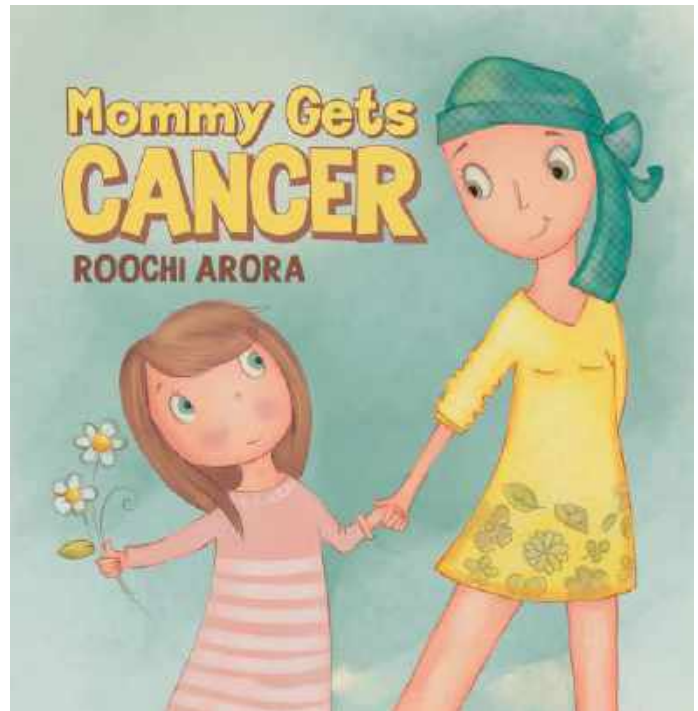


“Throughout my training to become a medical oncologist, I noticed I was meeting a lot of very young patients with young families,” Arora explains. “I was so surprised to learn how many patients try to hide their diagnosis of cancer from their children, often because they don’t know how to start the conversation.”

After this startling observation, Arora came to realize that “We get a lot of formal teaching around talking to people about chemotherapy, or breaking bad news to patients, but who teaches a young mom or dad how to tell their kids they have cancer, and that they are losing their hair and feeling tired because of the treatment they are undergoing?”

Arora says she had the idea to write this book for a long time but was struggling with finding the time to write it. “Finally, on December 31, 2020, after a lot of encouragement from my husband, I sat down and wrote and wrote and wrote. And a few hours later, the story was done, and *Mommy Gets Cancer* took off from there.”

She says the writing process was actually quite smooth. “Hands down, the hardest part was getting started. Once I actually sat down and committed to writing the book, I actually finished the entire story in about two hours. I’ve always loved poetry and Dr. Seuss, so getting to write in rhyme was so much fun for me.”



The resources on how to engage in conversations about cancer with younger children, as Arora points out, have been severely lacking. For such a hard topic, books like Arora’s are



a blessing, providing a friendly, easy, and supportive way to make conversations about having cancer and what that might be like or what challenges may arise for families somewhat less daunting and offers language families can integrate when talking about their diagnosis.

Arora says the feedback for the book has been overwhelmingly positive and encouraging. “I have been so fortunate to receive so much wonderful feedback from my colleagues, patients, and friends and family. Many of them have mentioned how grateful they are to have a resource for young moms and dads struggling with this issue.”

In particular, Arora recalls one interaction that really made a lasting impression after publishing the book. “I remember meeting a young woman in her early 40s while I was working in the hospital one summer, and she unfortunately had just been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. As I got to know her, I found out she had a young son. Among everything she was overwhelmed with, one of her major stressors was how she was going to talk to her little boy about what she has and what is to come.”

“As soon as I finished speaking to her and walked out of her hospital room, I grabbed my phone, pulled up my book on Amazon and ordered a copy for her. When I gave it to her the next day, she

gave me a great big hug with tears in her eyes. I get chills every time I recount that story because it was such a special moment that reminded me why I wrote this book in the first place.”

Arora takes a copy of the book with her everywhere she goes. “I have many copies of my book on hand and whenever I meet a patient with young children, or even grandchildren, nieces, or nephews they are close with, I love to give them a copy.” To be able to hand someone who is under the strain of this burden exactly the information they need to cope and find solutions is somewhat of a miracle, or at least a truly remarkable gift to be able to hand out.

Arora’s job as an oncologist put her in a unique research position to observe what supports were lacking in the process families with children had to go through. There is much to the job that isn’t seen, Arora says, and involves many aspects to juggle in addition to emotional support. “As a community medical oncologist, I see patients with all different types of cancer including breast cancer, lung cancer, colon cancer, and prostate cancer, just to name a few.”

The job requires a big heart, and Arora says she loves it. “My favorite part about being an oncologist is getting to be part of a life-changing journey for so many people. A diagnosis of cancer is scary for everyone, but I get to walk that road with my patients. As





“My favorite part about being an oncologist is getting to be part of a life-changing journey for so many people. A diagnosis of cancer is scary for everyone, but I get to walk that road with my patients. As much as I do my best to help them, I am also so grateful to learn so much from my patients every single day.”

much as I do my best to help them, I am also so grateful to learn so much from my patients every single day.”

Arora says when people hear the word “cancer” as a diagnosis, they automatically assume the worst. “Depending on the circumstances, outcomes are better than people expect and one of the best parts of my job is that I am able to offer people a lot of hope for the future.” With this hopeful and down-to-earth perspective, it is no wonder Arora was able to write a book that would provide comfort for families who didn’t know where to turn.

But Arora says her patients give her just as much as she gives them, and they keep her motivated. “Witnessing how much strength and courage my patients show during their journeys dealing with cancer is a huge inspiration for me to be the best doctor for them that I can. Also, I recently had a baby and so every

day, I am inspired to be a better person for him. I love showing him the book his mommy wrote.”

Arora said to get the book off the ground after initially writing it, self-publishing was the answer. “I used the self-publishing company, Tellwell. The process was quite straight-forward as my project manager guided me along every step of the way. There were definitely hiccups and times when the process slowed down because some steps required a lot of work. For example, the step where I had to describe every picture in exquisite detail, and the words to go with each image took me a very long time to complete.”

Even superstar author oncologists need a break sometimes, and Arora reveals that “I really appreciate some time to recharge my own batteries by working out, going in the sauna, and getting my nails done. My favorite way to instantly relax is to cuddle with my dog.



She is the most snuggly and sweet little fur baby. I also love to blow off stress with a Peloton spin class or lifting some heavy weights.”

Arora also enjoys travel and cherishes family time, too. “I love to travel and experience new cultures and sights. Now that I have a baby, I love to spend quality time at home with my family. We enjoy family swim time, hikes with our dog, and playdates with friends.”

Will there be any more books coming out from this groundbreaking new author? “Maybe! I would love to start a series around educating children. I am just still pondering what direction I would like to take.” With a little encouragement and another couple of hours, we are confident that Arora will speed ahead in whatever topic she thinks needs a little more humanity and help with. ●

Heather Fawcett

Takes Readers on a New Adventure

by Marcella Comerford

Heather Fawcett's writing has spanned the genres of adult, young adult, and children's literature, and it is so easy to get lost in time reading them. The hours pass and before you know it, dawn is chirping at your bedroom window as you turn ... the last ... page.

Still, Fawcett really is as humble as can be when speaking about herself and her storytelling chops. Talking about how she got into a career as an author, Fawcett remarks, "I've just always loved books and reading. I wrote several books, and attempts at books, before my first novel was published in 2017."

So it didn't just happen overnight, but Fawcett says, "In retrospect, I'm glad none of those early books were published because they gave me a chance to improve and figure out what kinds of stories I wanted to tell. I studied Archaeology and English Literature at university, so I was spending my time analyzing

stories and learning about worlds and ancient cultures that no longer exist, which together is a pretty useful foundation for a fantasy author." Really, what could be a better combination than history and the mysteries it provides? It's great fodder for imagination and new worlds.

Fawcett's latest work has a sort of secret responsibility built into a thrilling story. In *The Islands of Elsewhere*, readers are approached to consider a pretty sensitive subject: a family member suffering from dementia and how that impacts young people especially. It is undoubtedly taxing and emotional for all involved, however much

of the dialogue about dementia's effects on family leave out the youngest members. Impacting youth more than maybe society has noticed, Fawcett, however, did not overlook it.

Fawcett says that while the subject isn't as present as it could be in literature for young adults and it is not exceedingly common to find such a topic tackled in a YA book, things are looking up. "I would say it's been getting more attention recently. Books like *Merci Suárez Changes Gears* by Meg Medina and *Just Like Jackie* by Lindsey Stoddard are great examples. I love writing intergenerational stories, and it's a subject that's important to address in that context, because it's something quite a few kids are grappling with."

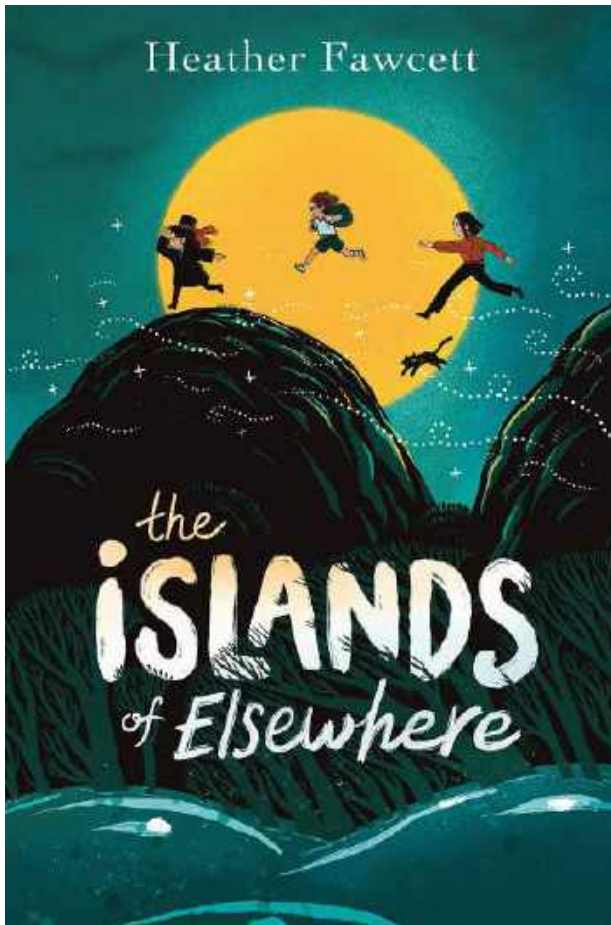
Along with being able to provide some common ground for families and youth struggling with the effects of dementia in loved ones, Fawcett said she had a pretty good time writing the story. Talking about the characters like family, Fawcett says, "I loved writing Bee's point of view, which forms the bulk of the novel, but I particularly enjoyed switching perspectives for a couple chapters and seeing Plum and Hattie's thoughts, too, which gave some insight into how the sisters see each other. Plum is a very imaginative little girl who wears Halloween costumes year-round, and her chapter was just a lot of fun to write."

Is it always this much fun, one wonders? It does seem so, as Fawcett appears to fall in love with the characters the same way the readers do, and it is undeniable that getting to choose those



superbly imaginative names for her characters must be creatively invigorating. Fawcett also has a knack for finding names that really fit just right, and says, "I wish I could say there was a method to it but they just come to me. I particularly like the sisters' names in *The Islands of Elsewhere*. Hattie, Bee (or Phoebe), and Plum. When





I know I've found the right name for a character, I just know it. If a character's name isn't right, it feels a bit like trying to walk with a pebble in your shoe. You know something's off." This is awesome advice for most things in life—if it's a little off, it will not feel right until resolved.

Fawcett freely shares her wisdom as a now-seasoned author, passing down a generous handful of tips and knowledge to aspiring and new writers. "I genuinely believe that the most important thing you need to do if you want to be an author is to read a lot. I think most writers think they know this, but as someone who also knows how important reading is, I often find myself not prioritizing it, and telling myself that I need to spend the bulk of my time writing. But the best way to improve your craft is by reading, and it's also how you figure out what kind of stories appeal to you the most. Those are the ones you should be writing. I think also exposing yourself to different forms of art is important. I've been trying recently to watch more foreign films, for instance, and whenever I'm in a new city I make a point of visiting at least one art gallery. Being a good storyteller is often about creating opportunities for inspiration to strike."

How does Fawcett keep coming up with these amazing stories? In her typical relatable style, she says, "The truth is, the answer to this question is often very boring. I've come up with ideas while watching documentaries, staring into space, or reading



books. I will say that a lot of my ideas come from my personal interests and hobbies. My first novel, *Even the Darkest Stars*, was partly inspired by an interest in rock climbing. So that can be another piece of advice for aspiring authors: Be interested in lots of things, try out different hobbies. You never know where a good idea might come from.”

The writing environment that best helps these novels come to life for Fawcett sounds like somewhere quite enjoyable to spend an afternoon adrift in the thrall of writing. “My favorite place to write is a coffee shop because I’m always at my most productive

“I think when a parent writes to me to say that one of my books inspired their child to get back into reading, or to read more, that always makes my day.”

there. Also, they have cookies. I always say that I like being the stereotypical writer, scribbling away at a coffee shop. The best coffee shops are roomy enough that you don’t feel bad taking up a table for a couple of hours, have good natural light, and are bustling enough to create interesting distractions.” Who doesn’t like cookies, and really, let’s be honest, we all love the distraction of some good people watching.

As the author of a number of books spanning age ranges, Fawcett has come into contact with her share of fan feedback, and shares one of the best things about being able to reach young readers especially. Fawcett says, “I think when a parent writes to me to say that one of my books inspired their child to get back into reading, or to read more, that always makes my day.”

It is unimaginable that Fawcett doesn’t have a couple of tricks up her sleeve already in the works and did reveal several more upcoming publications. “I have two more books out next year. The first is the next book in my adult series, *Emily Wilde*, and the second, out next summer, is another contemporary middle grade novel. I love them both and I’m really looking forward to sharing them with everyone.” And we are looking forward to reading them to see where she takes us next.

For more information about Heather Fawcett and her books, visit heatherfawcettbooks.com. ●



Joey Benun

Encourages Kids to Think Big

by Marcella Comerford

Joey Benun found himself in a conversation one day with his niece and nephews, puzzling over the succession of really big numbers—think, more than trillions—and found his little relatives getting so excited over the idea of figuring out and understanding big numbers that he started thinking about them a bunch, too. Benun saw what he describes as “non-math loving kids” going gaga over big numbers and began doing some research.

Benun came up with the character of Pebbles to lead the way through his ideas and lessons, and before long, *Pebbles and the Biggest Number* was on its way to becoming a real-live children’s book and Benun’s goals of explaining math and engaging kids became a reality. As a first-time author, Benun was also the recipient of the Purple Dragonfly Book Awards Grand Prize, which is kind of a really big deal.

It’s easy to see why *Pebbles and the Biggest Number* earned the grand prize—Benun has some big takeaways he wants to see kids gain from his book, and clearly did a lot of thinking, research,

learning, and investing thought and care into the effect his book would have on children.

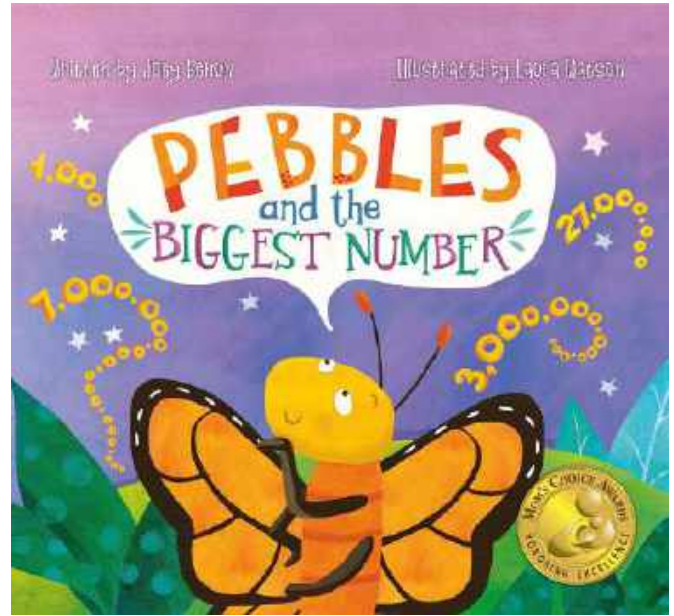
One of those main messages, for Benun, was to give kids the go-ahead to “Think big.” Benun says, “As a child, I was puzzled by the fact that many grown adults were unaware of the names of numbers beyond a trillion. The concept of using prefixes to understand big numbers, like ‘bi’ for 2 and ‘tri’ for 3, and ‘quad’ for 4 to form ‘quadrillion,’ seemed like basic knowledge that many adults overlooked. Thinking big can be seen as stretching one’s imagination just a little bit further, like bridging the gap between



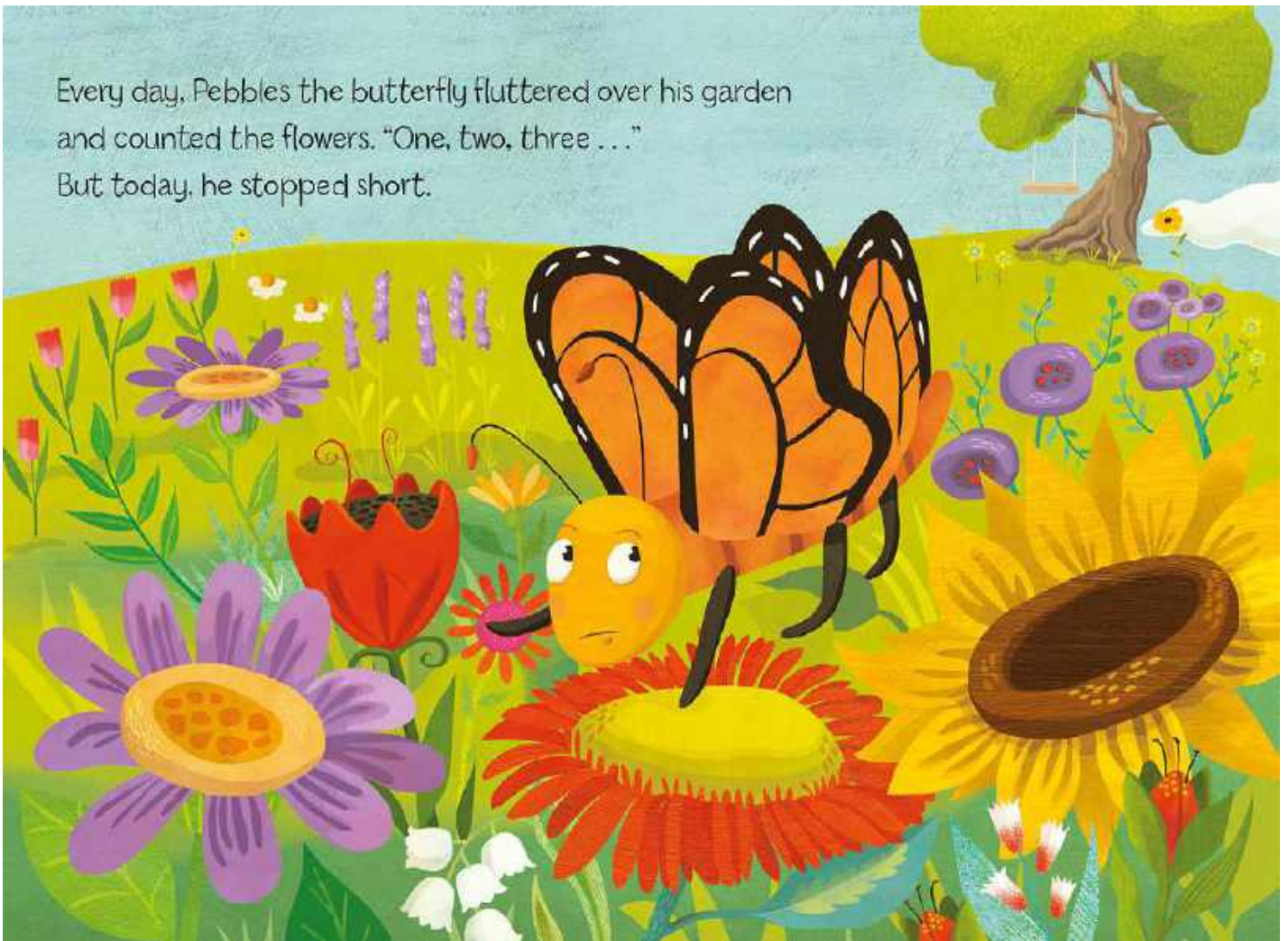
trillion and quadrillion. Once that gap is uncovered, it opens the door to boundless discovery.” How cool of a concept is that? One that is applicable to adults as well, and really a fun thing to think about.

“And who better to stretch their imaginations than children?” Benun continues. “It’s what they love to do—thinking in terms of the biggest, the strongest, the tallest. If we can train kids from a young age to think big and expand their imaginations, they will grow accustomed to doing so as adults. These skills can then be utilized to teach, build, create innovative things, and ultimately contribute to improving society as a whole.”

Big-picture thinking is Benun’s specialty, and if he can get kids to think big, he can effectively help make the world a better place, too. All within an entertaining, colorful, and fast-paced book—which remarkably appeals to not only little kids, but their big brothers and sisters, too. Everyone in the family can get



Every day, Pebbles the butterfly fluttered over his garden and counted the flowers. “One, two, three . . .”
But today, he stopped short.

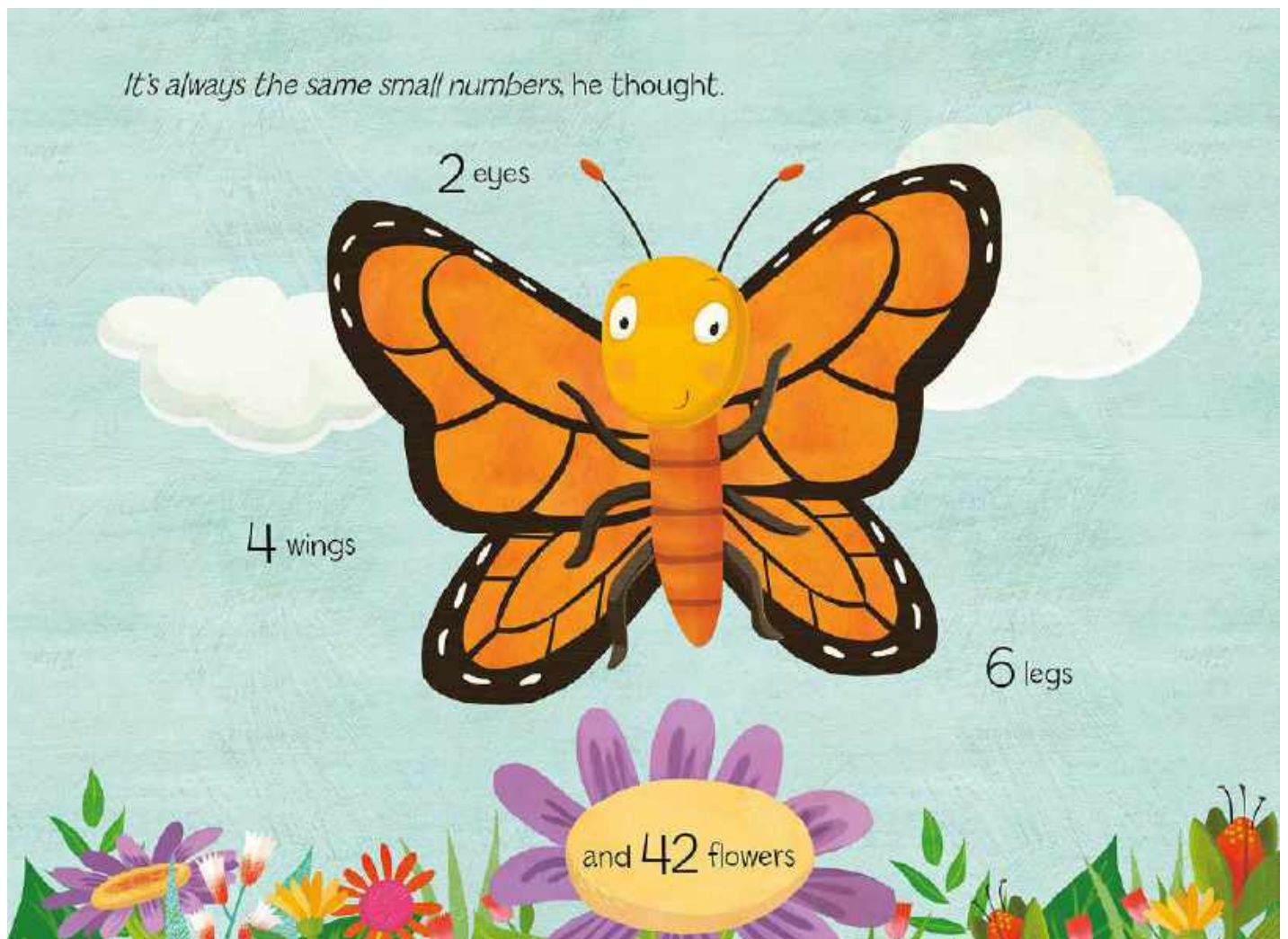


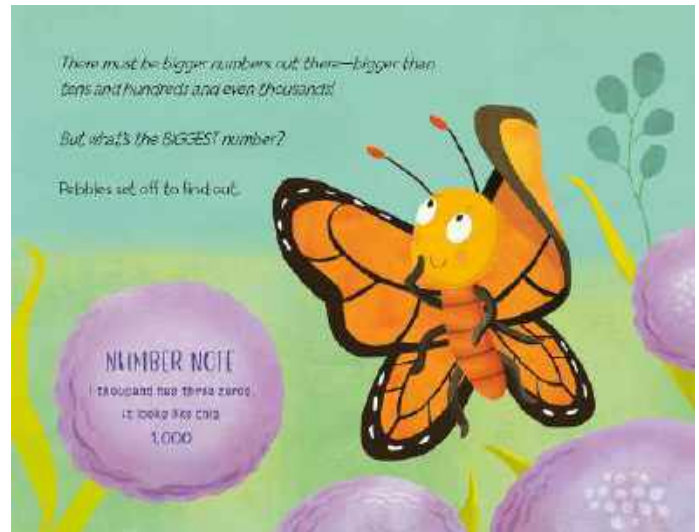
something out of sharing this book, and the conversations and questions sparked from it have an ageless status.

It should be noted that Benun actually started quite early in the publishing game, having completed a series of comic books by age nine—a cosmic glimpse of what was to come. Comic books still hold a place in his heart, but time manages to keep that love to a fond memory. “I still do love comics, although my busy schedule doesn’t allow me as much leisure time to enjoy them as I used to. *Diary of a Wimpy Kid* and *Captain Underpants* were some of my childhood favorites. I loved the carefree feeling they brought while reading, and I appreciated how they opened my mind in a fun and engaging way. I’d really love to get back into comic writing again. Many readers have urged me to bring back *The Ketchup Monster*, it’s something I’ve been considering.” One can only hope he will revive his comic obsession. It certainly would be interesting to see what Benun would do with it now!

Benun had to learn a few things of his own before finding out what was important to teach the next generations. He says some of the most important things that have shaped his character and who he is in the world is being able to “Believe in myself and ignore the naysayers. The first two people I approached about writing a children’s book wrote me off as foolish and naive. I won’t sell any copies. There are billions of books out there. Why waste my time? My response was ‘I don’t need you to believe in me. I believe in myself. And that’s all that I need.’ I felt powerful at that moment, that I could do anything I put my mind to. This was a turning point for me. I started to dive headfirst into exciting ideas, rather than sitting back and letting others discourage me.”

He says he also learned the art of writing for kids. “It is easy to ramble on when writing for adults, but when writing for kids, every word carries a lot of weight. My limit was 1,000 words, excluding the fun facts, so there were times where I literally spent hours discussing with my editors the perfect word or words to be





“If we can train kids from a young age to think big and expand their imaginations, they will grow accustomed to doing so as adults. These skills can then be utilized to teach, build, create innovative things, and ultimately contribute to improving society as a whole.”

used. One of my best ‘aha’ moments was when my editor and I coined the phrase ‘dazzling display,’ capturing the magical moment when Pebbles and Ms. Eagle gaze at the stars.”

Benun seems to have no end of teachable moments in life, and that is because he takes every chance he gets to learn, and enthusiasm like that is palpable in a book. For new and aspiring writers, Benun offers, “Before you inspire others, you need to inspire yourself. Your writing will naturally resonate with others then, making it all the more impactful and meaningful.”

It’s no surprise that reading was a big part of his own life growing up, judging by his impeccable memory of his favorite book as a kid, *The Series of Unfortunate Events*. “I was intrigued by the diabolical plots of Count Olaf and the clever ways the lovable Baudelaires managed to escape each and every situation. One memorable moment was when two-year-old Sunny Baudelaire climbed out of the Ersatz Elevator with her razor-sharp teeth, retrieving the rope to save her siblings below.”

But as an adult, Benun leans toward—and this may be no surprise, given the intensity with which he pursues goals, learning, and ideas—motivational books. “I love a good,

motivational book that spurs me to action. I recently read *Originals* by Adam Grant and really enjoyed it. One highlight for me was how the book debunked the criticism I often received from my school teachers while growing up. I tend to procrastinate when it comes to creative tasks, and Adam notes that there is a positive side to this practice—creativity often peaks under pressure. This realization allowed me to embrace my creative process with a new perspective.”

Benun does relax though, and he can prove it. “The most enjoyable part of my day has got to be sitting at my work desk, sipping a piping cup of freshly brewed La Colombe coffee while cracking jokes with my coworkers.”

A glimpse into this author’s personal life shows a love for and importance placed on family, faith, and tradition. Benun says, “As for my meaningful times, it’s definitely Saturdays, or as we Jews call it “Shabbat.” It’s a time where I gather with my extended family for an elaborate meal prepared by my mother or grandmother and catch up with everyone. We also disconnect from technology, which means I get to take a much-needed break from my three jobs, allowing me to relax and recharge.”

Pebbles and the Biggest Number has had an enormous impact on Benun, who says he is so grateful for the 500 reviews and counting that the book has received. “Thankfully, it’s been overwhelmingly positive. I’ve heard from a few parents that after reading this book to their kids, their kids started asking out-of-the-box questions, applying the ‘Think Big’ philosophy to the world around them. I’ve also heard some kids say, ‘I want to be an author too!’ It brings me great joy to see this making a mark on others. It’s hard to express in words.”

Benun says he found out about winning the Purple Dragonfly Grand Prize when a friend texted him with a big congratulations on winning. “I scrambled to see what she was talking about. I remember smiling really big and walking around work not being able to contain myself. It felt awesome.”

As for what’s next? Will there be more books in the future to look forward to? For Benun, it’s a resounding “Yes! Hard to say (what it will be.) My imagination is always running wild so it can literally be anything up next. But most likely it will be a sequel, with *Pebbles* exploring a familiar topic while uncovering novel information, much like in the first book.” Benun’s addition to the children’s literary world will continue to have far-reaching benefits, and seeing what he’s going to get us all thinking about next is sure to be a treat.

For more information about Joey Benun and his books, visit biggestnumber.com.

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Susan Traugh

Inspires Readers to Turn Their Struggles into Success

by Lindsey Giardino

Award-winning author Susan Traugh has been writing for more than 30 years. In fact, it's something she started doing even before kindergarten. "I think maybe my soul knew my destiny from the moment I snuck through the gap in the gate in my kindergarten play yard to go play with the kids in the school's special day class. Throughout my elementary years, those kids were 'my tribe.' Life, as a child, was supported and loving. I was an overachiever who tried everything—writing, music, dance—I created my own social work club in high school to help local at-risk kids. It gave me a strong, supportive foundation to face the struggles ahead."

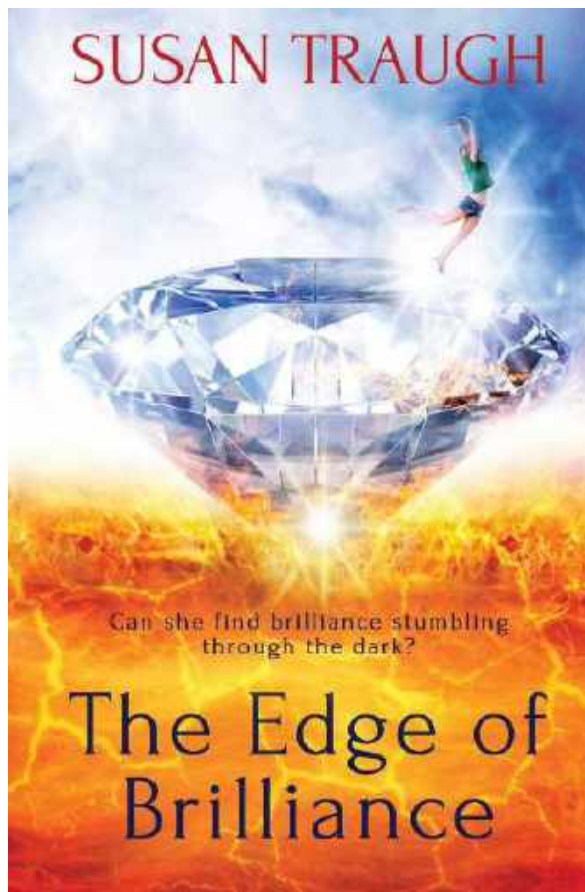
When Traugh's son was a year old, he fell from a second story, fractured his skull, and became traumatically brain injured. "The prognosis was bleak," Susan recalls. "They said he would never walk, talk, or function normally again. Someone even suggested that I might consider institutionalizing him."

So, Traugh quit her job to beat the diagnosis and devote her time to giving her son the best opportunities in life. Later, Traugh's oldest daughter was diagnosed with a myriad of physical and mental disabilities, including autism. Then her second daughter was diagnosed with a severe mental illness.

"I continued to stay home to help my children reach their highest potential," she said. "I began to freelance so that I could write beside their hospital beds or when they were asleep."

Along the way, Traugh volunteered in each of their special education classes, where she saw the dearth of curricula available to kids with special needs. It inspired her to begin writing for their teachers.

"When my son was in high school, his teacher asked me to find some transition curriculum for his class, as she could not find



any,” Traugh explained. “We discovered that, while transition was federally mandated for all students in special education, there just wasn’t much available for high functioning mild/moderate programs. So, I wrote the first book, *Transition 2 Life*, in 2009.”

Susan rewrote the entire book this year incorporating both the California and Texas transition guides and creating a dynamic new book to teach “adulting.” It includes units specific to students with disabilities such as how to read their IEP (Individual Education Plan), how to self-advocate, find services, and open ABLE accounts. But it also has the adulting skills all young people need such as how to write a résumé, interview, make good decisions, set goals, open a checking account, keep a budget, find a physician, or take care of themselves when they’re sick.

Today, Traugh has written over 100 books in *The Daily Living Skills* series, which are for students who need more in-depth instruction and covers cooking skills, housekeeping, record keeping, transportation, getting a paycheck, buying insurance, and time

management, to name a few. The series also covers social skills, including manners, making conversation, becoming likable, and safe dating.

Now, Traugh is venturing into the world of young adult fiction. Her latest novel, *The Edge of Brilliance*, is about a teen girl who struggles with bipolar disorder. It uses the hero’s journey motif and follows Amy as she battles to accept the challenge of her disorder and find the hero within herself. The manuscript was a finalist in the San Diego Book Awards.

“Despite the awards, the best honor I ever received for this book was when a young woman wrote to me from a residential psychiatric facility to say that she’d been fighting treatment and just wanted to kill herself, but when she read the book, she decided that if Amy could do it, she could, too,” Traugh said.

When Traugh isn’t writing for work, she’s writing for pleasure. She’s had scores of stories published in magazines and books



across the country including over a dozen for different *Chicken Soup for the Soul* books.

As Traugh reflects back on her own story, she notes it follows an overall theme. “I have always been drawn to the humanity and intensity of life that surrounds people who struggle,” she said. “My own kids have myriad of disabilities. Their successes look different than society’s definition. Yet I see that their accomplishments—and those of their peers—may be some of the most remarkable achievements that people can make. I am constantly in awe them.”

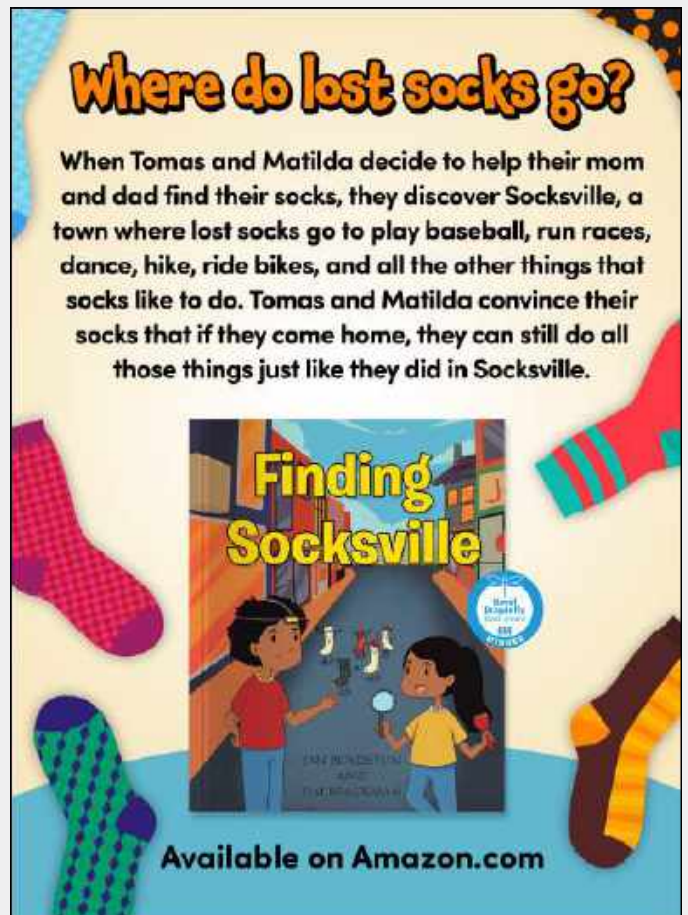
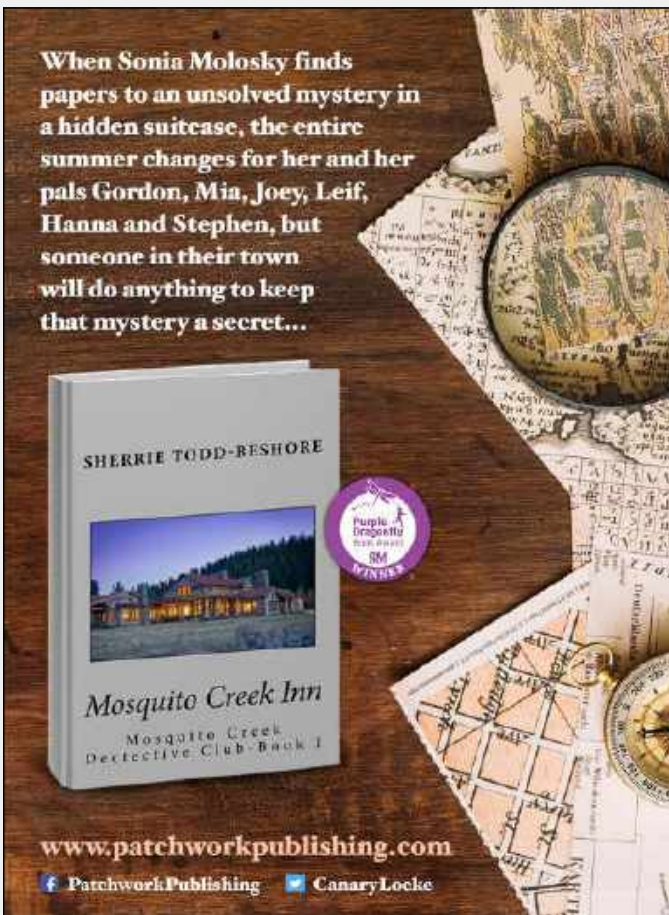
Traugh added that at one time or another, she was told with each of her children that their case was “hopeless”—that her son would never graduate, her oldest daughter would never live to be an adult, and her youngest would be dead, homeless, or in jail.

“The journey has been hard,” Traugh shared. “But my son is now an award-winning behavior specialist working with young men with disabilities and the severest behavior issues while he

finishes his degree in college with a 3.8 GPA. My oldest daughter is working hard to maintain her health and working with the Department of Developmental Disabilities to maintain a job while being a talented and passionate artist. And my youngest is on the Dean’s List at college, studying to be a social worker with the hope of working with troubled teens, as she once was. They are all amazing heroes and have each defied the odds.”

So what is next on the horizon for Traugh? “I’m currently working on a series of professional development videos to teach teachers how to approach transition instruction. They will be coming out through Responsive Learning in the fall. And, of course, I’m still dreaming of writing that next bestselling novel. Stay tuned. It seems that inspiration for Traugh’s stories will always be there, and she will continue to inspire us all as well.

For more information about Susan Traugh and her work, visit susantraugh.com. ●



Heather Bradley

Shares Her Love of Reading
Through Her Writing

by Marcella Comerford

Heather Bradley, a children's book author with a profound admiration for the natural world, tells us about how her love affair with reading and learning started at a very young age, and what her careers and educational experiences have brought to her writing for young people.

Bradley is the author of *When We All Get Together* (2021) and the soon to be released *We Both Speak English But...*. A retired elementary teacher, Bradley was awarded the William C. McMaster Award from Scholastic Canada for an essay about children's literature, and has worked for the Ontario Science Centre, very fitting with her appreciation of nature.

Bradley says, "I started writing articles for the local newspapers at age 15. Throughout high school, I pumped gas and performed oil changes at a local gas station to save money to go to

university. I spent the better part of ten years working at the Ontario Science Centre in Toronto. I then returned to school to obtain my teaching credentials and started teaching elementary school. One of my teaching assignments was on a southern island, Toronto Island."

Growing up in the country offered Bradley plenty of opportunities to build character through rural living, and also to develop an intense imagination in the country setting and time ambience. Bradley says, "I am a farmer's daughter, so I grew up in the country.



My childhood was spent building forts, bicycling for miles, swimming, or skating at ponds, playing baseball, and working the fields. The village where I lived had 54 homes. My paper route was a three-mile radius from the general store. I attended a one room schoolhouse until the village was amalgamated into the local town and traveled by school bus to a school 17 miles south.”

Her love of books also developed with her imaginative world, and she says, “I have loved books since I was old enough to hold one. Within their pages, I traveled the world. I was Nancy Drew looking for clues, Batman fighting crime, Henry Huggins with his paper route, and Lucy with her magical wardrobe.”

How could she know that one day she would be writing the books that offered the vital nutrition of stories to the child’s mind, and be now the one who is stimulating imaginations. How the tables have turned from when she was a child reading books. Bradley is able to give the same gift back to younger generations that she gleaned while growing up a literary buff in the country, that of being able to escape into a good story and become someone else, somewhere far away, for a time.

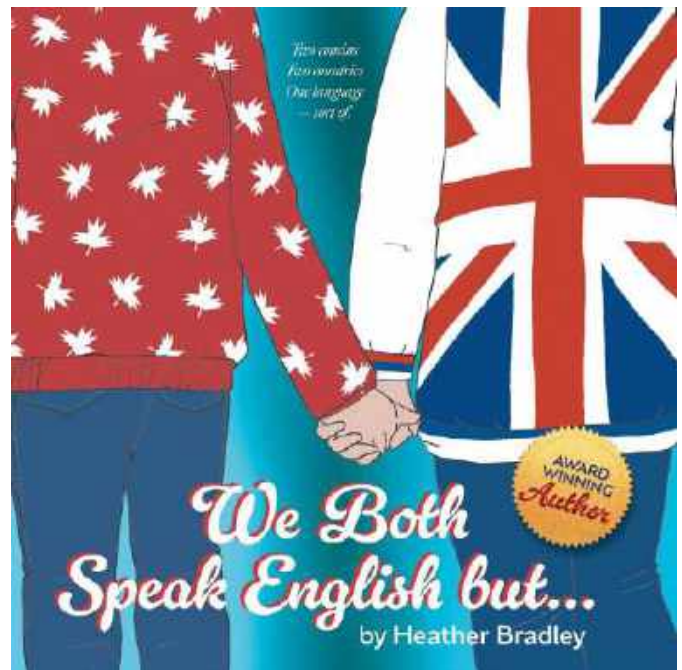
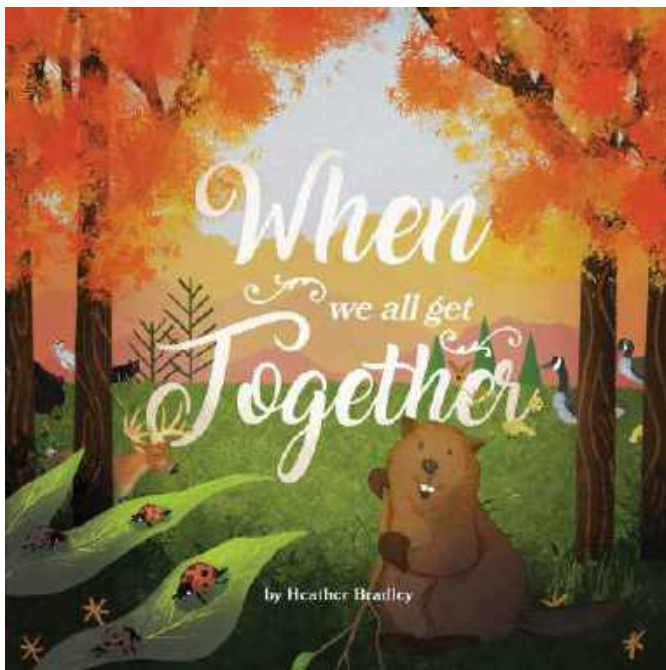
How did Bradley come full circle after several careers and educational accolades? She says, “I love reading to children, which is what I missed most when I retired. I solved that problem by writing children’s books, as I can visit schools and libraries and continue to read to children.”

Bradley reveals, “I possess a child-like curiosity about life. I like to know things and have collected five degrees and two college diplomas in that pursuit. The best compliment that I ever received was from an eight-year-old who was telling a friend about her teacher ... me. The compliment was, ‘She is really a kid disguised as a grown up!’” One suspects this retention of a child-like open, curious, and flexible mind is also part of Bradley’s recipe for being a successful children’s book author.

The first book, *When We All Get Together*, “showcases indigenous animals of the Canadian forest. From a colony of beavers to a mischief of mice, groups of wildlife are all meeting in the maple tree forest. That is, until unwanted pests arrive!” Bradley says. She adds that another thing that makes the book exciting for its target age group is that, “Children are drawn to the delightful illustrations of Canadian forest animals, as they enjoy the surprise ending,” crediting the visual appeal and plot twist of the story.

Bradley’s second and newest book, *We Both Speak English But...*, “is the story of two cousins, two countries, one language. Sort of. Cousins living over 3,000 miles apart enjoy many of the same things, though they say them differently,” Bradley says. Thus, the book does the job of serving as a testament to the commonality of human experiences, even through our seemingly big differences.

Bradley says, “One cousin wears a slicker, Wellingtons, and carries a broly to splash in the puddles. The other cousin wears a raincoat



and rubber boots, and carries an umbrella to play in the rain. When the Irish cousin feels chilly, she puts on a jumper. When the Canadian cousin feels cold, she puts on a pullover—but Granny knit them both to match!” She adds that in the book, the cousins demonstrate “discovering a new kind of bilingualism and diversity.”

This first-time, and soon to be second-time author, has hit the jackpot with her debut, and eager audiences are likely awaiting a second book that also knocks it out of the park. “One of my proudest moments was receiving a silver Moonbeam Children’s Book Award and later a Royal Dragonfly Award for *When We All Get Together*,” Bradley tells us.

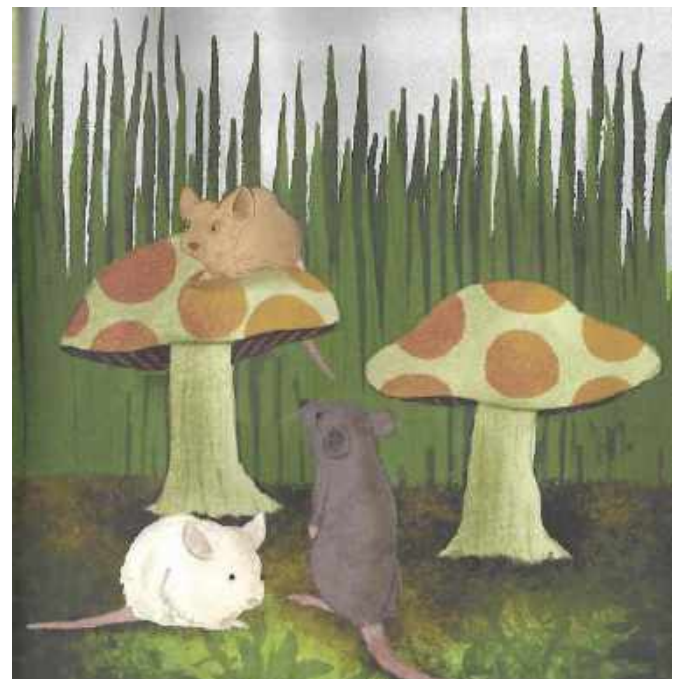
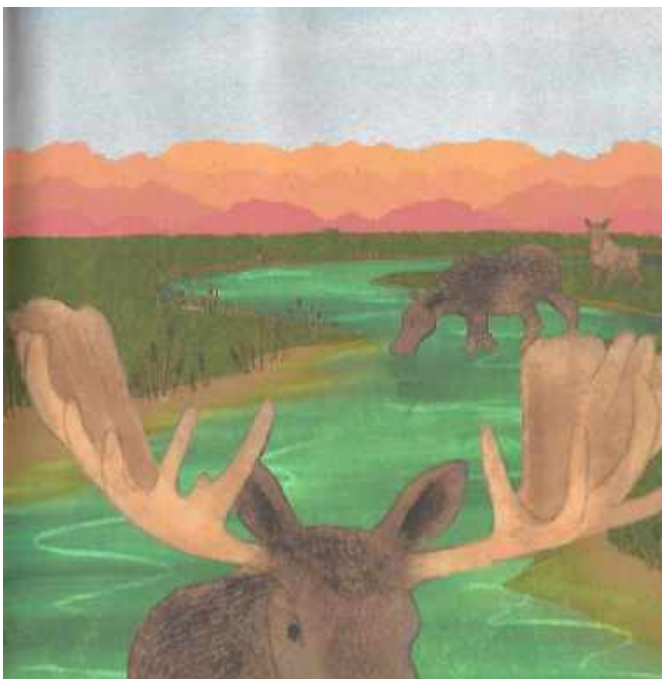
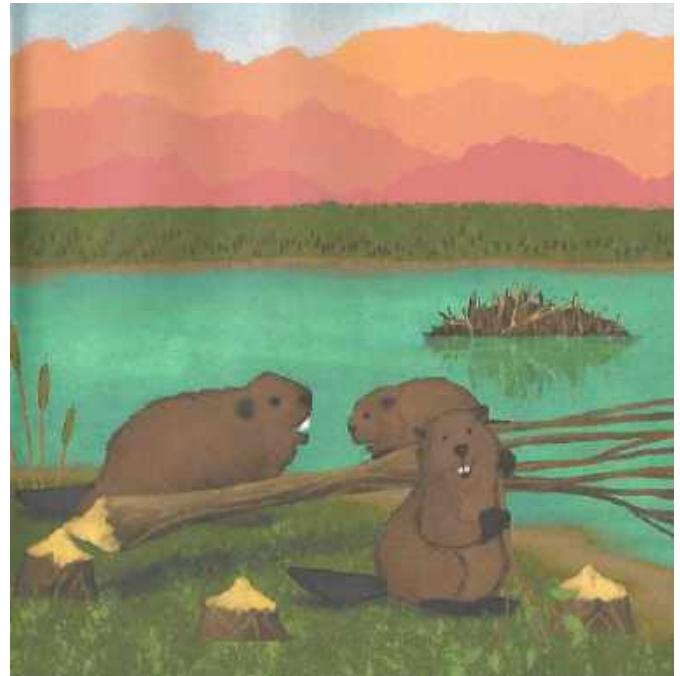
She adds, “Another (proudest moment) would be when I won the International Custom Bike Federation Lady’s Ryder Cup in 2000.” Bradley says that besides winning awards, in her free time she enjoys “gardening, feeding birds, making friends with chipmunks, motorcycling, camping, traveling, and picnics.”

What’s next on the horizon for this inspired author? Bradley tells us, “I seem to have fallen into the non-fiction genre and have two more books on the horizon, one of which is historical fiction for older children.”

Her newest book, *We Both Speak English But ...*, is being launched in September 2023 in Belfast, Northern Ireland at the Belfast Central Library, and again in Lindsay, Ontario Canada at the

Kawartha Public Library in October, so readers can start looking forward to picking up their copies before they know it.

For more information about Heather Bradley and her books, visit authorheatherbradley.com. ●



A Few Words with

Carole P. Roman

by Marcella Comerford

Carole P. Roman is the award-winning author of over 72 books. Whether it's pirates, princesses, spies, or superheroes, her books have enchanted educators, parents, and her diverse audience of children of all ages.

Q: Tell us about your background/life growing up.

A: I was born in Brooklyn a long, long time ago. I married in my early twenties and have two sons. I currently work in a family business. We do a lot together, along with several other family members. They are extremely creative and inspire me with stories to write. My wonderful daughters-in-law are supportive and have taken important roles in our various businesses. I get to work with the people I love best in the world. One of my sons is a successful author and I manage his writing career. Currently, we both have books being turned into scripts by an award-winning screenwriter. Sadly, I lost my husband almost six years ago. I live near my sons and their families on Long Island.

Q: What inspired those career choices?

A: I started my career as a social studies teacher. I left teaching 46 years ago to help my husband build a luxury ground transportation enterprise that grew to be one of the largest in the United States. I am currently CEO of BLS and we employ over 700 people worldwide. While we grew the company, I became a successful and award-winning author of over 70 books published under two different names. My children's series are popular with many homeschooled children and provide a cheerful and informative break from school books. They have been endorsed by several homeschool organizations. During the pandemic, I studied mediumship and now do over 40 readings a month, as well as teach courses on mediumship.

Q: What inspired you to become a writer?

A: My son published a book that became a bestseller on Amazon. He knew my lifelong dream was to write a book, so we held a contest. Both my sons and I brought in a story the next day and I won the contest. They helped me pick an illustrator and set up the book on CreateSpace. The book went on to be named to Kirkus' Best Books of 2012. I found that I enjoyed creating, publishing, and marketing books. I took over the publicity of his books and started publishing a book every few months. I got very active in the Indie author community and learned as much as I could. This led to helping others promote their books. I do several genres, from fiction to nonfiction, as well as assorted age groups. I even publish adult fiction as Brit Lunden and self-help as Phyllis Okon (my real name).

Q: Tell us about your most recent book!

A: My son was thinking about a concept for a superhero book. We discussed each other's ideas before our workday began in the morning. My other son said to set it in a high school, and I suggested it be about students who have challenges they think prevent them from competing with others. My son decided to tackle a book on cryptozoology, and I asked if he minded if I took this idea. *Grady Whill and the Templeton Codex* was born that day. I wanted to write about kids who face challenges like asthma, learning disabilities, neurodivergence, self-esteem, and other things that make them feel insecure. The book is about how these things can enhance a person, and what really holds them back are their own perceptions.

Q: You've written many other books as well. Can you tell us about them?

A: *Captain No Beard* is a pirate series, *If You Were Me and Lived in...* cultural and historical are two series aimed at demystifying history and introducing children to culture and customs throughout the world. The historical series is aimed at older children learning about particular time periods. Oh Susannah tackles fears and insecurities, *The Critter Collection* and *Bedtime Collection* are great books for younger kids and each book deals with issues kids face like acceptance, bullying, and self-esteem. I have several joke books, as well as a book on mindfulness, and spies. Lastly, *Grady Whill and the Templeton Codex* is a fun YA book that teaches us to embrace what we see as a challenge and learn to use it to enhance our lives.



Q: How do all the facets of your identity lend to your storytelling?

A: Not only am I in my books but so many people in my life can be found there too. All of the lessons I taught my children and grandchildren can be found on the pages. When one of them was suffering from something, I wrote a book finding solutions for both them and their parents.

Q: What are some of your interests/hobbies outside of writing?

A: I love to tap dance and I spent many hours during the pandemic doing that. I also am a highly successful medium that has been endorsed by well-known mediums. I currently have a thriving practice and have started teaching courses.

Q: What's next for you?

A: I am currently working on a second *Grady Whill* novel. Hopefully, it will get picked up and produced as a major motion picture. My agent assures me this is in the cards.

Q: What are your proudest moments in life, whether personal or career-wise?

A: Giving birth to my children and then watching my kids become parents. I do have lots of personal achievements, but my greatest joy is my family. ●

Bigfoot and back to school... Oh my!

You'll laugh through the picture book 'Monster's First Day at School' as little monsters go to school and learn to behave. The hilarious 'Biggie and Birdie are Different (so what)' proves it doesn't matter what's on the outside, it's what's inside that counts. For chapter books - Mick Morris Myth Solver #2 Bigfoot...Big Trouble! (there's #'s 1-6) is where you'll go on a wild ride discovering if Bigfoot exists - featuring 'Five Ways to Finish' in every book. Back to school reading is BIG!

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Get Ready for a Garden Adventure!

One day, while lost in a daydream, Cate finds herself in the middle of a mystery. The flower petals in her garden are missing, and she can't figure out what happened. But when she comes face-to-face with a bumblebee, everything changes.

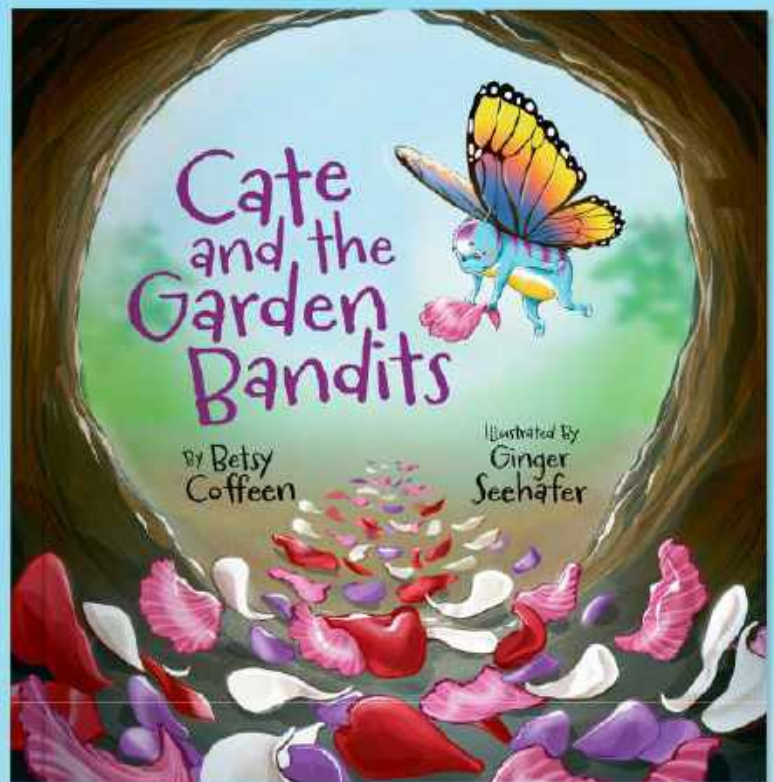
With stunning illustrations and a heartwarming message, this enchanting tale will capture the imaginations of readers young and old. Don't miss out on the adventure of a lifetime with Cate and her new friend!

"Cate and the Garden Bandits incorporates general science facts to drive home the importance of how our world will only survive by interdependence. It also introduces more challenging vocabulary words for enrichment and to accommodate the learning loss that occurred during the early days of the pandemic."

—School Library Journal

Available on Amazon.com and BarnesandNoble.com

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Book Lovers Support Literacy

by Deedee Cummings

If you're a book lover, it is hard to imagine what illiteracy might feel like. The world has come a long way throughout its history with literacy rates improving immensely over the years. According to UNESCO, the worldwide average literacy rate is 86 percent for adults and 91 percent for children.

However, the work of highlighting and promoting literacy is far from over. In fact, it may be more dire than ever with the rise of social media and untruths spreading through the internet like wildfire. There remain large pockets of adults and children, even within our own communities, who struggle to read and comprehend everyday information and directions. August 9th was National Book Lovers Day. I can't think of a more perfect opportunity for book lovers to do what they can to help improve literacy where they live. But how can one do that?

1. Even though most schools won't be in session yet, you can volunteer to read books to children in daycares and preschools that operate year-round. Or contact a school to get a background check so that you can read to kids as a volunteer once a month.
2. Pull books off your shelves and donate them to a little library. Make it a point to take them to an underserved area of your city or town.
3. Create a book basket at your workplace where colleagues can share books they have on their shelves.
4. Purchase books from authors you love, either from them directly or via your local independent bookstore. Supporting authors ensures that there are all kinds of stories for adults and children to read and fall in love with.
5. Spend time reading to a child in your life and talk with them about the privilege of having books and knowing how to read them.

6. Create a book club. If you're already in a book club, consider planning a book drive among members and donate those books to a school or community organization that works to encourage a love of reading among children.
7. Donate money to a literacy organization in your community if you are unable to donate your time.
8. Go to your local library, check out books, and tell others about the joy you had while you were visiting. Libraries need you to love on them to survive.
9. Attend local literary events. Just this year I attended an event at a bar and an event at a community center. When you show up, it makes it more likely that the event organizers will host another.
10. Lastly, show your own book collection a little love. Make sure others in your life know what you're reading and how it affects you. Don't keep a good read to yourself. Books need love too! ●

Deedee Cummings • As an attorney, CEO of Make A Way Media, and author of diverse picture books, Deedee Cummings has a passion for making the world a better place. Her children's books are not only fun for kids and adults to read, they also work to teach coping skills, reinforce the universal message of love, encourage mindfulness, and facilitate inclusion for all. Cummings is also the founder of the nonprofit It Pays To Read and the Louisville Book Festival. Visit makeawaymedia.com to learn more about her work.

Multicultural Education for Kids!

When Almaz makes a mistake in school, she's really embarrassed! Other kids tease her because they don't understand her Ethiopian culture. How can she use her family's traditions to make friends?

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SUMMER READING LIST

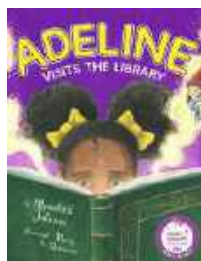


Geo

by Topher Allen

Get to know a beautifully strange city of living rocks before setting off on a colorful and imaginative adventure alongside Geo and his friends. A middle grade fantasy novel based on the oddities of real-world science. Intended for readers with a growing interest in science and engineering. Award winner in

both Sci-Fi/Fantasy and STEM categories. Available in paperback or e-book via Amazon.

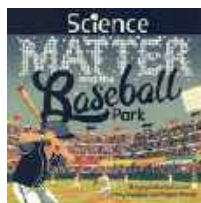


Adeline Visits the Library

by Meredith Johnson

Meet Adeline, a spunky, daring, and always caring little girl who knows the library is the key to exploring worlds she's always wanted to see. With kindness and a little imagination, she helps others to see how amazing reading can be. *Adeline Visits the*

Library is a kindhearted, rhyming story that helps young readers understand the power of kindness and can be an amazing teaching tool for those who are reluctant to read.

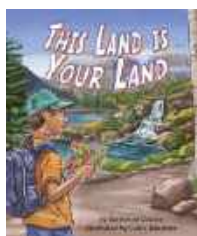


Science, Matter and the Baseball Park

by Catherine Ciocchi

This fast-paced rhyming story will have baseball and science fans alike delighted to see all the solids, liquids, and gases that make game day extra special. On the instant replay, the camera zooms in to show us the atoms that make up all matter. This picture book truly knocks matter out of the park! Teaching

activity guide online – Gnome Road Publishing. Addresses: NGSS 2. Structure and Properties of Matter.



This Land is Your Land

by Catherine Ciocchi

It's NOT the song. Ciocchi takes the reader around the world to discover a wide variety of Earth's landforms and geological features through rhythmic verse. On the journey, encounter plains, plateaus, and rolling hills.

Find out how a stream can make a canyon or lava creates an archipelago. Read aloud and discover new terrain with the flip of each page. Teaching activity guide online - Arbordale Publishing. Addresses NGSS 2-ESS2-Earth's Systems.



Burt: The Airport Cat

by Christine Henry

Burt is a black cat about to embark on a family adventure. But at the airport, he is separated from his family. Burt is a brave bold cat and

decides to explore the airport. He meets new friends, Valkyrie, Scout, and the Padre, and samples local cuisine as well. The kindness of his friends is remarkable and endearing? Will he ever reunite with his family? Join him on his quest to learn more. christinehenryauthor.com



Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda

by Donna DeMaio Hunt

After making some poor decisions, *Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda* leads to better decision making the second time around. This story focuses on what impulsive behavior looks like, as opposed to thinking before acting. *Shoulda, Coulda, Woulda* is a book that provides Social

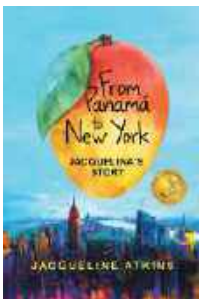
Emotional Learning by stressing the importance of self-control and emotion management.



The Sapphire Ring

by Donna DeMaio Hunt

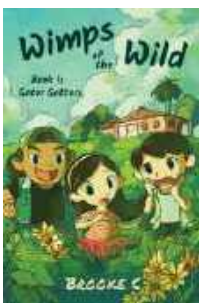
The Sapphire Ring is presented to Ethan by his Dad when he is afraid to go to sleep. The ring gives him the power to feel strong and safe, just like a superhero. *The Sapphire Ring* is the first title of a four-book series by Donna DeMaio Hunt. This story helps parents to deal with their child’s struggle of going to sleep, in an uplifting way. This book serves as a vehicle to embrace the common topic of nighttime fears.



From Panamá to New York: Jacqueliná's Story

by Jacqueline Atkins

Jacqueliná is a 10-year-old girl who lives in the beautiful Central American country of Panama with her beloved abuelita and her younger sister, Nana. But when her abuelita unexpectedly passes away, Jacqueliná is faced with a difficult decision: move to New York with Mama or stay in Panama with Papa. Jacqueliná’s story invites readers to experience how an immigrant child finds her identity, voice, and purpose.



Wimps of the Wild: Gator Getters

by Brooke C

The last thing scaredy-cat Izzy wants to do is sneak baby alligators into her house. But when her friend Joey begs her to save the alligators’ lives, Izzy faces her fears and finds enough compassion and courage to rescue the babies. “Adventure and a bit of social awareness combine in a compelling book for young readers.”

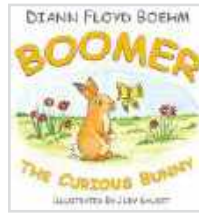
— Kirkus Reviews



The Caroler

by Liza Martini

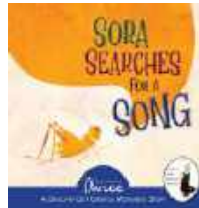
Celebrate Christmas in August! A caroler figurine and a glorious angel tree-topper are purchased at a summer tent sale and brought to their new home where they meet a nutcracker. The story unfolds over the next six months, and as Carol coaxes the nutcracker’s story from him, things begin to happen. It’s a story of bacon and sausages, greed and gluttony, curses and redemption, magic, and miracles! New characters bring life to an old tale.



Boomer the Curious Bunny

by Diann Floyd Boehm

Join this adorable furry rabbit as he heads off into the city where he meets a range of characters and goes on a variety of adventures. Will his discoveries be the joyful experiences he expects?



Sora Searches for a Song

by Once Upon a Dance

As the symphony floated above, Sora searched deep inside for a song. But nothing came. Melodies tickled across Sora’s toes, legs, and back as the little cricket searched in vain for a song. Then a stern voice pierced the night, and the music stopped. “Someone’s not singing.” Readers are invited to stretch, balance, jump, and move along with all the creatures in this delightful story of perseverance and celebrating your own unique voice.



Wings of Glitter

by Miranda Sada

Anna wakes up convinced that it will be a terrible day. She didn’t do her homework and she’s late heading out the door this morning. Will she change her mind after an extraordinary encounter on her way to school? Using basic words and short, clear texts, *Wings of Glitter* narrates a familiar feeling that will help us change our attitude on a challenging day. A charming, illustrated adventure for beginner readers. Also available in Spanish.



Ryan Daniels: Good Night, Firefly

by Ada Aguilar

Meet *Ryan Daniels: Good Night, Firefly*, an 814-word delightful picture book about a little boy named Ryan Daniels who hates going to sleep. “It is such a waste of time! BORING!” He could be playing video games, watching TV, or playing with his puppy. Soon Ryan learns of all the benefits of going to sleep. Bestseller on Amazon, Recipient of Mom’s Choice Awards, and Readers’ Choice Awards! Dragonfly Award Honorable Mentions.



Little Mouse Adventures: Mindfulness at the Park

by Teresa Anne Power

Go on an adventure with Little Mouse and his best friend, Mr. Opus the cat, to a bustling neighborhood park filled with new sights, sounds, and people. Blending humor and fun, *Mindfulness at the Park* gently

imparts ways to navigate the excitement and uncertainty of new experiences. Kids will delight in Little Mouse's adventures, while adults will love watching children apply their newfound mindfulness and yoga skills to quiet their minds and manage stressful situations. staffordhousebooks.com



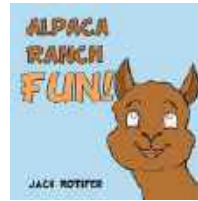
Little Palm: An Earth Day Celebration

Join Tavi and Tylee as they help their friend, Little Palm, get ready for her Earth Day birthday celebration. Get your paint, sparkles, glitter, and glue and let's see what they do! Will it be stars and stripes or spots and dots? What would your design be if you had the chance to paint a little palm tree?



Maya Moves to a New Country

Maya lives with her parents in the U.S. where she has lots of friends and enjoys playing with them. One day, Maya's Dad who serves in the U.S. Navy shares some big news. The family is moving to a new country (Japan). Maya is confused, happy, sad, a little bit scared, and really unsure of many things. She must brace herself for the unknown—new places, new faces, new food, and even a new language!



Alpaca Ranch Fun!

by Jack Rotifer

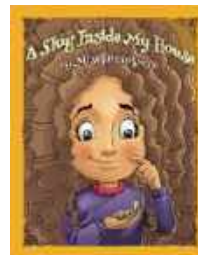
Aunt K owns a farm where alpacas and a menagerie of animals live. Three yorkies visit the farm and learn about the different animals including some of the history of these great animals. The yorkies become good friends with a couple of young alpacas. The yorkie trio also meet Betty, the sled dog, a world class athlete who competed in the Iditarod. The farm is home to many more animals that the yorkie trio enjoys learning about and meeting.



Would You Care to Join Our Team?

by Miselle Goffman

Embark on an inspiring journey with Christopher. When Galilea invites him to join her tennis team, Christopher sets out to improve his skills. Through dedication, healthier choices, and unwavering determination, he strives to prove that hard work and friendship can lead to victory. Will their efforts pay off in the ultimate tournament? Discover the power of teamwork and resilience in this captivating children's tale.



A Slug Inside My House

by Miselle Goffman

Join Galilea as she discovers a baby slug while gardening and names it Sluggo. When Sluggo ends up inside the house, Galilea becomes his caring guide. With determination and kindness, she helps Sluggo find his family. Experience their heartwarming adventure of friendship, resilience, and surprises. Will they succeed? Find out in this enchanting children's tale.



Let's Welcome a New Friend

by Miselle Goffman

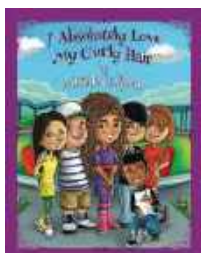
Skyler Jones moves to the neighborhood but resists making new friends. Galilea, Bruna, and their friends are determined to extend a warm welcome, but they're unsure how to help. Through patience and understanding, they uncover the reason behind Skyler's hesitance. Will their efforts lead to a heartwarming acceptance of friendship? Find out in this touching tale of compassion and connection.



Being a Good Friend

by Miselle Goffman

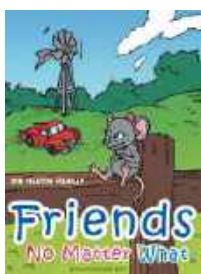
Bruna discovers a baby bird that has fallen from its nest. With no sign of the mother bird, Brunna rescues the helpless creature and names her Luna. Excited about her new pet, Brunna wonders if she can meet Luna's needs. Will Brunna rise to the challenge and be a responsible friend? Explore this endearing tale of friendship and responsibility.



I Absolutely Love My Curly Hair

by Miselle Goffman

Galilea isn't fond of her curly hair. Styling it takes time and makes her stand out. Teased by others, she dreams of straightening it. But her mother assures her that her hair is beautiful as it is. Will Galilea find the confidence to embrace her natural curls? Join her on a heartwarming journey of self acceptance in this delightful tale celebrating uniqueness.



Friends No Matter What

by Kim Heaton Ramsay

Marley Mouse wants to make some new friends. During her search, she meets four kind creatures who are very different from her and offers her friendship despite their differences. This colorfully illustrated story speaks to acceptance of those who are different and is a great way to speak with both pre-school and school-aged children about bullying.



Aqua Paws

by Patricia Allieri

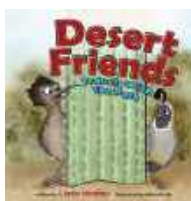
Splash! Splash! MEOW! Most cats hate water, but not Aqua Paws. He loves it! There's just one problem: he's terrified of crabs! When Aqua Paws finds himself in a sticky situation, and the only one around to help is a crab, will he be able to push his feelings aside before it's too late? Beautifully illustrated by Stella Maris, children will fall in love with sea creatures and learn a valuable lesson about ocean pollution.



Chesapeake Bay Adventures

by Cindy Freland

It's never too early to start reading to your child. The beautiful illustrations in award-winning international children's author Cindy Freland's books on the animals of the Chesapeake Bay will mystify them as you read. The series of ten books builds an appreciation for the environment in an entertaining way while stimulating curiosity in the unique creatures. Create precious memories while sharing special time learning about the Bay. Order books today at www.cbaykidsbooks.com.



Desert Friends

by Linda Harkey

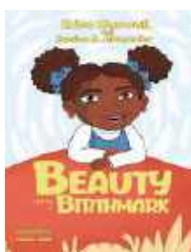
Animal friends in the Arizona Sonoran Desert are found in all sizes, shapes, and colors. Rodney, a Roadrunner and his best friend Quincy, a Gambel's quail spend days racing each other through dry creek beds called arroyos. One day Rodney and Quincy meet two hunting dogs-Gator and his three-legged buddy Tripod. Danger surrounds the four friends as a thunderstorm sends tremendous amounts of muddy water down the arroyo. The force of water sweeps Tripod away. Who will come to his rescue? What will happen when the Great One (the dogs' human hunter) arrives? harkeybooks.com



Adventures with Pop Pop at Grant's Farm

by Warren Martin

The fourth book in the *Adventures with Pop Pop* series picks up with a longstanding family tradition of visits to Grant's Farm that started back in the 1960s when Na Na's mom drove a school bus, and she would take the kids on tours of Grant's Farm. This tradition continued with Pop Pop and Na Na's own children and in recent years continues with their grandchildren, whom Pop Pop has dubbed as his Grandmen: Grandman Dean and Grandman Levi.



Beauty with a Birthmark

by Erica Maxwell and Jessica A. Alexander

Birthmarks, moles, freckles, and scars are all unique, like the sky's stars. *Beauty with a Birthmark* is an integral part of any home library as an important child development tool that teaches empathy, understanding, and acceptance—key character traits that can greatly reduce the likelihood of bullying. This delightful book is vital for building children's self-esteem as they learn to fully embrace themselves and what makes them unique. These skin marks are our design, both mine and yours, let us shine!



My Thousand Treasures

by Licia Chenoweth

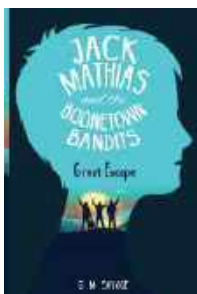
Eleven-year-old Raini Fraser spies on two boys digging at a park when a security truck disrupts their progress and causes them to flee. Seizing the opportunity, she pockets their forgotten gold coin. However, the coin's value puts her in grave danger from those who will stop at nothing to get it back. In a race against time, Raini decides her only option is to return the coin to its rightful owner. In the process, she uncovers deep-held family secrets about the coin, that have been hidden for generations. Could the coin be cursed?



Mickie McKinney: Boy Detective, Connections in Chemistry

by R.L. Fink

Maple Ridge Middle School is turned upside down when Jamie “Burners” Burns substitutes for Chemistry class, and a surprising amount of foam and smoke sets off the fire alarm. Principal Morgan is looking for someone to blame, but Mickie McKinney and Sam Hayes are convinced there is more to this accident than meets the eye. Can Mickie and Sam find the culprit behind the chaos in time? Or will Burners be unjustly punished instead?



Jack Mathias and the Boonetown Bandits

by G. M. Savage

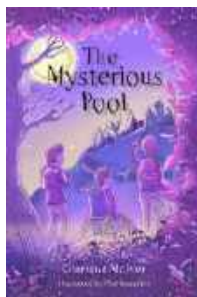
Jack Mathias and the Boonetown Bandits is a coming-of-age adventure story set in the lush Appalachian wilderness. Jack and his two companions must battle dangerous wildlife, whitewater rapids, and violent criminals to find centuries-old treasure. In the journey, they learn about themselves and true friendships along the way.



The Word Dancer

by Maxine Rose Schur

When traitors take over the kingdom, Wynnfrith, flees with the 5-year old crown prince to keep him safe. They embark on a treacherous journey that pits them against the cruel Ugsome family but Wynnfrith, though believing herself cowardly, triumphs as a strong heroine for she learns from the mysterious, magical Word Dancer both the beauty and the power of words. “A page-turning fantasy adventure for kids that enlightens, entertains, and ideally, empowers.” Kirkus Book Reviews.



The Mysterious Pool

by Charlene McIver

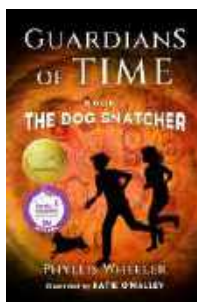
Join Leigh, Tara, and Cosmo on an awe-inspiring quest through Grandma’s enigmatic estate! This multi-award-winning chapter book delights with hidden passages, enchanting elixirs, and talking creatures. Young readers and nature enthusiasts will be enthralled by the tale of protecting endangered species. Discover how Leigh, wheelchair-bound yet determined, unites with friends to safeguard secrets. A mystical mentor ignites his pursuit of aspirations, creating an extraordinary revelation. Brace for an unforgettable odyssey—unveiling wonders beyond imagination!



Shiny Friends Super Squad: Starr of the Show

by Leigh Reagan Alley

Starr and Sunny are best friends with a super-unbreakable bond—at least until Starr tells a little lie that spirals into a great big mess! Will the lie cost Starr her best friend, her passing science grade, and her spot onstage at Fifth Grade Family Night? Or will friendship and the power of forgiveness show a whole new squad how to shine? Find out in *Shiny Friends Super Squad: Starr of the Show* and visit www.shinyfriendssupersquad.com to join the squad and follow the fun!



Guardians of Time: The Dog Snatcher

by Phyllis Wheeler

Twins Jake and Ava from present-day St. Louis rescue others lost in time. They aren’t doing it alone—they have the help of a 700-year-old alchemist from the Guardians of Time Guild. *The Dog Snatcher* won a Purple Dragonfly Award. In this series opener, Jake and Ava crisscross time and space chasing the thief who stole their dog. *Guardians of Time*, an action-packed series for ages 8-11, focuses on geography, history, and personal responsibility. phylliswheeler.com



Black Atlantian: Doomed Water World
by M.A.D Tronics Studios

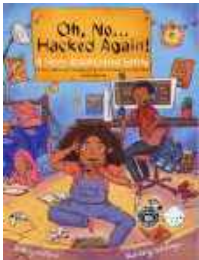
You can read the Black Atlantian comic book and play it like an interactive AR 3D video game. The action comes out of the book and actually surrounds you. Keep a positive score to win. \$1 from each book sold will go to The Ocean Cleanup Charity. There are music videos and a 12-episode competition TV series based on the Black Atlantian comic book. Just go to: www.madtronicstudios.com. All for only \$8!



Salmon Survivor
by Christian A. Shane

After the death of his father and fishing partner, 12-year-old Jack Cooper unwillingly travels to Alaska to meet his grandfather, Fly Bob. Over the summer, Jack challenges himself to do something his father “Redds” Cooper had never accomplished: catching the Alaskan Salmon Slam—all five species of Pacific salmon. He’ll need the assistance of veteran fishing guide, Fly

Bob, to teach him the secrets of fishing in Alaska. Nothing comes easy, especially in Alaska.



Oh, No ... Hacked Again! A Story About Online Safety
by Zinet Kemal

Meet Elham, an eight-year-old girl who loves online games but struggles with making safe decisions. When she can’t log in to her favorite game due to a hack, she leans on her family for support. Join this fun family story to learn about online safety and explore the dynamic field of cybersecurity as a future career option.

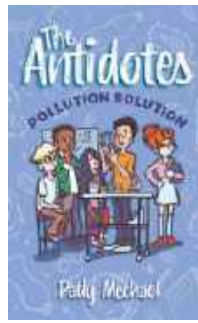
about online safety and explore the dynamic field of cybersecurity as a future career option.



See Yourself in Cybersecurity
by Zinet Kemal

See Yourself in Cybersecurity is an inspiring book for kids, teens, and young adults exploring the exciting world of cybersecurity. Discover various roles and opportunities in this industry where you can be a cybersecurity superhero, defending against hackers and protecting digital assets. If you love technology, problem-solving, and helping

others, this fulfilling career awaits you. Put on your superhero cape and prepare for a future fighting cybercrime!



The Antidotes: Pollution Solution
by Patty Mechael

In the wake of a global pandemic, intrepid fifth-grade friends are thrown headlong into a high-stakes environmental crisis as the waters of the Chesapeake Bay become a hotbed for a disastrous plastic-eating bacteria experiment. Izi, Gir, and their classmates uncover a shocking cover-up and respond by forming the Antidotes.

Navigating through secret meetings and undercover operations, the Antidotes leverage STEM strategies to find clean water solutions, rallying children around the globe toward zero plastic use.



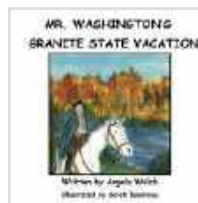
Percival's Dogs
by Steve Haskin

Twelve-year-old Madeline Ellis is determined to save Percival Parrant’s dogs from the horrible abuse he is inflicting on them. The dogs are rescued and given to Madeline to care for, but she soon learns that Percival is involved with even worse crimes, and she vows to stop him. *Percival's Dogs* is a coming-of-age story full of action, chases, and the bravery and determination of a young woman.



Adventures In Time 2: The Treasure
by Arlene Timoney

When an elderly time traveler leaves clues leading to a treasure map, Lilly, Watty, and Jordan must use their strong research skills to unravel a series of cryptic puzzles and codes in order to collect the promised prize. Time travel through history with these fun, free-spirited kids as their search for answers takes them on a patriotic journey to some of America’s most famous monuments.



Mr. Washington's Granite State Vacation
by Angela Welch

In the fall of 1789, George Washington decided to visit the northern states to talk about the new Constitution. He wanted to meet and listen to the people he met along the way. During his trip, he crossed the Merrimack River in

Massachusetts, heading for Portsmouth, New Hampshire, the capital of the state at that time. Come along as President Washington takes his Granite State vacation.



***Blame It On Revere!*
*The Portsmouth Alarm***

by Angela Welch

Paul Revere's famous ride in April of 1775 is well known by many. However, his first ride took place on a cold, stormy day in December of 1774 where he headed to the quiet coastal town of Portsmouth in the colony of New Hampshire. What message was so important that led to this journey? Read about the ride that led to the first shots of the American Revolution before those at Concord and Lexington, Massachusetts. www.lunabooksnh.com



Hispanic Heritage Wall Calendar 2024

by Cayena Press

A beautifully designed and informative calendar that celebrates the legacy of Hispanics in the United States.

Thoughtfully curated to celebrate the accomplishments of Hispanic Americans, the calendar features the birthdays and achievements of notable figures, and incorporates educational snippets of important historical dates and significant cultural celebrations. It serves as a meaningful tool to educate and spark conversations among instructors, students, employees, and community members. Available at cayenapress.org



Peace in the Midst of the Storm

by Kaleb Thompson

Peace in the Midst of the Storm glorifies the significant impact of embracing resilience, designated worth, strong faith, and unwavering confidence in enduring through obstacles and trials, regardless of how difficult they may be. It also brings into effect that no matter how frustrating life deals us a

heavy load, the ability to concede is never an option. Therefore, we possess the strength to overcome our storms, which is where the breakthrough welcomes us freely.



The Art of Touch: A Collection of Prose and Poetry from the Pandemic and Beyond

by Joan Schweighardt, Faye Rapoport DesPres, Linda DeFruscio-Robinson, et al.

The unique voices of 39 of some of the most creative thinkers of our times have been brought together to consider the profound impact of one of our five main senses: touch.

Psychologists, healers, massage therapists, academics, creative writers, and others reflect on or tell personal stories about what it means to be able to touch or experience touch, or to have to go without it—as so many did and still do because of the COVID-19 pandemic. From the experience of touching beloved animals to the life-changing ways in which books and performances can touch us, virtually all aspects of touch are acknowledged in these pages.



Transgender Profiles: Time for a Change

by Linda DeFruscio-Robinson

An inspirational volume about the courage it takes to become the person you have always felt you were inside to shirk off the mask that you have worn for your whole life until this moment. Filled with 20 unique stories of bravery from all different walks of life, this

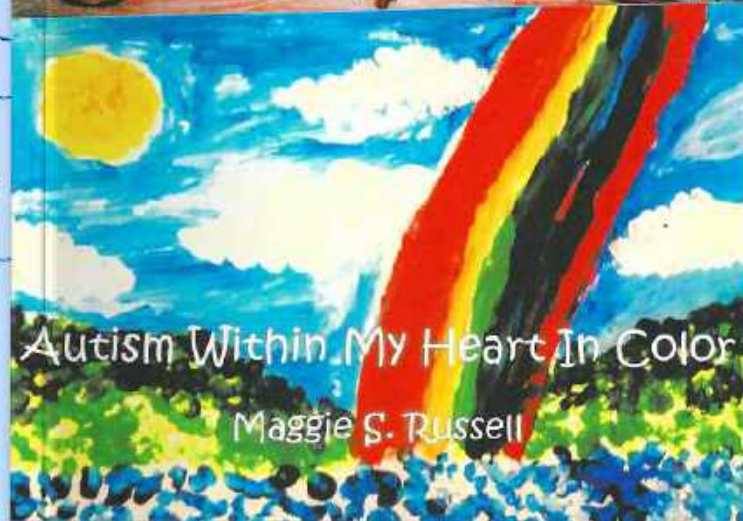
book is a tribute to all the courageous people who take their identity in their own hands and go forth to find the body that fits the soul and mind within. For those considering transitioning, for those looking for perspective and guidance in supporting loved ones, or for those who are curious and want to understand the struggles and triumphs of transgender individuals, *Transgender Profiles* is an invaluable resource.

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Nimona

Grade: B+

reviewed by Nick Spake

From the first *Ice Age* to *The Peanuts Movie*, Blue Sky was an often-underappreciated animation studio that closed its doors not long after Disney acquired 21st Century Fox. Blue Sky was reportedly 75% finished with *Nimona*, an adaptation of ND Stevenson's graphic novel. While the sun had set on Blue Sky, *Nimona* would live on with Annapurna Pictures, DNEG Animation, and Netflix stepping in. The film still retained much of Blue Sky's DNA with Nick Bruno and Troy Quane (*Spies in Disguise*) staying on as directors. *Nimona* may be the epilogue to Blue Sky's story, but it might also mark a promising new beginning.

In addition to laying down a solid foundation for Annapurna Animation, one could imagine *Nimona* inspiring sequels, spinoffs, and tie-in material. As a standalone entity, though, the film is an inspired take on the "villain gone good" trope. The film sets itself in a world that's equal parts medieval and futuristic. While we've seen this fusion of styles in franchises like *Final Fantasy*, there isn't another that quite resembles *Nimona*'s world. Over a decade after nailing it as *Hit-Girl*, Chloë Grace Moretz hasn't lost her knack for playing wisecracking menaces to society.

Nimona possesses a unique ability to transform into just about anything that comes to mind. Although she could take over the kingdom on her own, *Nimona* seeks to become another evildoer's sidekick. She seemingly finds a kindred spirit when a knight named Ballister Boldheart (Riz Ahmed) assassinates the queen. What *Nimona* doesn't realize is that Ballister was framed and he desires to clear his name. *Nimona* decides to help Ballister regardless, but she serves as the devil on his shoulder every step of the way. As Ballister is driven to rebel, we learn what drove *Nimona* to the dark side.

Similar to *The Sea Beast*, another Netflix release, *Nimona* is about how facts get distorted throughout history. Unlike some historical figures, *Nimona* is in a rare position to take back control of her narrative. However, she's already so deep into villainy that there may be no going back. This lays the groundwork for an absorbing dynamic between *Nimona* and Ballister, who finds that the government he swore to protect isn't what he thought. That



doesn't give anyone an excuse to burn it all to the ground, but *Nimona* shows Ballister the advantages of breaking the rules. In exchange, Ballister brings out *Nimona*'s humanity.

As compelling as its characters, world, and themes are, there are times when *Nimona* falls into familiar territory. The film's surprise villain can be seen from a mile away, and a misunderstanding toward the third act feels forced. Even when it fumbles, though, it doesn't take long for *Nimona* to rebound with an inspired joke, exhilarating set piece, or legitimately surprising moment. The film by no means feels safe, which was one of the reasons Disney had reservations about *Nimona*. Its LGBTQ+ characters were reportedly a point of contention. Thankfully, the filmmakers ultimately got to see their vision through in all of its beautiful anarchy. *Nimona* may be more antihero than villain, but she possesses an edge that most studio executives would be up in arms about. Those execs could learn a thing or two from *Nimona*, allowing their artists to color outside the lines. ●

Nick Spake is a member of the Hollywood Critics Association and Phoenix Film Critics Society. Follow him on Twitter at @NSpake and everywhere else at Nick Spake.

Books for the Young and Young at Heart

Follow Allie on her adventures and make new friends along the way!



Allie has a new friend...

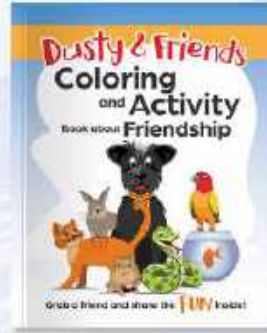
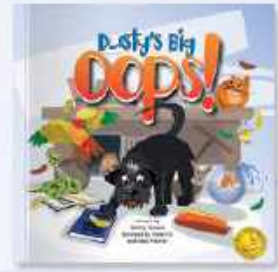
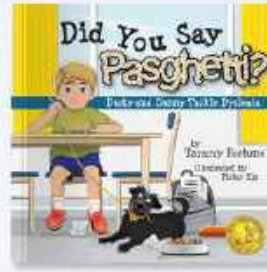


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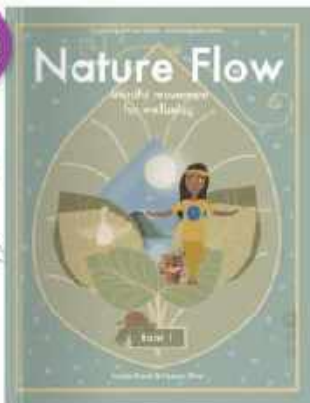


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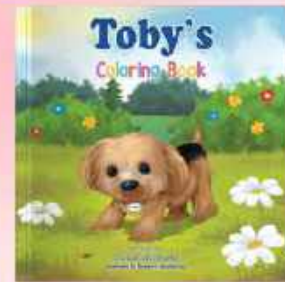
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JUDY NEWMAN LIFE OF A READER

BIG SISTERHOOD!

by Judy Newman

On July 21, 2023, my soul mate, Sophie Rae, joined Malia Obama, Beyonce Knowles, Kate Middleton, Selena Gomez, J.K. Rowling, and me (Sophie calls me “Juya”) in welcoming a baby sister into her life.



Sophie’s life was focused pretty much exclusively on her.

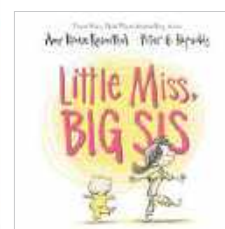
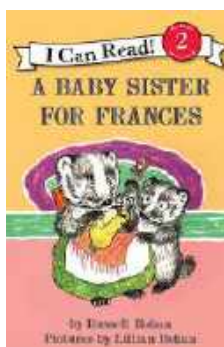
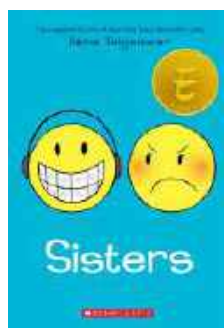
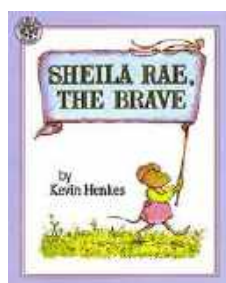
No one competed for attention when Sophie played with Magna-Tiles DX or blew bubbles or drew pictures with her plastic briefcase of 100 different colored markers. The beautiful, three-story, eggplant-colored dollhouse her grandfather, “Pa,” built for her could stay exactly as she arranged it with no risk of anyone rearranging the furniture or separating the dolls who like to live squished together on the rug in the living room.

No one else got to choose which books to read before bed. Sophie could watch her allocated *Daniel Tiger’s Neighborhood* on Netflix in peace and quiet. And while she is still very excited about her upcoming bubble-themed 3rd birthday party at the end of this month, I know there’s a part of her that is worried about her baby sister, who tends to cry a bit at the wrong moments, stealing some of the limelight.

But I can also tell that Sophie Rae truly loves her baby sister, Nina Frances. I am

As I know from the time when my own sister Emily was born, having a new sister arrive and take up permanent residence in your house after your mother has been away for a few days is a pivotal, “things will never be the same” experience for many children.

For the past two years and 10 months, Sophie’s life was orderly. Meals, grocery shopping, naps, school, bath time, and stories before bed all happened on a predictable schedule. And most of the attention of the doting grown-ups in



sure she already senses a future when they will be fast friends and allies in the world run by grown-ups. But for now, as was probably true with all the famous siblings in Sophie Rae's big sister cohort, once baby sister Nina Frances arrived, life changed a lot, and sometimes that's very annoying.

Fortunately, as with many key life-changing moments, there are many wonderful children's books that explore and celebrate being a big sister, which can help Sophie Rae sort out her complicated feelings about having "the other baby" (who has no intention of leaving!) in her crib.

Some of my favorite kids' books that extol sisterhood are *Sheila Rae the Brave* by Kevin Henkes in which little sister, Louise, surprisingly saves the day. Millions of readers over decades have shared Beezus Quimby's ambivalence about her pesky, often infuriating little sister, Ramona (*Beezus and Ramona* by Beverly Cleary). *Sisters* by Raina Telgemeier; *A Baby Sister for Frances* by Russell Hoban; *Big Sister, Little Sister* by LeUyen Pham; *Little Miss, Big Sis* by Amy Krouse Rosenthal and Peter H. Reynolds are some of my favorites for all ages.

Noelle: *The Best Big Sister* by Mikaela Wilson, *I Used to Be Famous* by Becky Cattie, and *Sona Sharma, Very Best Big*

Sister? by Chitra Soundar are some titles I want to explore.

And even though Tommy is the older sibling in *The Baby Sister* by the late, great Tomie dePaola; and *Peter's Chair* by Ezra Jack Keats isn't about sisters, they both deserve a place in the canon of new sibling children's books.

Each of these books approaches the complicated feelings of an older sister when the new girl shows up. These books can help kids like Sophie Rae express and explore their own feelings. Wonderfully written and illustrated children's books work so well as safe, accessible conversation starters—vehicles to help grown-ups talk with the children in their lives about big issues and big feelings by using fictional characters and stories as examples. I don't want story time to become lesson time for sure, but cuddling up with a great book featuring characters dealing with the same issues you are is a beautiful way to spend some reading together time.

As we hurtle back to start the brand new 2023-24 school year, I urge everyone to keep in mind that there is always a children's book that can help ease transitions, guide kids as they explore their feelings, give grown-ups an

opportunity to talk about life-changing and life-affirming moments, and discuss uncomfortable—and happy—situations and life experiences while reading a story about someone else.

The most efficient, reliable, affordable way for kids to learn about their worlds, build their vocabulary, understand words in context, and learn how to express themselves and make sense of what others are saying, is through books and reading.

Every big and little sister—and every child—must have access to choose books they are motivated to read from a wide, diverse, relatable collection of titles so they can develop their identity as a reader.

If you ever want to talk about choice and access to books for all, or have a recommendation for a title to add to the sisterhood collection, please reach out: Judy.Newman@Scholastic.com

Happy Reading!

XX,
Judy ●

Judy Newman, Chief Impact Officer, Scholastic.
Visit judynewmanatscholastic.com.

BOOK REVIEWS



Let's Go Puddling!

by Emma Perry, Claire Alexander
(Candlewick)

Reviewer: Christine Irvin

What kid doesn't like splishing and splashing in a mud puddle? In this book, three young kids grab their rain gear and meet their friends in front of their apartment building, where they all join in the fun of jumping and playing in puddles left by the recent rains. Filled with great illustrations, lots of descriptive action words, and short sentences, the book is perfect for young readers. (Ages 2-5)

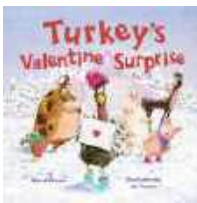


Maya Moves to a New Country

by Pearl Gifty Alimo, Sayani Mukherjee
(Greight Company)

Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Maya's father is in the military. As such, her family moves around a lot to be where he is stationed. After living in the United States for many years, she and her family will be moving to a new country: Japan. Before moving, Maya does some research to find out what her new home will be like. Although this story is fiction, it is packed with real information about a real place. The text is informative and is printed in different fonts throughout. The illustrations are lively, detailed, and very kid-friendly. (Ages 3-6)



Turkey's Valentine Surprise

by Wendi Silvano, Lee Harper
(Two Lions)

Reviewer: Christine Irvin

It's Valentine's Day and Turkey wants to give each of his friends a valentine, but he doesn't want them to see him deliver them. So, he comes up with some clever ideas to fool his friends. Unfortunately, his secret valentines aren't so secret after all. But, Turkey has fun making and delivering them, and all his friends enjoy their valentines, and that's really what counts. Delightfully expressive illustrations, a cute storyline, and some repetition all come together to create a book that everyone will enjoy. (Ages 3-7)



On Your Way!

by Mike Purewal
(Bumblebee Books)

Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

Follow a young girl on an amazing adventure from outer space to the middle of the universe. Rhythmic text and vibrant artwork combine for meaningful messages (for kids and adults) about being creative, overcoming obstacles, and protecting the environment. Go outside and play, be adventurous and imaginative, realize your dreams and potential. (Ages 3-8)

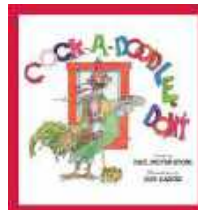


Aqua Paws

by Patricia Allieri, Stella Maris
(Aqua Kids Books)

Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

For a simple, informative lesson about preserving our oceans, swim along with Aqua Paws, as he looks for treasures with Purple Beak while cleaning up litter in the ocean, despite his fear of crabs. But when he gets stuck in plastic, who is going to rescue him? Adorable artwork, a suggestion page for ways to preserve the oceans, and a build your own crab instruction sheet are all part of this useful package. (Ages 3-8)

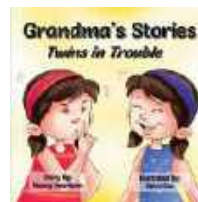


Cock-A-Doodle-Don't

by Paul Steven Stone, Don Carter
(AM Ink Publishing)

Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

Join the crew of barnyard animals as they try to quiet the rooster and his noisy cock-a-doodle-do. After calling a meeting, they decide to mock the rooster's doodle-do, which makes the rooster take off in a huff. Read on to see if he returns to the farm. With rhyming text and adorable illustrations, kids are bound to be entertained by this creative story. (Ages 3-8)

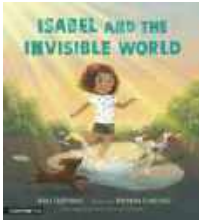


Grandma's Stories: Twins in Trouble

by Nancy Dearborn (Pen It! Publications)

Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

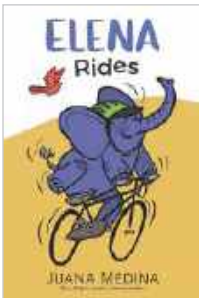
Siblings Hazel and Cory really like listening to the stories their grandma tells about when their mom and her twin sister were kids. It seems like the twins were always getting into some sort of mischief ... like in the case of the broken dish, the case of the dry toothbrushes ... what else did they get into when they were little? A fun read for parents and their playful kids. (Ages 3-9)



Isabel and the Invisible World

by Alan Lightman, Ramona Kaulitzki
(MIT Kids Press) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

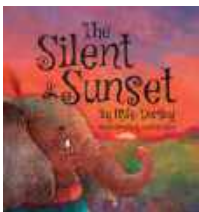
Physicist Alan Lightman uses a fictional book to illustrate the nonfictional concept of light waves. Isabel is almost 6 and is planning her birthday party. She is excited about the upcoming festivities, but she wants something special for her birthday: She wants to be able to see invisible things. Her mother gives her a prism for her birthday, showing Isabel how to see light waves that are normally invisible. This is a simple but informative physics lesson about light waves. The author also includes information about wavelengths, radio waves, and X-rays in the back matter for those interested in learning more. (Ages 4-6)



Elena Rides

by Juana Medina (Candlewick Press)
Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

Elena the purple elephant and a little red bird are the stars of the story, as Elena tries to learn to ride a bike. She falls and falls again, as the little bird friend cheers her on. The story offers a wonderful message of perseverance and learning something new, with the most adorable illustrations to accompany text that is perfect for beginning readers. (Ages 4-6)



The Silent Sunset

by Mike Dorsey, Carlos Velez
(Warren Publishing)
Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

An adorable friendship develops when Emma the elephant meets Anthony the ant. Emma is the largest and only deaf student at her school, while Anthony is the smallest student at his school, is hard of hearing, and has cerebral palsy. Their mutual love of sunsets provides a bond and teaches us all that what makes us different is what makes us special. Warm and colorful illustrations accompany this sweet tale. (Ages 4-7)



Sofia's First Ballet Class: Ballet Is Fun!

by Sara DeGennaro
(Archway Publishing)
Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

Tag along with Sofia as she experiences her first ballet class with Miss Mary. Correct posture, stretching, poses, first steps ... Sofia, in her pink tutu and ballet slippers, is so excited to complete her first day. The rhyming text and sweet illustrations make this picture book ideal for any youngsters interested in dance. (Ages 4-8)



Bella & Blue: Bella Meets Blue

by Berrie Torgan-Randall (Blue Bronco Books, Jr.) Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

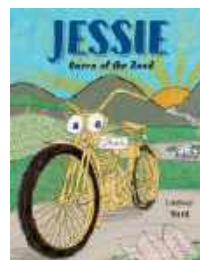
The first book in the graphic early reader series, *Bella & Blue*, contains three short stories about 8-year-old Bella who experiences anxiety in new situations. With the help of her lovable dog Blue and her perky grandma Gigi, Bella gains confidence in dealing with each new day's opportunities. Warm and cozy illustrations provide the perfect complement to the characters and the storyline. Includes a page in the back with instructions for drawing Blue. (Ages 4-8)



An American Story

by Kwame Alexander, Dare Coulter (Little, Brown) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Artist Dare Coulter takes author Kwame Alexander's words and illustrates them powerfully, leaving readers moved by the story of slavery. Together, they bring the story of slavery to life in a way I had not yet experienced. This is a must-read for everyone, young or old and of every ethnicity. (Ages 4-8)



Jessie: Queen of the Road

by Lindsay Ward (Two Lions) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Author Lindsay Ward uses a motorcycle named Jessie to represent seven different women, women who made their mark in history by riding motorcycles and breaking gender barriers. Although their names are not used in the text, they are mentioned in the Author's Note at the end. Delightful illustrations and a bit of repetitious text turn a nonfiction topic into an entertaining and educational picture book. (Ages 4-8)



My Mommy Is an Author: So What Will I Be When I Grow Up?

by Kelle Lima
(Writerverse Journey LLC)
Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

Kids of all ages can learn about the job of being an author in this creative story told from the point of view of little Dona, as she tries to copy some of the things her writer/illustrator mom does. The perfect tale for little ones for thinking about what they want to be when they grow up. Complete with artwork that jumps off the page and useful information in the back about being a writer. (Ages 4-8)



The Adventures of the Magical Whisk in France!

by Robin Lang, Leanne Rachel Allen
(Warren Publishing)
Reviewer: Deb Greenberg

In the first in a series of educational books that introduces readers to foods and languages from different countries, Mama Grace and her kids,

Bella and Luca, whisk away to France to take in the sights, smells, sounds, and tastes of a real French boulangerie. Learn about pâtisseries, petit fours, and other tasty foods. Delightful artwork, a recipe for croissants, and a pronunciation menu complete this magical story. (Ages 4-9)

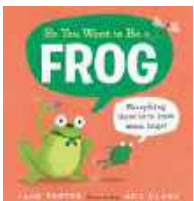


Desert Jungle

by Jeannie Baker (Candlewick)
Reviewer: Christine Irvin

A young boy lives in a tiny village in a desert valley. He never wanders far from home, partly because he thinks the desert is rather boring (he'd rather be looking at his tablet than be outside), and partly because of his fears of being attacked by

wild animals, particularly coyotes. But, when he visits his grandpa's ranch, he accidentally leaves his traveling bag outside. When he goes to retrieve it, he finds it missing. In an effort to locate it, he wanders farther and farther away from his grandpa's house, and in the process, discovers a beautiful, fascinating "desert jungle." Intricate, detailed mixed media art is used for the illustrations. The text is informative and the author includes extra information about the Sonoran Desert in the back of the book. (Ages 5-8)



So You Want to Be a Frog

by Jane Porter, Neil Clark (Candlewick)
Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Can you drink through your skin? Do you catch your food with your tongue? If your answer is "No," then maybe you would have trouble being a

frog. This book is—naturally—narrated by a frog. He entertains readers as well as educates them by providing fun and interesting facts about what it's like to be a frog. Colorful, kid-friendly illustrations complement the text and add to the fun. (Ages 5-9)

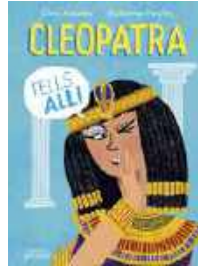


Curtain Up! Behind the Scenes at the Royal Opera House

by Royal Opera House, Lauren O'Hara
(Thames & Hudson) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Get a glimpse of what goes on behind the scenes at the Royal Opera House. The book highlights the production of *The Nutcracker*, but is packed

full of information that relates to most opera productions, from the costume department to the ballet studio to the orchestra pit, among others. Colorful, detailed illustrations add to the experience. (Ages 7-10)



Cleopatra Tells All!

by Chris Naunton, Guilherme Karsten
(Thames & Hudson)

Reviewer: Christine Irvin

Author Chris Naunton gives readers a view into the life of the famous Cleopatra, who was once the Pharaoh of Ancient Egypt. He tells the tale from Cleopatra's point of view, making her

the narrator of her life. Naunton uses as much factual information as possible to tell her story, filling in some of the blanks with conjecture based on what is known. The book is divided into dozens of chapters, each set out somewhat like a comic book. The illustrations are vivid and are perfect for the text. This book would make an excellent addition to a middle school library. (Ages 7-10)

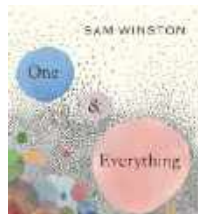


A History of Words for Children

by Mary Richards, Rose Blake (Thames & Hudson) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

In her unique style, Mary Richards gives kids a brief history of language, starting with nonverbal gestures, followed by sounds, then by pictures (hieroglyphics and Chinese characters), and then to a written language. The book is

divided into eight chapters and includes a timeline of the history of words and a glossary of terms used throughout the text. Filled with detailed illustrations and packed full of useful information, this would make a great addition to any young person's library. (Ages 7-10)



One & Everything

by Sam Winston (Candlewick) Reviewer: Christine Irvin

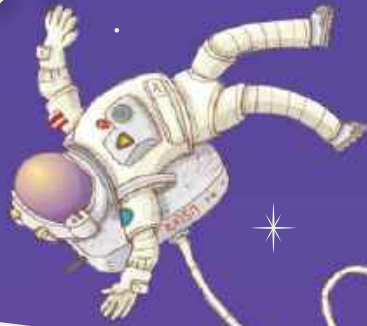
One is a story, and he wanted to be the one and only story in the world. One gobbled up all the other stories around him until he was the only story left. And then ... something unexpected

happened. Author/artist Sam Winston uses few words and stark illustrations to tell the story of One. He also includes some interesting information at the back of the book that explains his motivation for writing the book, which deals with the constant evolution of language—where it came from and how it keeps changing. (Ages 7-10)

To submit your book for review, email Cristy Bertini at cristy@storymonsters.com for submission guidelines.

ASTRONAUT

It's a Job That's Supercool!



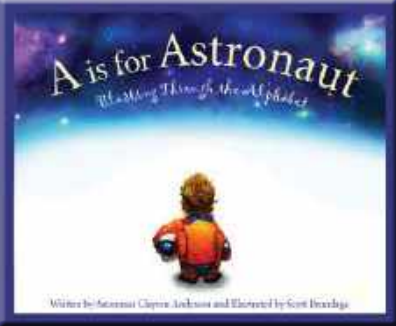
Written by
a Retired
Astronaut!



Blast Off with More Picture Books By Retired US Astronaut Clayton Anderson!

TEAMWORK

Many of the skills needed to succeed in space also come in handy here on Earth.



Q&A
WITH

SARA SHEPARD

by Julianne Black DiBlasi • photo by Danielle Shields

We all know that being a middle schooler is a whirlwind of experiences, discoveries, and sometimes, intense emotions. I can remember vividly my experiences (both awesome and truly horrifying) during my own junior high years, and now prepping my daughter to embark on her own middle school journey this fall, I'm mixed with both excitement ... and dread. If only there was a manual I could give her, or a set of flash cards for all those lame "frenemies" and awkward social situations—oh, look! Found one!

Sara Shepard's new book, *Penny Draws a Best Friend*, is the first book in a fun new middle grade series that covers both the social aspect of that time period, as well as the super important relevance of social-emotional learning that parallels those experiences.

For example, Shepard introduces us to her main character Penny Lowry, a fifth grader who grapples with anxiety and the challenges of starting a new grade. Penny eagerly anticipates reuniting with her best friend Violet, only to find that Violet has been acting strange since returning from summer break. Violet distances herself from Penny, preferring the company of Riley, the school's meanest girl. Penny, confused and hurt, wonders if she has done something to cause this change in their friendship.

But within the main storyline umbrella of friendship, so many fun (and not-so-fun) topics come up, setting the stage to wipe clean those feelings of being alone or unusual. As a mom watching these very same scenarios play out at home, young readers will fall right into step with the engaging and humorous narrative.

The book really showcases Sara Shepard's ability to connect with her audience while being fun, open and creative! Plus, the combo of drawings and text are the perfect I'm-reading-but-don't-tell-me-I'm-reading presentation for reluctant readers, as well.

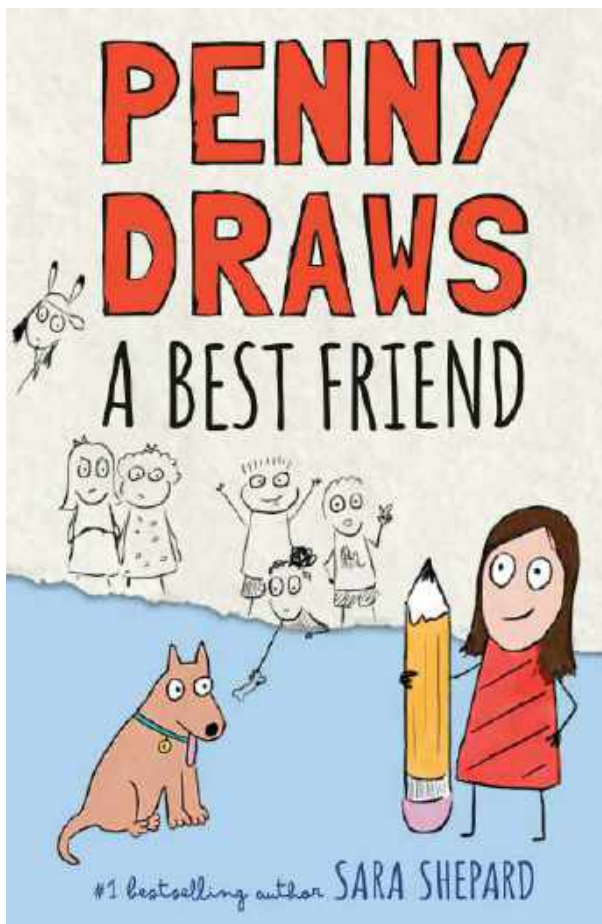
Now it's time to meet Sara!

Q: What inspired you to write for this specific age group?

A: My kids! I have wanted to write for middle grade readers for years, but it seemed like such a difficult voice. Having kids right in this age group, however, made the voice seem effortless. It brought me right back to middle school. I also realized that some of the themes of Penny—especially those about mental health—aren't discussed for middle grade readers that much, and they should be.

Q: How do you approach conveying meaningful messages while keeping the narrative engaging and relatable for young readers?





A: My main character, Penny, has a lot of worries and big feelings. I think a lot of kids can relate to that, and I wanted to normalize anxiety and provide some tips for kids when they're feeling overwhelmed. I tried to balance that with silly and fun, too—like a lot of Penny's worries are out of this world, and she makes funny observations. She also meets a lot of winning friends who add fun to the story—like Kristian, who's obsessed with roller coasters and always has a project going, and Chloe, who believes in all things supernatural and has a flair for the dramatic. I also think the doodle-style drawings help! The characters all have exaggerated expressions, which always makes things funnier.

Q: How do you ensure that your young readers are equipped to navigate these subjects in a responsible and age-appropriate manner?

A: Penny talks to the "Feelings Teacher" at school—even when she's worried about talking to her parents at home. A lot of schools are fortunate enough to have these sorts of teachers on staff, but there are characters who also turn to other trusted adults, too. I also tried to make the plot of the *Penny* books

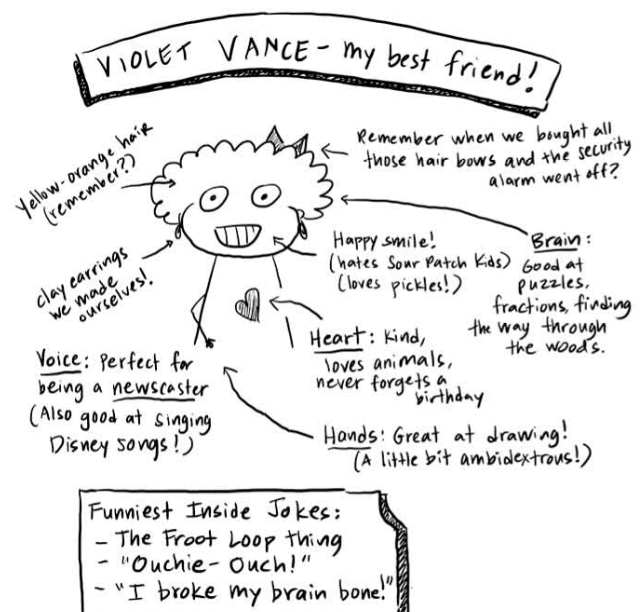
relatable, things all kids deal with or might face. Stuff like shifting friendships, family secrets, new friendships, speaking in front of a group, the first time going on a class trip, and more.

Q: How do you skate the fine line between entertainment and education? What are your personal red flags that you are tipping too much one way or the other?

A: I never try to be too preachy, I guess. Penny learns some of her lessons from her Feelings Teacher, but I don't make those moments the only place she finds insight—otherwise kids will be like, "Oh, here come another Feelings Teacher chapter again, we're in for a lesson." Sometimes Penny goes to the Feelings Teacher and just vents! I also test out my material (especially the drawings) on my kids, so they're a good judge of what's entertaining and what isn't working.

Q: What are some of the emotions you write about Penny experiencing during this transformative phase of life? What is the feedback from readers on how relatable these experiences are?

A: Penny worries, obviously, about things she can't control—and she encounters a lot of those things in the very first book when her best friend, Violet, decides she wants to be friends with someone else. That happened to me when I was young, and I've heard from readers it has happened to them, too. But I try to focus on different facets of anxiety with each book—in the second book,



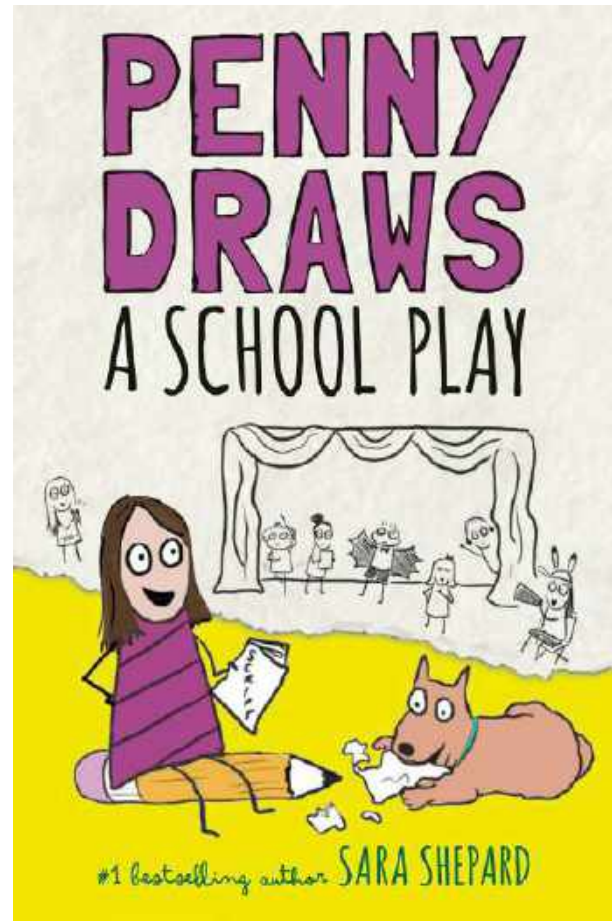
it's facing your fears and learning that you can't control every situation. In the third book, it's about feelings of "not being good enough" or not contributing enough to the group. And so on. As far as feedback goes, I've heard from a lot of readers saying they worry, too, and by reading *Penny*, they don't feel so alone. That's all I can ask for as a writer!

Q: Is there a particular emotion that you find challenging to express through writing? If so, how do you work through it?

A: I haven't found any emotions in Penny particularly difficult, maybe because I get to accompany the emotions with drawings. Even if I can't quite get across the emotion Penny's feeling on her face, she has such a big imagination that she often transforms what she's feeling into an imaginary scenario that readers can understand instantly—for example, when Penny faces the prospect of embarking on something new and scary, it feels to her like diving into a swimming pool filled with snakes. That's easy to imagine!

Q: In your opinion, are there any specific challenges or preconceived notions about expressing emotions for middle schoolers more than other ages? Why does middle school always seem to stand out in everyone's mind as a nexus of anxiety?

A: Everyone says middle school is hard, and it certainly was for me. It's such an awkward phase of life—you're caught between



being a child and being a teen. Everyone is in different stages of development and maturity. In the first book, Penny's best friend says certain things she does are "babyish," which throws her into a tailspin and makes her question lots of her choices. It seems like cliques form, kids start having crushes, school gets more intense, your body starts to change—it's a mess! I started writing young adult novels because I was drawn to the big feelings teenagers experience, but I think those same feelings apply to middle schoolers, maybe even moreso.

Q: What advice would you give to middle schoolers (and their parents and teachers) who may struggle with identifying and expressing their emotions? How can they feel more confident and supported in embracing their feelings?

A: Something Penny realizes in the first book is that she isn't the only one who visits the Feelings Teacher—by a long shot. When I was growing up, I thought I was the only one experiencing anxiety, but when I got older, I realized that so many other kids were anxious, too. We were all just hiding it. But I don't think



there should be any stigma to having feelings or having a hard time. I think messaging about that has become much better over the years, but I still think we could push even more. I was lucky enough, growing up, to use journaling to work out my feelings, and I think that's a good resource for parents, teachers, and students. But talking to a trusted adult can help, too. It doesn't have to be your parents—Penny often shies away from telling her mom things because she fears she'll overreact. Bottom line, don't keep feelings bottled up. Sometimes just talking them out will make you feel so much better. And there is definitely someone out there who wants to help you.

Q: With many of our *Story Monster* readers being in the children's lit world as well, what advice would you give to aspiring children's book authors looking to make a difference in the lives of young readers? How can they create unforgettable stories that inspire, educate, and spark joy?

A: I wanted to write a middle grade novel for a while, and I had a few false starts, but I sort of let the idea of Penny come to me in a way that felt natural and unforced. I think that's the best way to write stories—do what really inspires you and gets you excited every day. And much like for the *Pretty Little Liars* series, I used experiences from my own life to inspire me—Penny is based so much on my childhood and all the ways that I worried.

Also, illustrating these novels is tough, but it's my favorite part of writing this series. At the same time, I don't think of myself as an illustrator, so it was a big deal for me to even ask to do the art for these books. You never know what you're capable of until you try!

Q: You also have a second book in the series, *Penny Draws a School Play*, scheduled for publication on September 5. Can you give us some hints about what comes up for Penny in the next book?

A: Penny faces some big changes in *Penny Draws a School Play*—not just the secret revealed at the end of the first book but many, many more. But she also meets some new friends and has a lot of fun. The novel is set around her class putting on a school play, so there's a lot of silliness and chaos involved with casting, rehearsals, and the performance. It promises the same fun artwork and heart as the first novel—I hope readers check it out and continue with Penny's story.

For more information about Sara Shepard and her work, visit Instagram @saracshepard or @sarasheparddrawspenny or pennydraws.com. ●

Julianne Black DiBlasi • Mom, wielder of pixel, paint, and pen. krakenSky.com



Welcome to the

Magical World of Sienna!



An enchanting children's illustrated chapter book that will delight young readers and keep them captivated from beginning to end.

Inspired by a vacation with her parents to Disney World when she was four, Sienna asks her parents for two mice as pets. So begins her journey to convince her parents to get her pet mice. Follow Sienna on her magical adventure as she meets a kind man, two incredible mice, and experiences life changing events along the way.

"Wonderful book! This is an adorable, magical book for people of all ages. I thoroughly enjoyed reading about Sienna's adventures and look forward to seeing where her journey takes her next! Beautifully written and illustrated."

-Amazon 5-Star Review



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THE
BOOK BUG

LAUREN CASTILLO:

From a Preschool Self-Portrait to the Caldecott Honor

by Raven Howell

Lauren Castillo jumped on the children's literature fast track as the author and illustrator of the 2015 Caldecott Honor winner, *Nana in the City*, and penned the outstanding Junior Library Guild Selection chapter book series, *Our Friend Hedgehog*.

Before that, Lauren studied illustration at the Maryland Institute College of Art before receiving her MFA from New York's School of Visual Arts. Her exceptional talent opened the gateway to illustrating critically acclaimed picture books for several well-known authors. For instance, her artwork can be found in *Imagine* by Juan Felipe Herrera, *Twenty Yawns* by Jane Smiley, and *Yard Sale* by Eve Bunting.

I tracked her down in Harrisburg, Pennsylvania, where she lives. "We recently renovated our little city backyard, and I've been loving spending time outside building my new garden space. I also enjoy just sitting outside on a nice day and listening to the birds and the wind chimes."

That makes sense, coming from her self-described inquisitive, playful, chatty, and shy nature.

"When I was young, I really wanted to be a Walt Disney animator. That eventually changed to illustrator when I met my high school

art teacher, Kurt Bittle, who was also an illustrator. He graciously helped me put together a portfolio to apply to art school."

Of creative inspiration, Lauren says, "I am inspired by so many books, but two that I return to again and again are *The Gardener* by Sarah Stewart and David Small, and *Leaves* by David Ezra Stein. Those books are the perfect melding of text and illustration and I often think of them while working on my own author/illustrator picture books."

She wishes she could have met another one of her predecessors. "I'd love to chat with illustrator Garth Williams. It would be incredible to hear about his experience illustrating *Charlotte's Web*, and where he found inspiration to create those beautiful line drawings."

If you visit Lauren's website, you'll find her own very first drawing. "The first image I drew myself was a self-portrait in preschool! As I got older, my brother and I would pause Disney movies and draw

our favorite characters from the screen to practice our drawing skills. I often tell budding artists that it is OK and very helpful to copy the work of artists you admire for practice. Replicating another artist's work can be a great learning tool because it helps you understand how the character and/or scene came together. Eventually you'll have the ability to create your own characters and worlds, which is the most rewarding!"

Her distinguished artwork progressed over the years. "I've always been drawn to the linework in illustration, and when I first started illustrating books, I was using a technique called acetone transferring. I would use ink pens to create the finished drawing, then on a copy machine I'd enlarge the drawing by at least 200 percent and print it as a mirror image. I'd then use that image and transfer the lines by rubbing acetone over the back of the print and on to the good paper. Because the lines were both enlarged and transferred in black, it created a very bold look. I have moved on from using acetone to transfer my lines, but have kept the same thick, outlined look readers recognize in my art."



"Yellow is my favorite color to work with these days. I've been enjoying using yellow for highlights and glows lately."

As with most authors and illustrators, Lauren agrees that there are both rewarding and challenging aspects of creating a book. She says, "I think just coming up with a solid idea is the hardest part of my work when I start a project. I have a lot of ideas, but most of them never make it into a fully formed story."

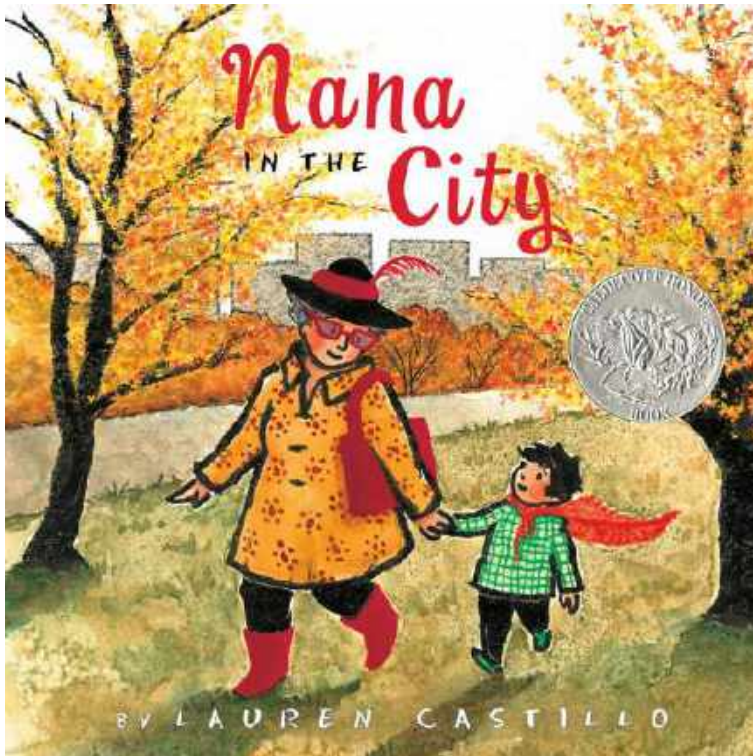
On the other hand, it's fun, too. "I love the brainstorming stage where I don't feel the need to be precious and I get to just scribble down rough thoughts and sketches into my notebook. It's so exciting when the pieces of that book idea begin to form! I feel like I am putting together a puzzle as I create the storyboard."

Lauren continues, "It takes anywhere from two to five years from the idea stage of a book to the actual holding of the printed, published book. That's a long time! So, it is super rewarding to be

able to hold that book in my hands after all the effort that I put into it. Another huge reward is having the opportunity to visit schools and sharing my love of books and art with children."

A Caldecott award is a huge achievement for any author. Lauren didn't see it coming. "I was completely taken by surprise when I got the call that I'd won a Caldecott Honor for *Nana in the City*. It was 4 a.m., and the call left me stunned. After I came out of shock, I woke up my brother (who I was staying with at the time) and called all the people I was allowed to tell. Later that morning we watched the live announcement, and then celebrated with a hike in the Hollywood Hills with breathtaking views of Los Angeles. I remember it was sunny, around 70 degrees, and I was deliriously happy. It couldn't have been a more perfect day."

She adds, "Aside from the *Our Friend Hedgehog* books, *Nana in the City* holds an extra special place in my heart. It's based on a childhood memory of visiting my nana at her home in NYC."



Lauren's *Our Friend Hedgehog* books carry warm messages of friendship, family, and working together as a team. The cast of characters brings to mind a touch of classic Winnie the Pooh charm in that cozy kind of way.

"I'd love to continue building the *Our Friend Hedgehog* series. These chapter books have been my dream project, and if I have the chance to return to Hedge Hollow, I will be very happy."

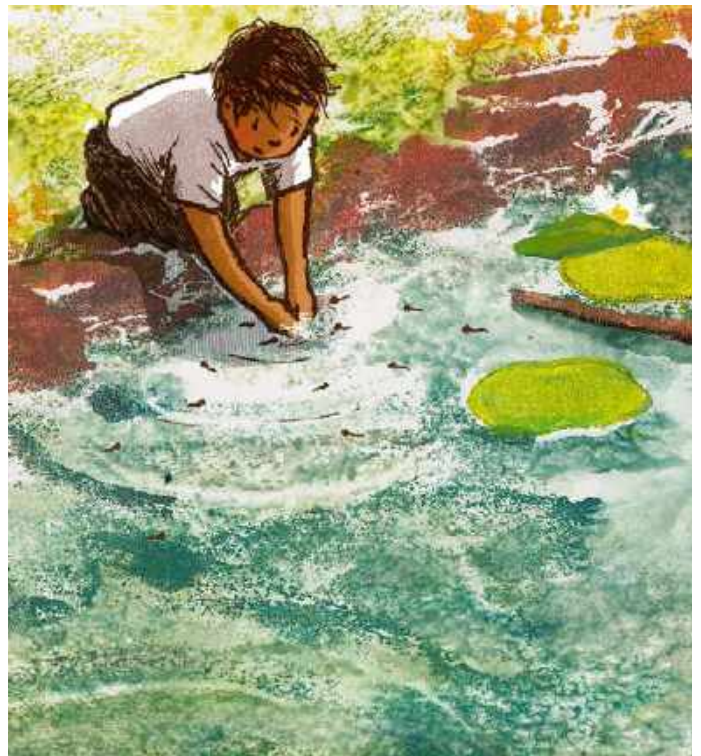
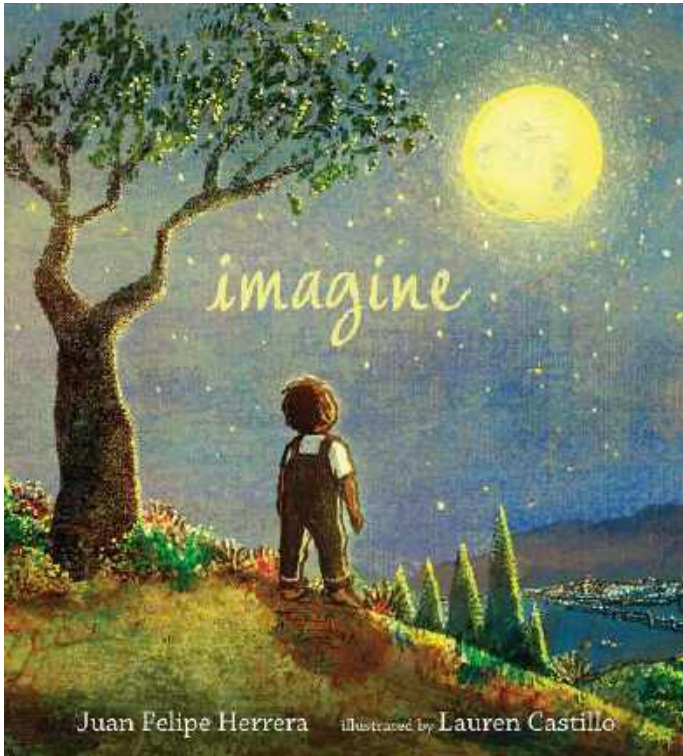
Oh—and there's one more thing, too. "The character of Hedgehog is very much me! I went through a move and lost good friends and community and had to find the courage to start over in my new city. This is very much the story I tell in *Our Friend Hedgehog*, *The Story of Us*."

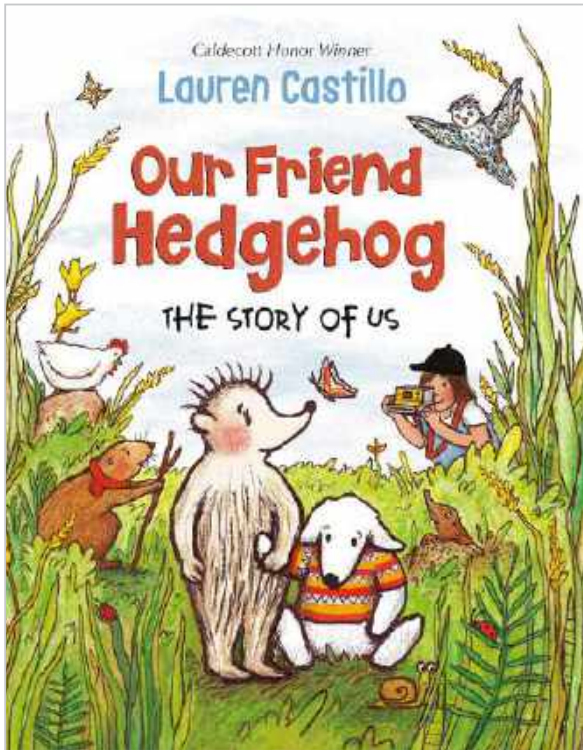
Not surprisingly, Lauren holds an affection for hedgehogs. "I have quite the collection of spiny hedgehog statues, ornaments, and garden decorations gifted to me by friends and strangers alike. Even my clothes are fluffed by hedgehog dryer balls!"

Earlier this year, the children's community received the gift of a new John Schu book titled *This Is a Story*, illustrated by Lauren. The story is a homage to the power of books and how they guide us to kind human connections.

"John Schu and I have been friends for many years," Lauren tells me. "But I did not know that he had me in mind as illustrator for *This Is a Story* until our publisher, Candlewick Press, reached out with the offer. I was so excited to illustrate one of his first picture





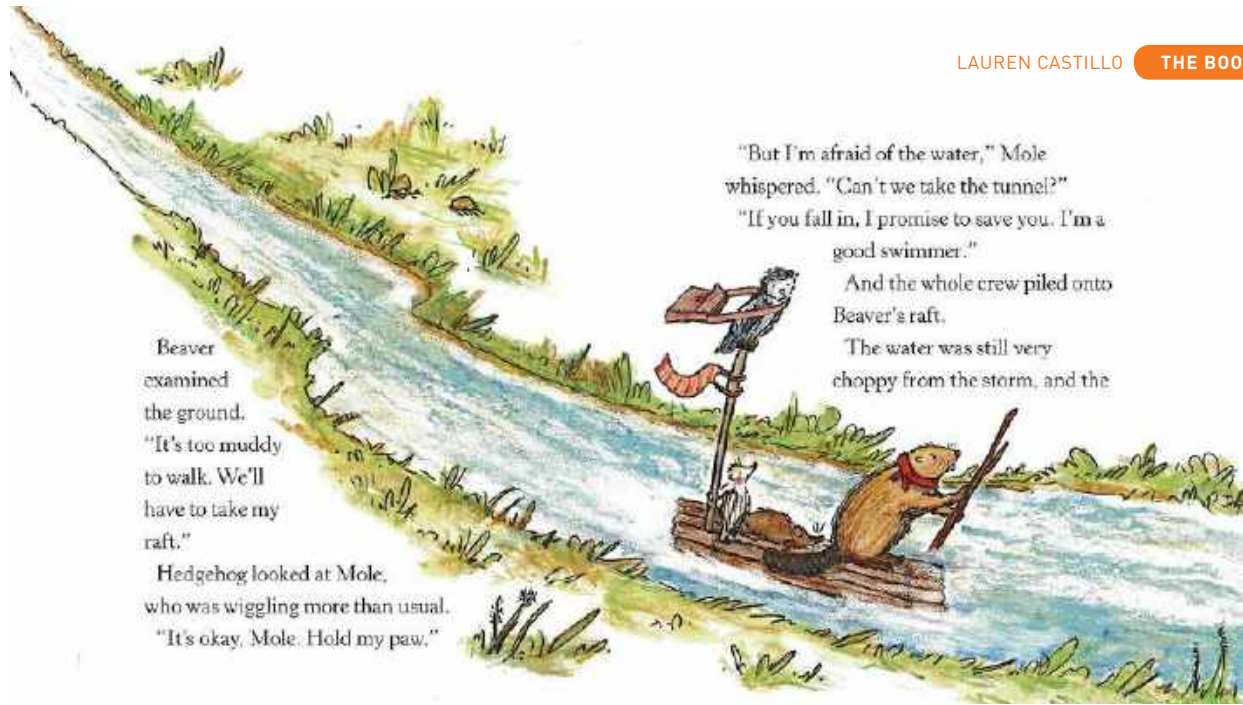


books. The manuscript was an illustrator's dream because John kept the text spare and left lots of room for an illustrator to add layers to the story. I got to create a visual story that isn't in the text but runs parallel to it, and that was great fun for me."

On a personal note, another fun thing Lauren doesn't want to live without is a pet. "Specifically, dogs," she says. "We lost our two pups recently and the house is just too quiet. To remedy this, I try to pet every dog I pass on the street!"

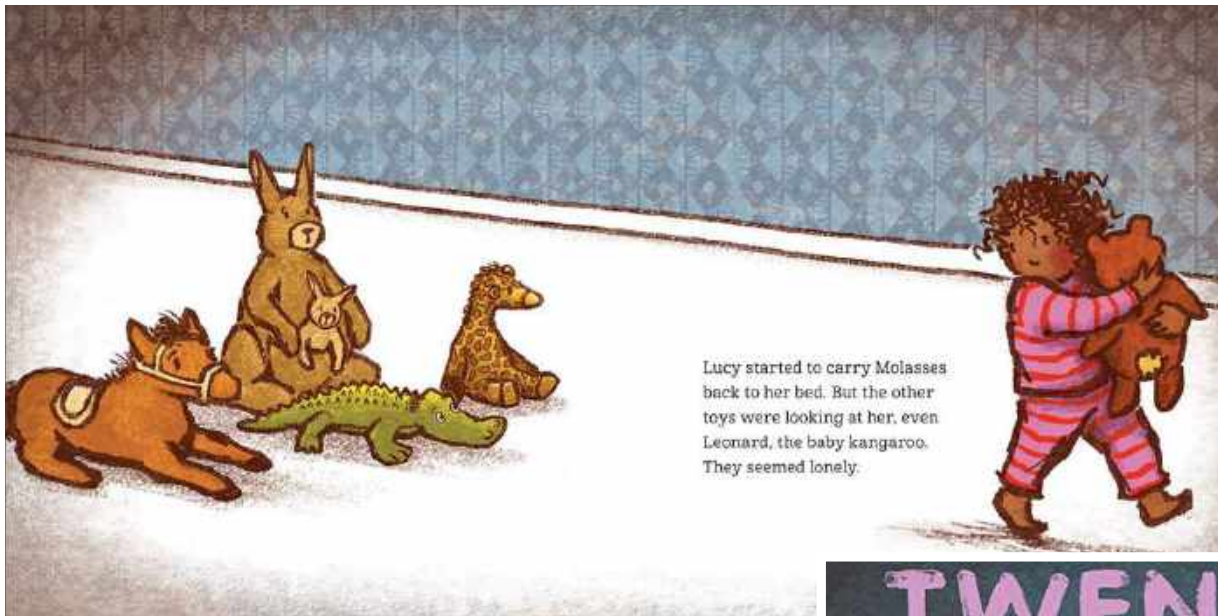
In addition to a possible new pet on her horizon, there are other upcoming goodies she's looking forward to. "Next spring, I have two picture books that I wrote and illustrated coming out. *Nana in the Country*, which is a companion book to *Nana in the City*. This time Nana visits her grandson at his home in the country. The other book is called *Just Like Millie*. It's about a child who, after a move, struggles to come out of her shell, and a dog that ends up teaching her how to make a friend."





Beaver examined the ground. "It's too muddy to walk. We'll have to take my raft." Hedgehog looked at Mole, who was wiggling more than usual. "It's okay, Mole. Hold my paw."

"But I'm afraid of the water," Mole whispered. "Can't we take the tunnel?" "If you fall in, I promise to save you. I'm a good swimmer." And the whole crew piled onto Beaver's raft. The water was still very choppy from the storm, and the

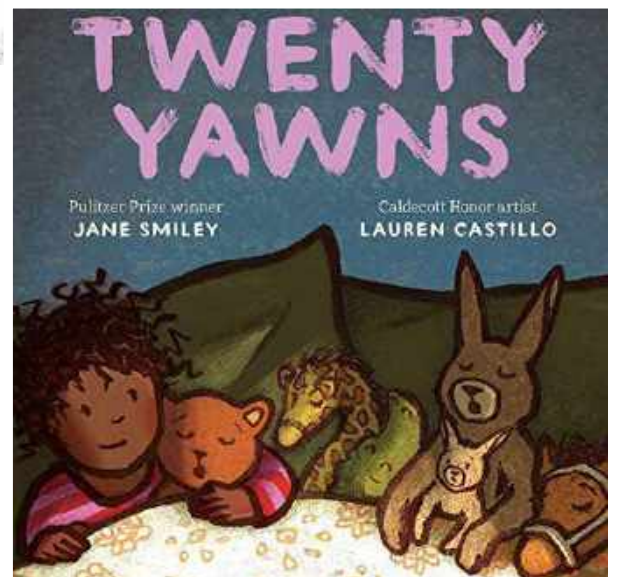


Lucy started to carry Molasses back to her bed. But the other toys were looking at her, even Leonard, the baby kangaroo. They seemed lonely.

As for remaining creative and cheerful, Lauren suggests taking a walk. "I find that getting outside to stretch my legs, get some sun, and say hello to neighbors on the street is so rewarding. It helps relieve sadness if I'm down, or anxiety if I'm nervous. And it also fuels my creativity. Walks can open our minds up to the world around us, and you just might think of a great idea for a book!"

For more information about Lauren Castillo and her work, visit laurencastillo.com.

Raven Howell is an award-winning children's author and poet. ravenhowell.com



IT'S ALL ABOUT THE BUMBLEBEES

words and photos by Conrad J. Storad

In years past I've written often about a special group of living things and the important work they do on our planet. My words were all about the pollinators: bees, birds, butterflies, and other creatures that help carry out one of nature's most important processes.

What's the buzz? Pollination, of course.

Pollination is a vital stage in the life cycle of all flowering plants. Scientists say that more than 80 percent of all flowering plants need the help of a pollinator. It's the single bee or bird or beetle or butterfly that moves the heavy pollen grains from one plant to another. In most cases, the wind is not strong enough to do the job.

Pollinators come in all shapes and sizes. The majority are insects. More than 200,000 kinds of bees, beetles, butterflies, moths, wasps, and ants do most of the work.

Today I'll focus on just one. It's all about the bumblebees, baby!

Here in Ohio, my wife and I look forward to seeing bumblebees in our flower garden. The common eastern bumblebee is one of the first pollinators to make an appearance once blooms begin to open. Hearing the big bee's loud buzzing as it bobs around flowers is a sure indication that spring has arrived.



The bumblebee's wings glisten in the fading light of sunset.



Bumblebee working overtime on a coneflower.



Almost a full load of pollen.

Of course, there are many kinds of bumblebees. Many have distinctive black, yellow, and white colors in various patterns. But others can be red and black or orange and black. More than 250 species have been identified around the world.

In North America alone, depending on who you ask, there are between 40 and 50 species, probably more. Their scientific names in Latin are often a mouthful. The common names of bumblebees are much more fun.

In the United States, we have yellow-faced, brown-belted, fuzzy horned, yellow-banded, buff-tailed, white-tailed, black-tailed, white-shouldered, and tri-colored bumble bees, just to name a few.

Bumblebees are much larger than the honeybees, their more famous cousins. They look like fuzzy flying teddy bears. Some scientists call them the “Zeppelins of the insect world.”

The big bees look and feel fuzzy because they are covered with long, soft hairs called setae. Each hair is branched, which makes it



Common Eastern Bumblebee at work on a coneflower.

“stickier” for collecting pollen grains. The thicker hair also provides insulation for the bumblebee’s body. That is why bumble bees can forage for pollen on wet, cold, and windy days in early spring and late fall.

Bumblebees depend on flowers for nectar and pollen as their only food. They slurp nectar with a long tongue and gather pollen with hairy legs. The pollen is stored in sticky balls that are stashed in handy “pollen baskets” attached to their back legs.

Enough about names and color and size and shape. Bumble bees are big and their loud buzzing does sound mean. So, let’s get to the important stuff. Do bumblebees sting? How bad does it hurt?

The answer is Yes, and No!

A male bumblebee does not have a stinger. It can’t sting even if it wanted to.

A female worker bumblebee does have a stinger. It can sting, but is never willing to sting, unless you mess with their nest. But unlike honeybees, bumble bees do NOT lose their stinger after a sting. They can sting again and again.

I leave the rest of the answer to Professor Justin O. Schmidt, an entomologist at the University of Arizona and the author of *Sting of the Wild*. Schmidt is one of the world’s leading experts on stinging insects. He created the Schmidt Pain Scale to rank the power of various insect stings. The scale goes from 1 to 4. A sting rated 4 is the most painful.

On his pain scale, Schmidt rates a bumblebee sting as a 2.

He writes: “Pain like colorful flames; as if fireworks have landed on your arm.”

I say, always respect nature’s creatures, small and large, and you’ll be just fine.

Learn more about bumblebees:

Books:

The Book of Bees: Inside the Hives and Lives of Honeybees, Bumblebees, Cuckoo Bees, and Other Busy Buzzers

by Lela Nargi

Cate and the Garden Bandits

by Betsy Coffeen

The Sting of the Wild

by Justin O. Schmidt

A Sting in the Tale (My Adventures with Bumblebees)

by Dave Goulson

Websites:

Animal Corner

animalcorner.org/animal/bumble-bee/

Ask A Biologist – Culture in Bumblebees

askabiologist.asu.edu

Easy Science for Kids

easyscienceforkids.com/all-about-bumblebees

Birds and Blooms

www.birdsandblooms.com/

More buzz about bumblebees:

- Bumblebees are fast fliers. Their wings can beat about 200 times per second.
- Bumblebees are social insects that live in small colonies. Each colony has a queen and from 50 to 500 individual bees.
- Bumblebees build their nests in ground holes. They like dens abandoned by mice or other rodents. They also nest in cavities in trees or logs.
- Bumblebees are native to North America. Honeybees are not. Settlers from Europe first brought honeybees here in the 1600s. Bumblebees do produce some honey, but not enough for humans to eat.
- In cold weather, bumblebees shiver to bring their body temperature up to 86 degrees F. That's their minimum temperature to fly. ●

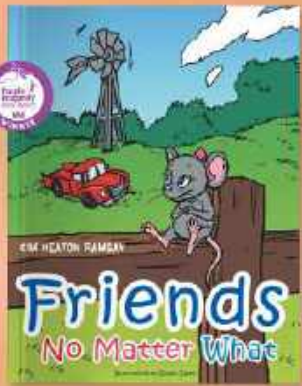
Conrad J. Storar is the national award-winning author or editor of more than 50 science and nature books for children and young adults. His first book in a new series, *Night Watchers: Nocturnal Creatures of North America*, is out now. conradjstorad.com

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SUPPORT YOUR LIBRARY

by Olivia Amiri, age 16

I was checking out a book at the end of the school year to read recreationally. The librarian at the counter was one I hadn't seen, and before I even placed the book on the counter she quickly said, "Phone or computer charger?" My response was, "Neither," and was followed by a bewildering exchange where we continued to surprise each other. She told me she didn't know how to scan the book, and so I directed her in inputting my information to be recorded. It felt like I was at the self-checkout at the grocery store attempting to maneuver a Jane Austen novel on the scanner.

It felt like I wasn't in a library at all. I also recently noticed that in the past two years, I haven't seen one person in the library actually reading. At first, I chalked this up

to the fact that library books are for use outside of school, but after my comical encounter with the librarian who assumed that the only thing I could be asking for was a charger, things changed. I've borrowed chargers and sat in the library to work on a paper on my computer, but I had also always considered it the ethos of academics for the students as well as the heart of the campus itself.

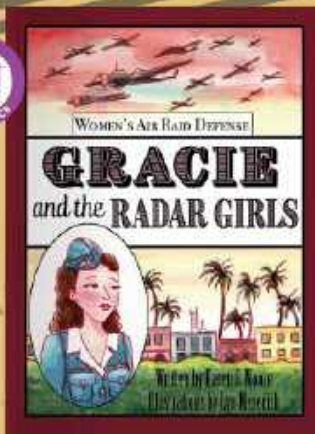
I wonder how, as time progresses, school libraries might change even further due to the lack of engaged reading as well as the pressurized book bans in some states. I will still continue to check out books (and sometimes hold them past the due date) and I encourage you to do the same in your community. ●

Sixteen-year-old Olivia Amiri is a little girl with big advice! Sharing insights and observations on the world around us, her message is clear: kids are still the best teachers to remind grown-ups of the simple joys in life. livonlife.com

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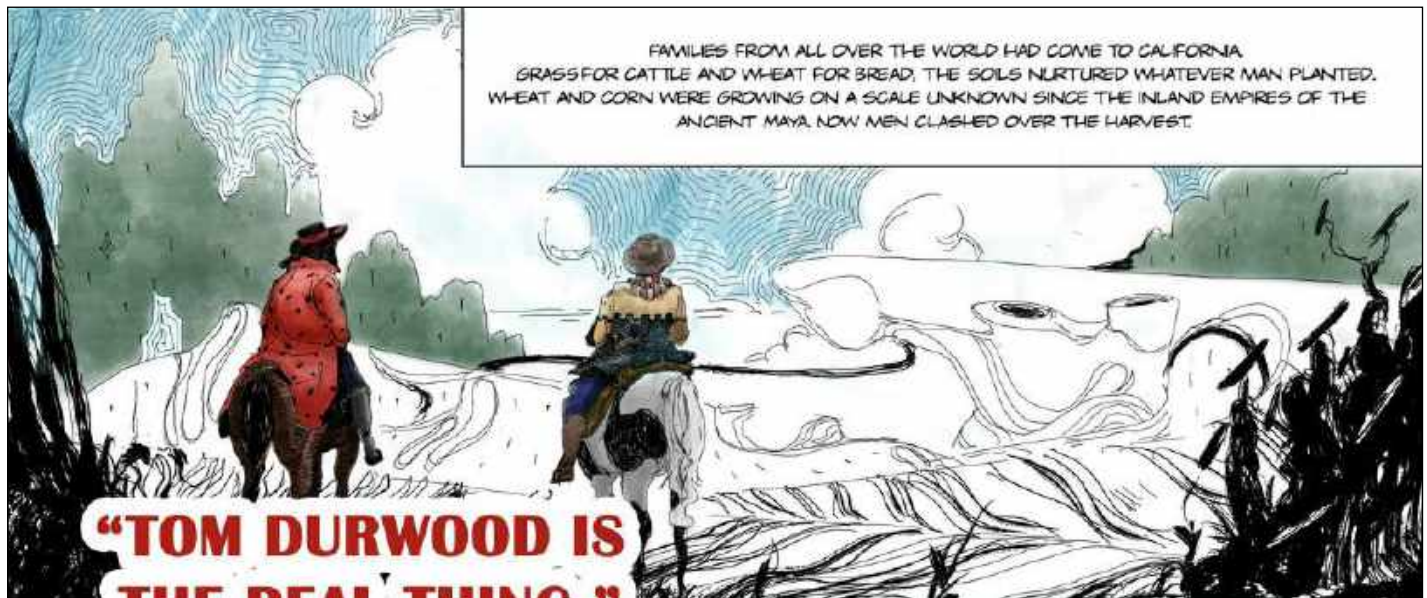
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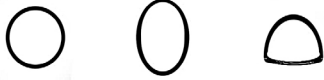
- www.boatmansdaughter.com
- www.mycolonials.com
- www.themathgirls.com
- www.usginchina.com
- www.empirestudies.com
- www.kidlitcrit.com





1. BODY TYPE:

ROUND OVAL GUMDROP



IS YOUR MONSTER FURRY?



Coloring page from
HUGSBY

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PET MONSTER HERE!**



2. ADD A FACE:

EYES (HOW MANY?) ○ ○ ○

EARS? ROUNDED POINTY
FIN-LIKE
(OR NO EARS!)

HORNS OR SCALES?

NOSE? ●

MOUTH?

3. ADD ARMS AND LEGS

 HOW MANY
OF EACH?

4. DOES YOUR MONSTER WEAR CLOTHES?



5. COLOR YOUR MONSTER!

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DESIGNED BY: _____

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