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ABSTRACT

This is the fourth volume of the "Biography Today Author Series." Each volume contains alphabetically arranged sketches. Each entry provides at least one picture of the individual profiled with additional information about the birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. The entries end with a list of accessible sources designed to lead the student to further reading on the individual and a current address. Obituary entries also are included and clearly marked in both the table of contents and at the beginning of the entry. Profiles in this volume include: (1) Betsy Byars, author of "The Summer of the Swans" and the "Bingo Brown" books; (2) Chris Carter, creator of the television series "The X-Files" and "Millennium"; (3) Caroline B. Cooney, author of romance, mystery, horror, and suspense stories for young adults; (4) Christopher Paul Curtis, author of "The Watsons Go to Birmingham - 1963"; (5) Anne Frank, Holocaust Victim and author of "The Diary of Anne Frank"; (6) Robert Heinlein, author of science fiction books including "Stranger in a Strange Land"; (7) Marguerite Henry, writer of books for children including "Misty of Chincoteague," "Justin Morgan Had a Horse," "King of the Wind," and "Brighty of the Grand Canyon"; (8) Lois Lowry, author of "Number the Stars," "The Giver," and the "Anastasia" Series; (9) Melissa Mathison, scriptwriter for "The Black Stallion," "E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial," and "The Indian in the Cupboard"; (10) Bill Peet, author and illustrator of children's books, including "Farewell to Shady Glade" and "The Whingdingdilly," as well as former illustrator and screen writer for Disney Animated Films such as "Pinocchio" and "101 Dalmations"; and (11) August Wilson, playwright and author of "Fences" and "The Piano Lesson." (EH)

Vol. 4
1998

Biography Today

Profiles of People of Interest to Young Readers

Author Series

Christopher Paul Curtis

Lois Lowry

Featured in this issue . . .

Chris Carter
Caroline B. Cooney
Robert Heinlein
Marguerite Henry
Melissa Mathison
Bill Peet
August Wilson

Betsy Byars

Anne Frank

Biography Today

Profiles of People of Interest to Young Readers

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Preface

Welcome to the fourth volume of the **Biography Today Author Series**. We are publishing this series in response to the growing number of suggestions from our readers, who want more coverage of more people in *Biography Today*. Over the past few years, we have published several special subject volumes, covering **Artists, Authors, Scientists and Inventors, Sports Figures,** and **World Leaders.** Each of these hardcover volumes is 200 pages in length and covers approximately 15 individuals of interest to readers aged 9 and above. The length and format of the entries is like those found in the regular issues of *Biography Today*, but there is **no duplication** between the regular series and the special subject volumes.

The Plan of the Work

As with the regular issues of *Biography Today*, this special subject volume on **Authors** was especially created to appeal to young readers in a format they can enjoy reading and readily understand. Each volume contains alphabetically arranged sketches. Each entry provides at least one picture of the individual profiled, and bold-faced rubrics lead the reader to information on birth, youth, early memories, education, first jobs, marriage and family, career highlights, memorable experiences, hobbies, and honors and awards. Each of the entries ends with a list of easily accessible sources designed to lead the student to further reading on the individual and a current address. Obituary entries are also included, written to provide a perspective on the individual's entire career. Obituaries are clearly marked in both the table of contents and at the beginning of the entry.

Biographies are prepared by Omnigraphics editors after extensive research, utilizing the most current materials available. Those sources that are generally available to students appear in the list of further reading at the end of the sketch.

Indexes

To provide easy access to entries, each issue of the regular *Biography Today* series and each volume of the Special Subject Series contains a Name Index, General Index covering occupations, organizations, and ethnic and minority origins, Places of Birth Index, and a Birthday Index. These indexes cumulate

with each succeeding volume or issue. Each of the Special Subject Volumes will be indexed as part of these cumulative indexes, so that readers can locate information on all individuals covered in either the regular or the special volumes. A "Guide to the Indexes" appears on page 159.

Our Advisors

This member of the *Biography Today* family of publications was reviewed by an Advisory Board comprised of librarians, children's literature specialists, and reading instructors so that we could make sure that the concept of this publication—to provide a readable and accessible biographical magazine for young readers—was on target. They evaluated the title as it developed, and their suggestions have proved invaluable. Any errors, however, are ours alone. We'd like to list the Advisory Board members, and to thank them for their efforts.

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Our Advisory Board stressed to us that we should not shy away from controversial or unconventional people in our profiles, and we have tried to follow their advice. The Advisory Board also mentioned that the sketches might be useful in reluctant reader and adult literacy programs, and we would value any comments librarians might have about the suitability of our magazine for those purposes.

Your Comments Are Welcome

Our goal is to be accurate and up-to-date, to give young readers information they can learn from and enjoy. Now we want to know what you think. Take a look at this issue of *Biography Today*, on approval. Write or call me with your comments. We want to provide an excellent source of biographical information for young people. Let us know how you think we're doing.

Laurie Harris
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Betsy Byars 1928-

American Writer for Children and Young Adults
Author of *The Summer of the Swans*, the "Blossom Family" Books, and the "Bingo Brown" Books

BIRTH

Betsy Cromer Byars was born on August 7, 1928, in Charlotte, North Carolina. Her father, George Guy Cromer, was trained as a civil engineer, and her mother, Nan (Rugheimer) Cromer, had studied acting and music in college but stayed home to raise their two children. Betsy had one older sister, Nancy.

YOUTH

Byars grew up during the Great Depression of the 1930s, when jobs were scarce around the country. Betsy's father moved the family to rural Hoskins, North Carolina, for a few years so he could work in the office of a cotton mill. They later returned to the city of Charlotte, where she spent most of her youth. She enjoyed the three years her family lived in the small mill town of Hoskins. "At Hoskins we had goats and rabbits, and because I loved animals, I thought life was wonderful," she recalled. "I thought I had the best of both worlds—city life and the country life." Another advantage Byars gained while living in Hoskins was learning how to sew. "I started sewing when I was very young because my father worked for a cotton mill and we got free cloth," she noted. "I was making my own clothes by the second grade, although I have a vague recollection of not being allowed to wear them out of the yard." Byars also took piano lessons and speech lessons as a girl, but she never really took such activities very seriously. "When I was young, I was mainly interested in having as much fun as possible," she admitted. "Enjoying things was just more important to me than taking things seriously."

One of Byars's favorite pastimes during childhood was reading. "I had no intention of becoming a writer when I was growing up, but I had one thing in common with every other writer I've ever met. I loved books," she recalled. "I was reading well ahead of my age but not necessarily good things." In fact, the first time Byars accompanied her older sister to the local library, Nancy guided her to a shelf full of adult romance books. It was only years later, after she had read every book on that shelf, that Byars discovered the children's annex during a tour of the library with her school class. Still, the variety of things that she read helped to stimulate her imagination. "I read creatively, and by that I mean that I went through books as if they were coloring books, mentally coloring the scenes to suit my personal tastes," she noted.

EDUCATION

Byars attended the public schools in Hoskins and later in Charlotte. "I was a happy carefree girl during my school years and not an outstanding student in any respect," she remembered. "I loved to read but was very poor in anything scientific or mathematical." At Central High School, Byars managed to maintain a B average even though she was much more concerned about fitting in with her friends and attracting the attention of boys than she was with obtaining good grades.

"I hit high school in 1943, and the important thing—the only important thing—was to look exactly like everybody else. We wore dirty saddle

shoes, angora socks, pleated skirts, enormous sweaters (sometimes buttoned up the back), and pearls," Byars recalled. "We all had long hair with curved combs in the back so we could continuously comb our hair. We had mirrors taped inside our notebooks so we could check and make absolutely sure we looked exactly like everybody else." Attending classes took second place to social concerns. "I spent a good part of my school day arranging to accidentally bump into some boy or another," she admitted. "I would rush out of science, tear up three flights of stairs, say a casual 'Hi' to a boy as he came out of English, and then tear back down three flights of stairs, rush into home ec, and get marked tardy. I was tardy a lot."

One of Byars's favorite pastimes during childhood was reading. "I had no intention of becoming a writer when I was growing up, but I had one thing in common with every other writer I've ever met. I loved books. I was reading well ahead of my age but not necessarily good things."

Despite her love of books and reading, Byars still did not think about becoming an author. "In all of my school years—from grade one through high school—not one single teacher ever said to me, 'Perhaps you should consider becoming a writer.' Anyway, I didn't want to be a writer. Writing seemed boring. You sat in a room all day by yourself and typed," she stated. "If I was going to be a writer at all, I was going to be a foreign correspondent like Claudette Colbert in [the movie] *Arise My Love.* I would wear smashing hats, wisecrack with the guys, and have a byline known round the world."

Byars graduated from Central High School in 1946. She then went on to Furman University in Greenville, South Carolina, where she became a math major. "The only thing I really loved to do was read, but I knew I couldn't get a job doing that," she explained. Besides, her father wanted her to be a mathematician, and her much-admired older sister was studying math in college at that time. But Byars finally decided that she was not well suited for a career in mathematics when she was unable to master calculus during her sophomore year of college. "I thought there was nothing in the world I could not master if I put my mind to it," she noted. "This—no matter how hard I tried, and I tried hard—I could not get." Byars transferred to Queens College in Charlotte in 1948, and she graduated in 1950 with a bachelor's degree in English.

One of the highlights of Byars's college years was meeting her future husband, Edward Byars, who was then teaching engineering at Clemson University in Clemson, South Carolina. "Ed was tall, good looking, witty, a wonderful dancer," she recalled. "He had a yellow Mercury convertible. Since he was left-handed, he had switched his gearshift over to the left side of the steering wheel, leaving his right arm free to be put around whatever lucky girl was beside him on the front seat." The couple was married shortly after Betsy's college graduation in 1950. "It is no longer fashionable to admit this, but I was very happy to be getting married instead of looking for a job," she noted. "I had no work ambition. I had always wanted marriage and a family."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

For the next five years, she and Ed remained in Clemson and started a family that grew to include four children. Byars felt happy and fulfilled. "My only writing consisted of letters and shopping lists," she recalled. But then her husband decided to pursue his doctoral degree at the University of Illinois. Living in a student barracks in an unfamiliar part of the country soon left Byars feeling bored and lonely. "As it turned out, every other wife in the barracks complex either worked or was going to school. The last thing any of them wanted was to come to my house to chat. I got lonelier and lonelier," she remembered. "The highlight of my day was the arrival of the grocery truck after lunch." The solution to her problem, Byars decided, was to begin writing articles for popular magazines.

"Now up until this point in my life, while I had never done any creative writing, I had always thought that I could write if I wanted to. I thought it couldn't be as hard as people say it is. I thought probably the reason

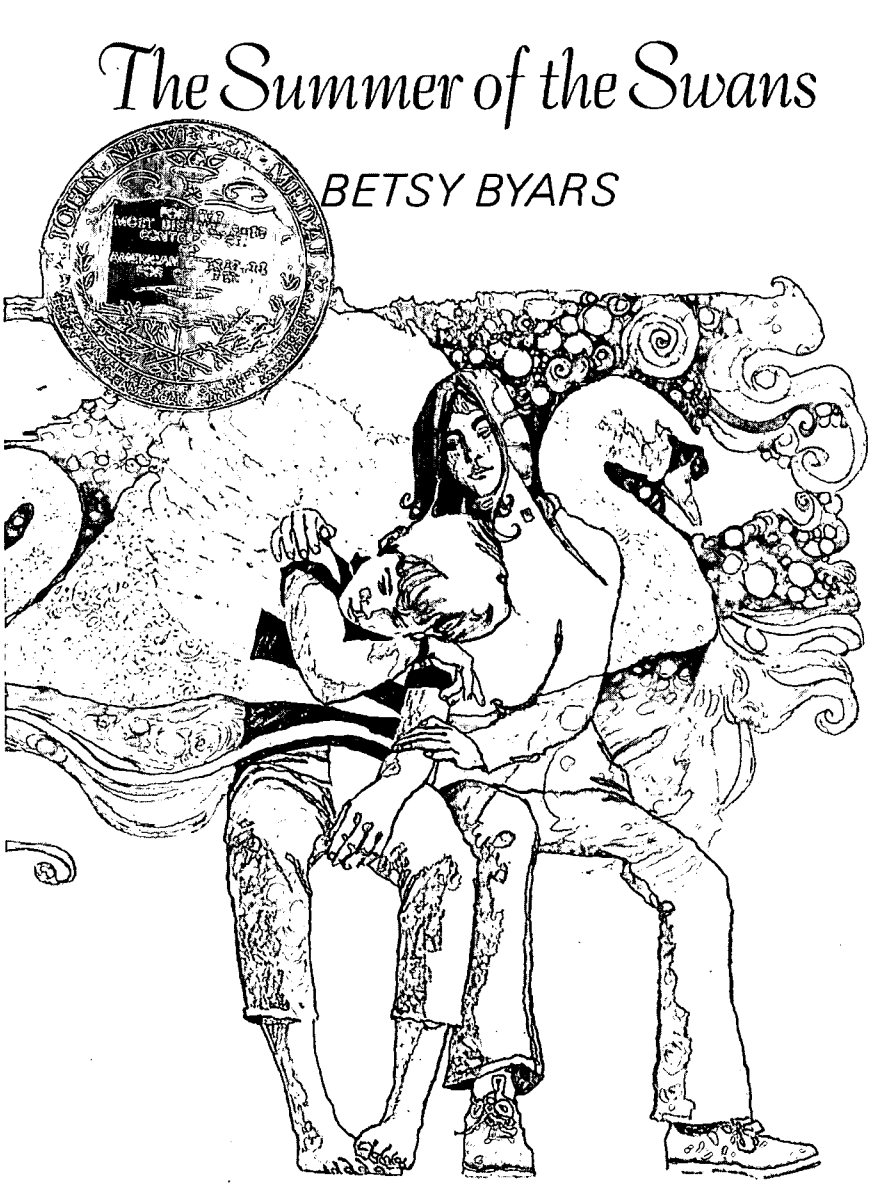
professional writers claim it's so hard is because they don't want any more competition," Byars noted. "I got a typewriter so old I had to press the keys down an inch to make a letter. . . . I set the old typewriter by my place at the table, and that's where it stayed for two years. I would push it aside when I ate and pull it back when I got through. I wrote constantly."

Unfortunately, writing for publication did not turn out to be as easy as Byars expected. Although she soon sold a short article to the *Saturday Evening Post* for $75, it then took her seven months to sell another one. "I was learning what most other writers have learned before me—that writing is a profession in which there is an apprenticeship period, oftentimes a very long one," she explained. "In that, writing is like baseball or piano playing. You have got to practice if you want to be successful."

Writing for Children

After her husband finished his degree and the family moved back to Clemson, Byars continued writing, setting up her typewriter on a card table in a corner of her bedroom. "I had not been able to stop [writing] in Illinois, no matter how badly things went, because I needed writing to fill my life," she stated. "Now I didn't need it in that way anymore, but I still couldn't stop. Now the reason was because I loved what I was doing." She eventually switched from writing magazine articles to writing children's books, and she developed a tough attitude that enabled her to take rejection in stride. Her efforts paid off with the publication of her first book, *Clementine*. "In 1962, seven years after I rolled my first sheet of paper into that ancient typewriter, my first children's book was published," she recalled. "It had been turned down by nine publishers, so it was not exactly the book the world was waiting for, but I was absolutely wild with excitement."

By this time, Byars and her family had moved to Morganstown, West Virginia, where her husband had taken a teaching job at West Virginia University. She published three more children's books over the next five years, but they did not sell many copies and were not well-received by critics. Then Byars took a class in children's literature at the university. "This was one of the turning points in my career. For the first time I saw the realistic children's novel. There had not been any of those when I was growing up," she stated. "What I had been writing up until this point were children's books about a troupe of pigs who went West to give shows, or an orangutan who enrolled in an all-girls academy—things like that. I had never even considered anything realistic."



Illustrated by Ted CoConis

Byars immediately began to incorporate realistic situations into her writing. She created believable young characters who faced serious problems, but she still managed to present their stories with humor and compassion. She included details from her own childhood, from the ex-

periences of her children, from her observations of people around her, from newspaper and magazine articles, and from library research into various subjects. As a result, her books became more satisfying to her and more popular with readers and reviewers.

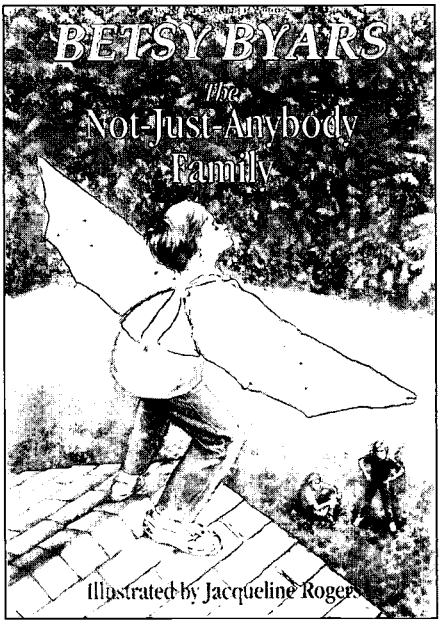
"The first book that turned out the way I had envisioned it was *The Midnight Fox,*" she recalled. Published in 1968, this book tells the story of a young boy named Tom who must spend the summer at his aunt and uncle's farm when his parents decide to take a bicycle tour of Europe. Tom escapes boredom and loneliness by following and studying a beautiful black fox that lives in the nearby woods. After the fox steals a turkey from the farm, however, Tom's uncle wants to hunt it down. Tom must take drastic action to save the animal. "I look on *The Midnight Fox* as another turning point of my career," Byars stated. "It gave me confidence I had not had before. I knew now that I was going to be able to do some of the things I wanted to do, some of the things I had not had the courage and skill to try. For this reason, and others, it remains my favorite of my books."

The Summer of the Swans

Another major turning point for Byars came in 1970 with the publication of her seventh book, *The Summer of the Swans*. This book grew out of her experiences tutoring children with learning difficulties, as well as a newspaper article about swans visiting a pond at the university. It tells the story of an unhappy teenager named Sara who takes her mentally retarded younger brother, Charlie, to a nearby lake to see a group of swans. Shortly afterward, Charlie disappears and Sara undertakes a frantic search for him. As she worries about her lost brother, Sara realizes that her problems are not so important after all.

Byars was very proud of *The Summer of the Swans* when it was first published, and she grew a bit discouraged when it initially received very little popular or critical attention. "I had now published seven books, but I had never had one of those long editorial lunches at a swanky New York restaurant that you read about. I had never been in a publisher's office. I had never even met an editor. My contacts with my editors had consisted of long letters and brief phone calls. I did not know a single other writer," she recalled. "Despite having published seven books, I was as green as grass."

But then one day in 1971 Byars received a phone call informing her that *The Summer of the Swans* had been awarded the prestigious Newbery Medal, presented annually to the best children's book published in the



United States. Suddenly she was a respected author in great demand, and her whole world changed. "The announcement of the Newbery Award literally changed my life overnight," she stated. "Up until this time I had had a few letters from kids. Now we had to get a bigger mailbox. I got tapes, questionnaires, invitations to speak, invitations to visit schools, requests for interviews. For the first time in my life, I started feeling like an author."

Popular and Critical Success

Since winning the Newbery Medal, Byars has enjoyed a great deal of success with both readers and reviewers. She has published nearly 50 books of realistic fiction for upper elementary and middle school readers, and she has earned a reputation as one of the best authors working in her genre. Her books have been translated into many languages for the enjoyment of children around the world, and several of her novels have been adapted for television. She is continually praised for using humor to help her characters deal with a variety of serious situations. "Reading a Betsy Byars book is like talking to a good friend: ideas and problems are taken seriously, but laughter is sure to follow," wrote a reviewer for *Children's Books and Their Creators.* "When we first meet Betsy Byars's characters, they are frequently being pulled along by a tide of events, with little control over the direction of their lives. But from their inevitable and brave attempts to swim the current, wisdom and maturation result."

Another one of Byars's many highly regarded novels is *The Night Swimmers,* which won the American Book Award for Children's Fiction in 1981. In this book, a teenager named Retta is left in charge of her two younger brothers every night as their father tries to make a name for himself as a country and western singer. For amusement, the children often sneak into a nearby private swimming pool for a dip. When the youngest child almost drowns while swimming alone, however, the family rethinks their responsibilities and grows closer together. In a re-

view of *The Night Swimmers* for the *Times Literary Supplement*, Elaine Moss claimed that it "makes the reader hold his breath, cry, and laugh; not for one moment are the emotions disengaged."

In the late 1980s and 1990s, Byars turned her attention to writing two popular series of novels, about the eccentric Blossom family and the lovesick teenager Bingo Brown. Byars introduced the Blossom family in *The Not-Just-Anybody Family* in 1986 and has featured them in four more volumes since. The Blossoms are a "lively, likeable family, handled lightly but surely by an author known for her ability to write believable dialogue and present the desires of her characters with humor and understanding," according to Sara Miller in *School Library Journal*. Meanwhile, Byars started the Bingo Brown series with *The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown* in 1988 and has continued his adventures over three more volumes. Throughout the series, Bingo has the same trying experiences as many teenagers while he learns the hard way about girls and relationships. "If there is such a thing as a typical American kid, Bingo Brown is it. He is funny and bright and loveable without being precocious, and Betsy Byars has demonstrated a special creative genius in pulling off this delicate balancing act," Fannie Flagg wrote in the *New York Times Book Review*.

The Writing Process

Byars often credits her children with helping to inspire her works. "I'm sure I would never have written my books if I had not had children," she once wrote. "My kids not only read my books and gave me their very frank opinions, but they were also very communicative kids, always wanting to tell where they had been and who said what, and all of that was very helpful. I never followed them around with a pad and pencil taking down things to use in my books, but they certainly provided a good refresher course in childhood," she said. "Living with my own teenagers

[also] taught me that I must not write down to my readers; I must write up to them. Boys and girls are very sharp today. When I visit classrooms and talk with students, I am always impressed to find out how many of them are writing stories of their own and how knowledgeable they are about writing."

Byars uses "scraps" of material from her children's lives and her own memory to add realism to her stories. "Plenty of good scraps are as important in making a book as in the making of a quilt. I often think of my books as scrapbooks of my life, because I put in them all the neat things that I see and read and hear. I sometimes wonder what people who don't write do with all their good stuff," she noted.

"There is not activity in my life which has brought me more pleasure than my writing. And the moment of receiving a package in the mail, opening it, and seeing the finished book for the first time is beyond description."

Byars's writing process includes putting a first draft down on paper quickly, then revising as many times as necessary to create a finished product. "I write as fast as I can because until I see what I've done in print, I can't tell what's wrong with it or—hopefully—what's right about it," she stated. "I rely totally on instinct. If my instinct tells me the story is not moving fast enough, I speed it up. If my instinct tells me I've told this too quickly, I divide the chapter and add some bull. And the difference between someone who has been writing for 25 years and someone who is just starting, is the quality of this instinct."

Byars does not anticipate ever running out of ideas for new books. "I used to think, when I first started writing, that writers were like wells, and sooner or later we'd use up what had happened to us and our children and our friends and our dogs and cats, and there wouldn't be anything left. We'd go dry and have to quit. I imagine we would if it weren't for that elusive quality—creativity. I can't define it, but I have found from experience that the more you use it, the better it works." Byars continues to enjoy her career as an author—a career that she never planned to pursue. "There is not activity in my life," she stated, "which has brought me more pleasure than my writing. And the moment of receiving a package in the mail, opening it, and seeing the finished book for the first time is beyond description."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Betsy Cromer married Edward Ford Byars on June 24, 1950. They had three daughters — Laurie, Betsy Ann, and Nan — and one son, Guy. Two of their daughters became published authors as well, under the names Laurie Myers and Betsy Duffey. Byars and her husband now live in Clemson, South Carolina. These days, she does most of her writing in a little log cabin near her home that is decorated with posters and letters from her readers.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

"My own hobbies," Byars once wrote, "are rather quiet. I like to read and do needlework, and I love animals. But my husband has some very interesting hobbies, and through him I've learned to fly and earned my pilot's license. Together, we fly all over the United States." Byars and her husband share an interest in soaring — flying competitively in a type of aircraft without a motor. Byars acts as her husband's crew, helping to put their glider together and take it apart, and driving around to pick him up after he lands.

WRITINGS

Clementine, 1962
The Dancing Camel, 1965
Rama, the Gypsy Cat, 1966
The Groober, 1967
The Midnight Fox, 1968
Trouble River, 1969
The Summer of the Swans, 1970
Go and Hush the Baby, 1971
The House of Wings, 1972
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After the Goat Man, 1974
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The Night Swimmers, 1980

The Cybil War, 1981
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The 2,000-Pound Goldfish, 1982
The Glory Girl, 1983
The Computer Nut, 1984
Cracker Jackson, 1985
The Blossoms and the Green Phantom, 1986
The Blossoms Meet the Vulture Lady, 1986
The Golly Sisters Go West, 1986
The Not-Just-Anybody Family, 1986
A Blossom Promise, 1987
Beans on the Roof, 1988
The Burning Questions of Bingo Brown, 1988
Bingo Brown and the Language of Love, 1989
Bingo Brown, Gypsy Lover, 1990
Hooray for the Golly Sisters!, 1990
The Moon and I, 1991 (autobiography)
The Seven Treasure Hunts, 1991
Wanted . . . Mud Blossom, 1991
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Coast to Coast, 1992
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The Dark Stairs: A Herculeah Jones Mystery, 1994
The Golly Sisters Ride Again, 1994
The Joy Boys, 1995
Tarot Says Beware, 1995
Dead Letter: A Herculeah Jones Mystery, 1996
My Brother, Ant, 1996
Tornado, 1996
Ant Plays Bear, 1997
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Disappearing Acts: A Herculeah Jones Mystery, 1997

SELECTED HONORS AND AWARDS

Book of the Year (Child Study Association of America): 1968, for *The Midnight Fox;* 1969, for *Trouble River;* 1970, for *The Summer of the Swans;* 1972, for *The House of Wings;* 1973, for *The Winged Colt of Casa Mia* and *The 18th Emergency;* 1974, for *After the Goat Man;* 1975, for *The Lace Snail;* 1976, for *The TV Kid;* 1980, for *The Night Swimmers*

Notable Book Selection (American Library Association): 1969, for *Trouble River;* 1972, for *The House of Wings;* 1974, for *After the Goat Man;* 1977, for *The Pinballs;* 1981, for *The Cybil War;* 1982, for *The 2,000-Pound Goldfish*

Lewis Carroll Shelf Award: 1970, for *The Midnight Fox*

John Newbery Medal (American Library Association): 1971, for *The Summer of the Swans*

Outstanding Book of the Year (*New York Times*): 1973, for *The Winged Colt of Casa Mia* and *The 18th Emergency;* 1979, for *Good-bye Chicken Little;* 1982, for *The 2,000-Pound Goldfish*

Dorothy Canfield Fisher Memorial Book Award: 1975, for *The 18th Emergency*

Mark Twain Award (Missouri Association of School Librarians): 1980, for *The Pinballs;* 1985, for *The Animal, the Vegetable, and John D. Jones*

William Allen White Children's Book Award: 1980, for *The Pinballs;* 1988, for *Cracker Jackson*

Boston Globe-Horn Book Fiction Award: 1980, for *The Night Swimmers*

Best Book of the Year (*School Library Journal*): 1980, for *The Night Swimmers*

American Book Award for Children's Fiction: 1981, for *The Night Swimmers*

Children's Choice (International Reading Association): 1982, for *The Cybil War*

Sequoyah Children's Book Award: 1984, for *The Cybil War*

Parents' Choice Award (Parents' Choice Foundation): 1982, for *The Animal, the Vegetable, and John D. Jones;* 1985, for *Cracker Jackson;* 1986, for *The Not-Just-Anybody Family*

Regina Medal (Catholic Library Association): 1987

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New York Times Book Review, Oct. 8, 1989, p.34
Publishers Weekly, July 17, 1995, p.140
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WORLD WIDE WEB SITE

http://www.bdd.com/teacher/

Chris Carter 1956-

American Screenwriter, Director, and Producer
Creator of the Television Series "The X-Files" and "Millennium"

BIRTH

Chris Carter was born on October 13, 1956, in Bellflower, California, a blue-collar suburb of Los Angeles. His father, William Carter, was a construction worker, and his mother, Catherine (Mulder) Carter, was a homemaker. He has one younger brother, Craig.

YOUTH

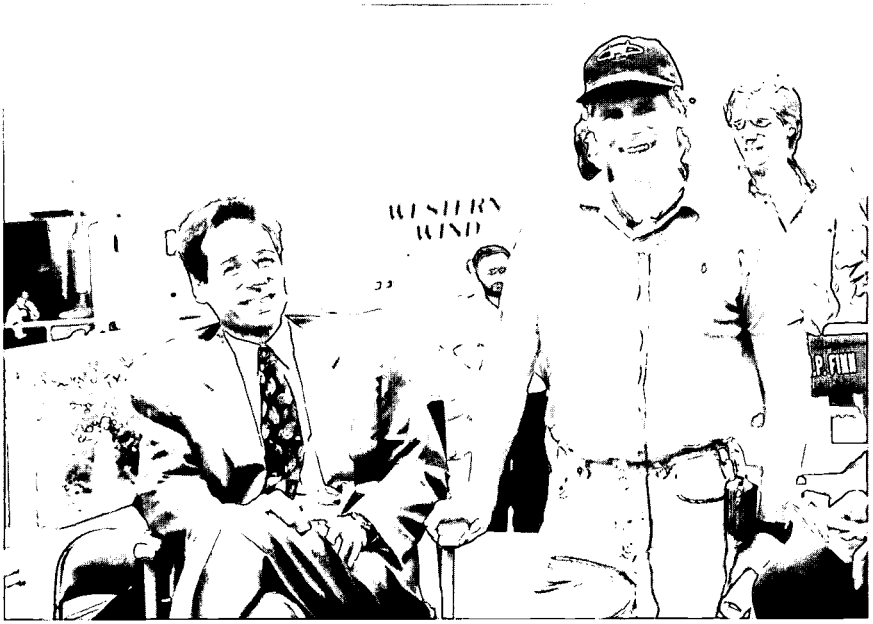
Growing up in Bellflower, Carter enjoyed an average, middle-class boyhood. The town and its people contributed to his very normal youth. "I think Bellflower does give you a sense of middle America. There's something about the time I lived there that I know sort of invades everything I do. People still believed in things," he noted. Carter loved to play baseball in those days and was a pitcher on his Little League team. He also liked listening to Vin Scully calling the play-by-play of Los Angeles Dodgers games on the radio. Years later, Carter would name one of the main characters in "The X-Files" — FBI Agent Dana Scully — after the legendary broadcaster. He gave the other main character — FBI Agent Fox Mulder — his mother's maiden name.

Carter took up surfing at the age of 12, and from that time on he spent as much time as possible at the beach. "It was a way to postpone entering the adult world," he explained. In the evenings, he would become engrossed while watching scary television shows. "I watched a lot of TV as a kid," he admitted. "'Twilight Zone.' 'Night Gallery.' 'The Outer Limits'." But Carter's favorite show was "Kolchak: The Night Stalker," about a reporter who encountered all sorts of strange characters, like werewolves and zombies. Carter would eventually try to re-create some of the eerie aspects of these shows in "The X-Files."

Carter's only exposure to the dark side of human nature in Bellflower came during his late teens. One day, when he was umpiring his brother's Little League game, a boy they both knew was arrested for murder. "He was a good athlete and a good kid from a solid family. And then one day he was arrested. He had killed an Avon lady. Then they found out that he had also killed his girlfriend with an ice pick," Carter recalled. "It was very unsettling. I would never have suspected he was capable of that. I think that was my first touch with darkness."

EDUCATION

Carter was not a particularly good student at Bellflower High School. "I spent high school being a goof-off," he admitted. "I was bored, in a way. I came from a situation that had low expectations for me. Everybody would have been satisfied, heck, extremely happy if I went from being box boy to manager of the Alpha-Beta [grocery store] where I was working." Despite his lack of attention to his studies, Carter was a popular student and was voted Mr. Flirt by his classmates upon graduating from Bellflower High in 1974.



Carter with actor David Duchovny on the set of "The X-Files"

Carter changed his ways once he reached California State University at Long Beach. "I was a good college student," he noted. Although he started out as an art major and actually paid his way through school by making pottery, he later changed his major to journalism. He graduated from Cal State with a bachelor's degree in journalism in 1979.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

Carter's first job after college was as a writer for *Surfing* magazine. "It was a great experience. I got to travel all around the world; I did stories in Australia, and I did stories in the Caribbean. I did many stories in Hawaii," he recalled. "I wrote 10,000 to 15,000 words an issue, and it taught me a lot. I developed a work ethic, a voice, and a style. I learned how to tell a story." Although he enjoyed his work at the magazine, Carter always thought that he might eventually want to write for television and the movies. "I always sort of wanted to get into the movie business. I had always loved movies, but I never had a way to get there," he noted. "As it turned out, it was luck. Well, it was luck and timing. But a lot of it was perseverance too."

The series of events that ultimately led to the creation of "The X-Files" began in 1983, when Carter met his future wife, Dori Pierson. A writer of movie screenplays, she encouraged him to try his hand at it as well. "It took a while, but I finally wrote one, a coming-of-age story about kids who would have gone to a school much like Bellflower High, and it got all kinds of attention," he recalled. Carter hired an agent and met with several production companies, but nothing ever came of this first screenplay. In the meantime, he continued surfing and traveling. But the second screenplay Carter wrote drew the attention of Jeffrey Katzenberg, the new head of Disney Studios. Before he knew it, Carter had been hired to write and produce television movies for Disney. "Everything was happening all at once," he remembered of that time. "It was like I got out of the surf, dried off, and I was in the movie business."

Carter's two main characters represent different sides of his own attitude toward the unexplained. "They are the equal parts of my desire to believe in something and my inability to believe in something. My skepticism and my faith. And the writing of the characters and their voices came very easily to me. I want, like a lot of people do, to have the experience of witnessing a paranormal phenomenon. At the same time I want not to accept it, but to question it. I think those characters and those voices came out of that duality."

By the early 1990s, Carter had become a fairly successful television writer. Among other projects, he wrote the pilot for a family show called "Brand New Life," and he co-produced the musical comedy "Rags to Riches." In 1992, he signed a contract to create and develop shows for the Twentieth Century-Fox television network. It was at this time that he hit upon the idea for "The X-Files." "The idea just came to me, and I don't know how," he recalled. "I was conscious of a lack of anything truly scary on TV. I was conscious that people are afraid of science and technology, as much as they want it." Knowing these things, Carter decided to create a scary show that was based partly on scientific fact and partly on people's fears.

Carter combined a number of different elements in developing the premise for his new show. He was influenced by the shows that he had

enjoyed watching as a boy, especially "Kolchak: The Night Stalker." He was also influenced by the Academy Award-winning movie *Silence of the Lambs*, in which a female FBI agent tracks down a notorious serial killer. Finally, he was influenced by an FBI agent he saw interviewed on TV. This real-life agent had been assigned to investigate satanic cults. "I found it interesting that they had somebody specifically investigating something like that," Carter stated.

"The X-Files"

"The X-Files" focuses on two FBI agents who investigate strange and unusual cases involving alien abductions, paranormal activity, and government conspiracies. Agent Fox Mulder is a brilliant psychologist who is driven to pursue this type of work by his own experiences: his younger sister disappeared when they were children. After undergoing hypnosis, he believes that she was abducted by aliens as he watched in horror. Powerful people within the government want to keep an eye on Mulder to prevent him from uncovering their secret activities, so they assign him a partner with very different motivations. Agent Dana Scully is a forensic doctor who takes a very skeptical view of the cases they investigate. She believes that science can explain all the strange events they witness or hear about.

Carter's two main characters represent different sides of his own attitude toward the unexplained. "They are the equal parts of my desire to believe in something and my inability to believe in something. My skepticism and my faith," he stated. "And the writing of the characters and their voices came very easily to me. I want, like a lot of people do, to have the experience of witnessing a paranormal phenomenon. At the same time I want not to accept it, but to question it. I think those characters and those voices came out of that duality."

At first, Carter had trouble convincing Fox to produce "The X-Files" because it was so different from anything else on TV. But he grew more determined than ever following a trip to Martha's Vineyard, off the coast of Massachusetts, where he met a psychologist from Yale University. This man showed Carter research conducted by a professor at Harvard University indicating that three percent of Americans believed that they had been abducted by aliens. "Here were two guys — one from Harvard, one from Yale — who were saying, 'There's something here,'" Carter noted. "It was all I needed to go back to Fox." His persistence finally convinced the network executives that the show would find an audience. Fox picked up the show, and Carter began filming the pilot episode of "The X-Files" in March 1993.

When "The X-Files" premiered on September 10, 1993—starring David Duchovny as Mulder and Gillian Anderson as Scully—it did not receive a strong promotional push from the network. Not many fans tuned in at first, although many television critics took note of its high quality, unusual subject matter, and eerie atmosphere. The first season established a pattern of alternating among three different types of episodes. The main type of episode—known as the show's "mythology"—focuses on the presence of aliens on earth and the government's obsession with

keeping it quiet. Additional information about the aliens' activities and the extent of the government conspiracy is slowly revealed over time.

The second type of episode finds the agents dealing with paranormal criminals, such as a scientist who can kill people with his shadow or a man who can force people to do things using only the power of his mind. These episodes usually stand alone, telling a complete story within an hour. The third type of episode acts as a parody of the other two types and showcases the dry humor of Carter and his two stars. In one memorable example, Mulder and Scully encounter a man who can transform his physical appearance to resemble other people. He uses this unusual ability to seduce, and impregnate, a number of women by impersonating their husbands. The show turns comic when the man makes himself look like Mulder and then begins to flirt with Scully.

As the first season ended, more and more people were beginning to tune into "The X-Files." The show's popularity continued to spread by word-of-mouth until it eventually became the highest-rated show on the Fox network. Thousands of devoted fans, known as X-Philes, began attending conventions and purchasing merchandise relating to the show. They also launched hundreds of sites on the Internet to discuss various aspects of the show. Today, "The X-Files" is watched by millions of people in 60 countries around the world. "It's a dream come true," Carter said of the show's success. "To get something that's this big, and then all of a sudden it generates novels, kids' books, and these things—it could be once in a lifetime."

Tapping into American Fears

"The X-Files" struck a nerve with the American public, partly because many of the story lines are so believable. In fact, Carter has taken the idea for many episodes from actual events. "I'm constantly reading magazines and newspapers. I pick up all the things you'd think of: *Science, Discovery, Scientific American,* any newspaper with a good science section. I'm the ultimate scavenger. I've got to be—I've got a lot of work to do. When I get a good idea, I clip it out and put it on the board for anyone to use," he explained. "My team of writers has a great knowledge of the paranormal. We'll never run out of stories, because I think there is an infinite number of spiritual, physical, and psychological questions to explore."

For Carter, one of the most interesting aspects of the show's success is the number of people who have approached him with their own stories of paranormal experiences. "Since the show started, people have sought me out. I was warned about nutcases but these are regular folks. A

banker will tell me about his experience with aliens. Pilots and flight attendants come up to me and claim to have seen UFOs. One friend told me, 'You don't know how accurate you are.' He broke down, telling me about his visitations. I've known this person for two years. I have no reason not to believe him," he stated. "There are things that are affecting people out there, whether they are real or imagined. There's too much evidence to dismiss it out of hand."

Although he cannot discount the claims of others, Carter stressed that he has never had an alien encounter himself. "I've never had a personal experience with the paranormal. I've never seen a UFO. I've never been contacted by anything or anyone," he noted. "The main misperception of me is that I'm some kind of sci-fi maven. People would be surprised to learn that I'm really the guy next door, not a paranoid, kook, or crank."

Still, Carter does admit feeling a basic distrust toward the government. "I was a child of the Watergate era," he says, referring to the political scandal that led to the resignation of President Richard Nixon. "I distrust authority. I believe the government does lie to us on a regular basis and that people are working against our best interests on an ongoing basis. The conspiracy idea on the show comes as a result of my great belief that we're being suckered." He has claimed that his feelings were justified by events in the news. For example, it was recently revealed that the U.S. government conducted radiation experiments on unknowing citizens in the 1950s. "You're vindicated every day of the week if you read the papers," Carter stated. "I think we've been used as lab rats in too many instances by a government which has not yet come to ethical and moral terms with its duty to the public."

"The X-Files" Is Adapted for the Movies

From the earliest days of "The X-Files," Fox network executives were somewhat uncomfortable with the fact that the underlying alien/conspiracy storyline continued to develop over a number of episodes without ever providing viewers with a sense of closure. "But it's hard to put handcuffs on aliens every week and throw them in the slammer," Carter responded. "I would like to think that because we can never truly know all the answers in life, that the show might follow the same route. I liken it to [the explorers] Lewis and Clark. I know the direction I'm headed, but I don't know quite what I'll find on the way."

In 1997, however, Carter decided to capitalize on the popularity of the series and give fans the answers to some long-standing questions by producing a movie version of "The X-Files." In an unprecedented tie-in to a currently running TV series, the movie will provide a resolution to

Carter with actress Gillian Anderson on the set of "The X-Files"

the cliffhanger at the end of the television show's fifth season, and will also raise new questions that will be resolved in the show's sixth season. "You hold back and hold back and hold back, and now you have a chance to give a lot of big answers to what the series has set up," Carter explained. "You want to do it well, and you want to do it big, and you want to do it carefully, and you want it done artfully. This is our opportunity to do that with more time and more resources, taking advantage of the newer technologies out there." Carter acted as writer and producer of the $60 million movie, which is scheduled for release in the summer of 1998.

Meanwhile, the television version of "The X-Files" will face a major change during its sixth season. Since the beginning, it has been filmed in Vancouver, Canada. "The pilot episode required a forest," Carter recalled. "There isn't one in LA, and we just sort of stayed." With its low-hanging clouds and dark rain forests, Vancouver provided the series with a distinctive, spooky atmosphere. The favorable exchange rate between U.S. and Canadian dollars also enabled Carter to produce a higher-quality show for the money. But the show's stars were unhappy about having to spend so much time shuttling back and forth between Vancouver and their homes in Los Angeles, so Carter and Fox executives agreed to make the move.

"Millennium"

Thanks to the phenomenal success of "The X-Files," Carter had the opportunity to develop another show for Fox in 1996. This series, "Millennium," concerns ex-FBI Agent Frank Black and a secret group of former law enforcement officers known as the Millennium Group. After 10 years of hunting down homicidal maniacs for the FBI, Black has retired to Seattle with his wife and young daughter. They live in a bright yellow house in a pleasant neighborhood, which Black intends as a safe haven for his family. But as the year 2000 approaches, the end of the millennium brings psychopaths out of the woodwork. Black, who can form a psychic link to the minds of criminals, is reluctantly drawn out of retirement to help the Millennium Group fight the growing evil in the world.

"'Millennium' is about crime in society, evil in society, and the unraveling of the social safety net. It's about heroism, or the lack of it. . . . It's going to be a chance to put a mirror up to society, hopefully. And even though I feel the show is very graphic—it has dark content—I believe that it is important for creating really good heroes. You can't write for heroes well or realize them well unless you put them against a very dark background," Carter explained. "The reason for the show is not the darkness. The reason is the light at its center, Frank Black, who is acting heroically in a world and in a society that I believe does not promote heroism."

In the face of all his success, Carter's goal remains simple—to treat modern viewers to the thrills he experienced while watching scary television shows as a kid. "All I want to do is take people on a roller-coaster ride each week and scare the pants off them."

Thanks to interest among fans of "The X-Files" and a strong promotional push by the network, the pilot episode of "Millennium" achieved the highest rating ever for a new show on Fox. However, it also received criticism from some people who felt that it was too disturbing and violent for television. When Carter was asked whether parents should allow their children to watch the show, he replied, "I don't know. It's scary stuff, but I'd rather have my kids smart and afraid than ignorant and vulnerable."

Although Carter created "Millennium" and wrote many of the early episodes, he soon found that it was too difficult to produce two televi-

sion shows at the same time. He found himself working 16 to 18 hours per day and rarely getting enough sleep. In 1997 he turned over the reins of "Millennium" to two of his trusted collaborators, Glen Morgan and James Wong. Despite some slippage in the ratings, the show remains popular and has been renewed for a third season. In the face of all his success, Carter's goal remains simple—to treat modern viewers to the thrills he experienced while watching scary television shows as a kid. "All I want to do is take people on a roller-coaster ride each week and scare the pants off them," he stated.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Carter has been married to Dori Pierson since 1987. They have no children and live in Pacific Palisades, California.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Carter still enjoys surfing, though he admits that "I'm not as nimble as I once was." In his very limited spare time, he also likes to jog and play with his dog.

WRITINGS

"The X-Files," 1993-
"Millenium," 1996-97

HONORS AND AWARDS

Environmental Media Award for Outstanding Episodic Television Drama: 1994, for "Darkness Falls" episode of "The X-Files"
Parents' Choice Honor for Best Television Series: 1994, for "The X-Files"
Golden Globe Award for Best Dramatic Series: 1995 and 1997, for "The X-Files"
Saturn Award for Outstanding Television Series (Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror): 1995, for "The X-Files"
International Monitor Award for Best Director: 1996, for "The List" episode of "The X-Files"

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Caroline B. Cooney 1947-

American Writer of Romance, Mystery, Horror, and Suspense Stories for Young Adults
Author of *The Face on the Milk Carton, Whatever Happened to Janie? Both Sides of Time, Prisoner of Time,* and Other Popular Novels

BIRTH

Caroline B. Cooney was born on May 10, 1947, in Geneva, New York. Her parents were Dexter Mitchell Bruce, a purchasing agent, and Martha (Willerton) Bruce, a teacher. She had one brother.

YOUTH

Cooney grew up in a pleasant neighborhood in Old Greenwich, Connecticut. "We lived on a nice old street with lots of other kids who all knew each other from kindergarten up through high school," she recalled. "There was great pleasure to be had in just staying near home, playing with friends. If there were problems in the community, we certainly didn't know about them; it was a very innocent time. My parents told me and my brother that we were the most wonderful kids on earth. And we believed it."

Even as a child, Cooney developed a keen interest in both music and literature. She dreamed of becoming a famous pianist and spent lots of her free time singing with the choir or playing the organ at the church that her family attended. On days when she did not have practice or music lessons, she could often be found with a book in her hands. "Children's books were very warm and satisfying for me," she remembered. "They always had happy endings." Cooney was particularly fond of book series that featured heroic young women. "When I was in elementary school, I was crazy about series books like *Nancy Drew* and *Judy Bolton*," she confirmed. "I entered nursing school because of *Cherry Ames, Student Nurse*, and would certainly have become an airline stewardess like *Vicki Barr* had my bad eyesight not ruled that out."

EDUCATION

Cooney attended both elementary and high school in Old Greenwich. She enjoyed elementary school, and high school was even more fun. "When I reached high school, I was one of those kids with tons of energy," she remembered. She threw herself into a wide range of extracurricular activities: she played the piano for musical productions, directed a choir, and performed as a church organist. She was so active, in part, because she really wanted to be popular. "Though I had a lot of friends and was actually a very successful student, it always looked like other kids were more at the center of things, that I would never achieve the level of popularity I had daydreamed of," she said. "You have so little perspective as a teenager that you can't always see yourself clearly. I certainly didn't. Luckily, that didn't stop me from loving high school or from being good at it."

Cooney received her high school diploma in 1965 and made preparations to go to college at Indiana University, which is known for its excellent music program. Confident in her musical abilities, she decided that she would be a music major. Upon arrival at the university, however,

Cooney was stunned to find that many of the other students were far more talented than she was. "Having anticipated that [college] would be the best four years of my life, it was quite a shock when it didn't work out that way at all," she admitted. "At 18, learning that my level was lower than I had dreamed proved to be quite a blow. The thought of being average had never even occurred to me, so my ego took a terrific beating."

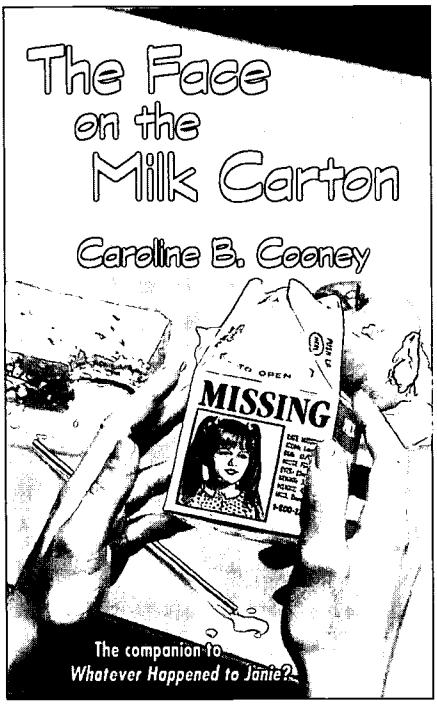
Cooney struggled through her freshman year at Indiana. In 1966 she abandoned her hopes of a musical career and enrolled at the Massachusetts General Hospital School of Nursing. All throughout the 1966-67 school year, Cooney tried to balance her nursing schoolwork with the demands of a part-time job at a temporary agency. It was during this time that she met the young man who would become her husband, although Cooney has not disclosed his full name to the press. "We bumped into each other at work," she recalled. "It was all very romantic. Having such a miserable time at school, hating it so much, it seemed perfectly reasonable to get married and have children."

"Cooney spent several years teaching herself how to write. 'I began with terrible, ghastly short stories, many of them with no plot, no characters, no dialogue. Then at 24 I finished my first novel, absolutely confident that this book would take the world by storm and make me a household name before I turned 25; it didn't.'"

BECOMING A WRITER

Cooney was 20 years old when she got married. In 1968 she enrolled at the University of Connecticut, but after a year of classes there she decided to quit school and become a full-time homemaker. Within five years she had two children, Louisa and Sayre (rhymes with fair). Taking care of her family took a lot of time and energy, but after awhile Cooney realized that she was beginning to feel a little restless. "Sitting home with the babies, I had to find a way to entertain myself," she said. "So I started writing with a pencil between the children's naps — baby in one arm, notebook in the other."

Cooney spent the next several years teaching herself how to write. Her first attempts at writing were short stories, as she explains here. "I began with terrible, ghastly short stories, many of them with no plot, no char-



acters, no dialogue. Then at 24 I finished my first novel, absolutely confident that this book would take the world by storm and make me a household name before I turned 25; it didn't." She continued to persevere, even after the birth of her third child, Harold. She had always loved literature, and she believed that if she worked hard, she might be able to develop her newfound enthusiasm for writing into a career. Over the next several years she wrote eight novels aimed at an adult audience. All of the novels were rejected by publishers, and Cooney wondered if perhaps she was wasting her time. But as she later recounted, "while working on these novels, I was still writing short stories, trying every kind of writing that I enjoyed reading. When *Seventeen* accepted one of my humorous short stories for kids, I continued to write for that age group and finally found the type of writing that I could both be successful at and enjoy. The stories really started working for me, and I sold quite a few."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

In 1979 Cooney published her first novel, *Safe as the Grave.* Unlike her earlier books, which had been written for adults, *Safe as the Grave* was written for young readers. The novel tells the story of an 11-year-old girl who discovers a secret in the family cemetery. According to Cooney, she never would have been able to publish that first book if she had not stuck with her writing despite the rejections: "I discovered that for better or for worse a lot of writing went into those previous eight books, and by [the time that *Safe as the Grave* was published] I'd finally learned my craft."

In 1980 Cooney published a novel for adults called *Rear View Mirror.* This story, about a young woman who is kidnapped by two ruthless killers, was hailed by critics as a surprising, suspenseful tale that kept

readers on the edge of their seats. *Washington Post* reviewer Michele Slung said that the book is "so tightly written, so fast-moving, that it's easy not to realize until the last paragraph is over that one hasn't been breathing all the while." She also praised Cooney for creating a heroine who was simultaneously resourceful, responsible, and realistic. In 1984 *Rear View Mirror* was made into a television movie starring Lee Remick.

Despite the success she enjoyed with *Rear View Mirror,* Cooney decided to go back to writing books for young adults. It is a decision that she has never regretted, in part because she believes that younger audiences appreciate her own preference for upbeat stories. She knows that problems like drug abuse, alcohol abuse, and sexual pressures are present in high schools and middle schools across the country. "It's ridiculous to suggest that these problems don't exist," she once said. But Cooney also explained that "I have the impression that kids still yearn for absolutely wholesome childhoods. They want hope, want things to work out, want reassurance that even were they to do something rotten, they and the people around them would be alright. . . . I think they want to read about the nicer, sweeter sides of life; I think they want happy endings."

A Prolific Writer

During the 1980s Cooney wrote literally dozens of novels for young adults. She would often write three or four books a year, using both story lines suggested by her editors and her own story ideas. By her own estimate, about half of the books were romances. Some of her romance stories are part of short series of books, while others are individual titles. But all have become very popular. "I believe that to love and to be loved are the most fierce desires any of us will ever have, and young girls can never read enough about it," she has said. According to Cooney, her romance novels are written for girls. She tries to ensure that each one has lots of intense emotions, a strong sense of place (particularly the town and the high school), a moral, and descriptions of clothing, makeup, and hairstyles. Most of her romance books have followed fairly similar boy-meets-girl story lines, Cooney says, but such plots are always enjoyed by young readers. Some of her most popular romance books are *An April Love Story* (1981), *Nancy & Nick* (1982), *Holly in Love* (1983), and *The Girl Who Invented*

> *"It took me a long time to learn how to write well, and what I learned is that you must write steadily, enjoy yourself, and never give up."*

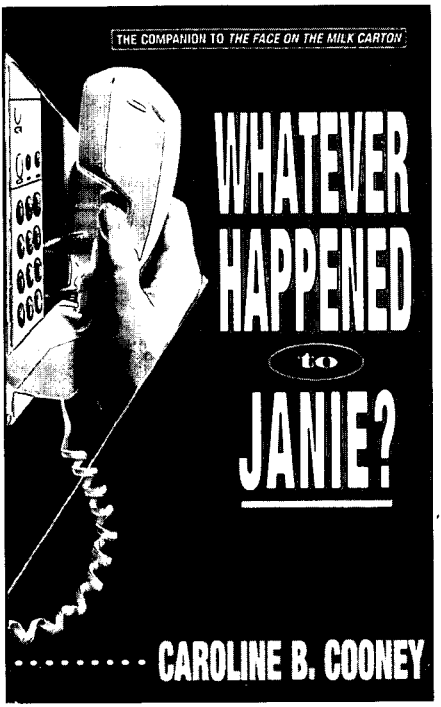
Romance (1988). In 1985 Cooney received the Romantic Book Award for her many teen romance novels.

As the years passed, Cooney also displayed a flair for writing suspense and horror stories for young readers. During the latter part of the 1980s she unveiled several spooky novels that emphasized atmosphere and creepy plot twists over the blood and gore that typified so many other books in the genre. These novels, including *The Fog* (1989), *The Fire* (1990), *The Snow* (1990), *The Cheerleader* (1991), *The Return of the Vampire* (1992), *Freeze Tag* (1992), *The Perfume* (1992), *The Vampire's Promise* (1993), *The Stranger* (1993), *Twins* (1994), and *Night School* (1995), have proved immensely popular with young readers looking for a good scare.

Cooney has also written several works that seriously examine important issues for young adults. For example, in *Don't Blame the Music* (1986), Cooney tells the story of a family's efforts to accept a troubled daughter back into their home after a long absence. *Among Friends* (1987) concerns a group of high school girls whose close friendship begins to fall apart under the weight of jealousy and peer pressure. The novel's structure consists of journal entries written from the points of view of six different girls. Reviewer Mitzy Myers, writing in the *Los Angeles Times*, praised Cooney's skill in realistically depicting the heartaches that sometimes accompany high school friendships: "It is a pleasure to find a book for young readers that not only individualizes characters through their writing but also has wise words to say about how writing offers very real help in coping with the problems of growing up." Cooney's 1989 novel *Family Reunion* tackles the subject of divorce and the pain that it causes children. *Booklist* reviewer Hazel Rochman wrote that "[the] messages are a little heavy, but Cooney's characters are funny and endearing, and she captures relationships with subtlety and candor."

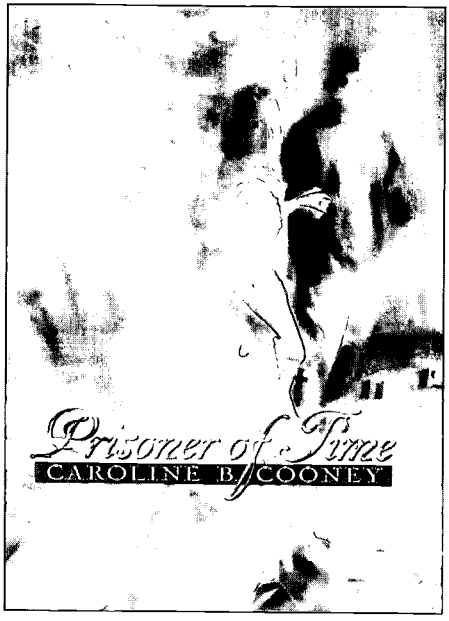
Some of Cooney's novels feature adventure and true-to-life experiences. In *Flight #116 Is Down* (1992), she shows the actions of two teenagers who help to rescue the surviving passengers after a jumbo jet crashes near their home. In *Operation: Homefront* (1994), a woman who is the mother of three children is called up for duty in the National Guard and sent to Saudi Arabia during the Persian Gulf War. The novel shows how the family copes in her absence. In *Emergency Room* (1994), Cooney shows the events experienced by different teenagers during a single evening in the emergency room of a city hospital. The events in this book were based on her own experiences while volunteering each week at a hospital near her home. In *Driver's Ed* (1994), she shows a class full of teenagers learning to drive, and what happens after two of them steal a stop sign from an intersection. A young mother is later killed there because of the missing sign.

Recent Acclaimed Novels



Among the best known of Cooney's serious novels, however, are the series about Janie Johnson in *The Face on the Milk Carton* (1990), *Whatever Happened to Janie?* (1993), and *The Voice on the Radio* (1996). In the first book of the series, which won several awards, Cooney tells the story of Janie, a high school student. While at lunch one day in her school cafeteria, she sees a picture on a milk carton of a three-year-old girl in pigtails and a polka-dot dress with a white collar. The little girl had been kidnaped many years before. Janie is haunted by that photo, and the memories it uncovers. Soon, she begins to question whether she may have actually been kidnapped from her birth parents. *Publishers Weekly* praised Cooney's novel, noting that "Cooney's skilled writing makes even the most unlikely events seem plausible. The roller-coaster ride Jane experiences with her emotions is both absorbing and convincing. Strong characterizations and suspenseful, impeccably-paced action add to this novel's appeal." Janie's story is continued in the two later novels as well. In 1995, the first two books in the series were made into a television movie called "The Face on the Milk Carton" starring Kellie Martin (as Janie), Jill Clayburgh, and Sharon Lawrence.

Another popular series by Cooney is her time travel novels. *Both Sides of Time* (1995), *Out of Time* (1996), and *Prisoner of Time* (1998) feature characters that are able to travel through time between 1995 and 1895. In *Both Sides of Time*, Annie Lockwood, a girl from the present day, is intrigued by the romance of the 19th century. By accident, she travels back through time to 1895, where she falls in love with a man named Strat. Although she returns to the present, she is torn between her loyalty toward her family and her love for Strat. In *Out of Time*, Strat is tricked into going to a mental institution. He is sent there by his father because of his belief that Annie is a time traveler. Strat's sister, Devonny, calls



Annie through time to come help Strat. In the third book, *Prisoner of Time,* the story focuses on Devonny, a high-spirited girl from 1895. Against her wishes, she has become engaged to a stuffy English lord. When she calls out for help across time to her brother Strat, it is Tod, Annie's brother, who comes to help her. Cooney's time travel novels, which combine elements of science fiction, history, and romance, have been great successes with her fans.

In the late 1990s, Cooney has continued to maintain a busy writing schedule. She has written over 50 novels to date, and she continues to write five days a week. Even when she is not writing, Cooney often thinks about possible plot developments when she goes grocery shopping or strolling along the beach. "I'm not an author who writes from pain or agony, but from joy," she explained. "The writing has always been something I've wanted. I have been well-disciplined because I love what I do and take great pleasure in telling stories." Cooney also suggested that the volunteer work that she regularly does with children at local schools and churches helps her maintain her enthusiasm for young adult literature. "These children have been a tremendously positive influence on me, because they're the ones I'm writing to, the ones I'm writing for."

ADVICE FOR YOUNG WRITERS

"For me, writing is not hard," Cooney admitted. "It is something I do every day for several hours and something about which I daydream for the rest of the day. My world is as populated by people I imagine as it is by people who exist. . . . It took me a long time to learn how to write well, and what I learned is that you must write steadily, enjoy yourself, and never give up." She encourages young writers not to get bogged down by fears about failure when they write. "In the beginning it may not be any good—my first work certainly wasn't—but if you pay your dues, keep on turning it out and turning it out, eventually you'll learn

what you're doing. . . . The best advice I can offer is simply to say that if you want to be a writer, you have to write. An awful lot of people get in touch with me with great ideas but only a sentence or two on paper. When I think about my eight unpublished books, my I-don't-know-how-many short stories, it's difficult for me to be sympathetic if they're not actually writing. Becoming a writer, like any other craft, requires a long apprenticeship. Which is not to say that it is not also tremendous fun."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Cooney continues to live in Connecticut, where she spends much of her free time taking long walks or reading. "I tried four colleges, disliked each, and never got anywhere near a college degree," Cooney once said. "But having read several million books (or so it seems; all of them are in my house—covering the walls, layered on the counters, lost under the couch, climbing the stairs), I am educated."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Cooney was married in about 1967 and is now divorced. She regularly visits with the families of her now-grown children, Louisa, Sayre, and Harold.

SELECTED WRITINGS

Young Adult Novels

An April Love Story, 1981
Nancy and Nick, 1982
He Loves Me Not, 1982
Holly in Love, 1983
I'm Not Your Other Half, 1983
Nice Girls Don't, 1984
Don't Blame the Music, 1986
The Rah Rah Girl, 1987
Among Friends, 1987
Camp Boy-Meets-Girl, 1987
The Girl Who Invented Romance, 1988
Camp Reunion, 1988
Family Reunion, 1989
The Fog, 1989

The Snow, 1990
The Fire, 1990
Party's Over, 1991
The Cheerleader, 1991
Twenty Pageants Later, 1991
The Perfume, 1992
Operation: Homefront, 1992
Freeze Tag, 1992
The Return of the Vampire, 1992
Flight #116 Is Down, 1992
The Vampire's Promise, 1993
Forbidden, 1993
The Stranger, 1994
Emergency Room, 1994
Driver's Ed, 1994
Twins, 1994
Unforgettable, 1994
Flash Fire, 1995
Night School, 1995
The Terrorist, 1997
What Child is This?: A Christmas Story, 1997

Follow Your Heart Series

A Stage Set for Love, 1983
Sun, Sea, and Boys, 1984
Suntanned Days, 1985
Racing to Love, 1985

Cheerleaders Series

Rumors, 1985
Trying Out, 1985
All the Way, 1985
Saying Yes, 1987

Chrystal Falls Series

The Bad and the Beautiful, 1985
The Morning After, 1985

Saturday Night Series

Saturday Night, 1986
Last Dance, 1987
New Year's Eve, 1988
Summer Night, 1988

Janie Johnson Series

The Face on the Milk Carton, 1990
Whatever Happened to Janie? 1993
The Voice on the Radio, 1996

Time Travel Series

Both Sides of Time, 1995
Out of Time, 1996
Prisoner of Time, 1998

Juvenile Mysteries

Safe as the Grave, 1979
The Paper Caper, 1981

For Adults

Rear View Mirror, 1980
Sand Trap, 1983

Television Adaptations

"Rear View Mirror," based on *Rear View Mirror*, 1984
"The Face on the Milk Carton," based on *The Face on the Milk Carton* and *Whatever Happened to Janie?* 1995

HONORS AND AWARDS

Romantic Book Award (teen romance category): 1985, for body of work
Children's Choice Award (International Reading Association—Children's Book Council): 1991, for *The Face on the Milk Carton*
Young Adults Choice (International Reading Association): 1994, for *Whatever Happened to Janie?*

Best Book for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1995, for *Flight #116 Is Down*
Editors' Choice (*Booklist*): 1995, for *Driver's Ed*

FURTHER READING

Books

Authors and Artists for Young Adults, 1990
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 37, 1992
Drew, Bernard A. *The 100 Most Popular Young Adult Authors: Biographical Sketches and Bibliographies,* 1996
Gallo, Donald R. *Speaking for Ourselves, Too: More Autobiographical Sketches by Notable Authors of Books for Young Adults,* 1993
Hipple, Ted, ed. *Writers for Young Adults,* 1997
Something about the Author, Vol. 48, 1987; Vol. 80, 1995

Periodicals

Booklist, Feb. 15, 1991, p.1188
Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, July/Aug. 1986, p.205; Feb. 1990, p.133
Los Angeles Times, Feb. 6, 1988, p.5
Publishers Weekly, Jan. 12, 1990, p.62; Apr. 10, 1995, p.17; Feb. 3, 1997, p.35; June 9, 1997, p.46
School Library Journal, Apr. 1995, p.25; Aug. 1996, p.65
Times Literary Supplement, May 20, 1988, p.565
Voice of Youth Advocates, Oct. 1992, p.222; Apr. 1994, p.36
Washington Post Book Review, June 1, 1980, p.10
Wilson Library Bulletin, Apr. 1986, p.48

ADDRESS

Dell Publishing
1540 Broadway
New York, NY 10036

WORLD WIDE WEB SITE

http://www.bdd.com/teacher/

Christopher Paul Curtis 1953-

American Writer
Author of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*

BIRTH

Christopher Paul Curtis was born on May 10, 1953, in Flint, Michigan, an industrial town about an hour north of Detroit. He was one of five children, with three sisters, Lindsey, Cydney, and Sarah, and a brother, Herman David. His father, Dr. Herman Curtis, was a hand and foot surgeon, who, when his practice dried up, went to work in an automobile factory. His mother, Leslie Curtis, was a homemaker.

YOUTH

Curtis was raised in Flint as part of a loving but strict family. "The biggest influence on me when I was growing up was my parents," he stated. "They were relatively strict by today's standards. We knew the rules that we had to follow, and we knew what we had to do and what was expected of us. We had a very structured upbringing." The Curtis children always knew that they would be punished for going against their parents' wishes. Curtis himself went through a brief phase of playing with matches as a boy. His parents warned him repeatedly to stop because it was dangerous, but he did not listen. When he was caught again, his mother decided to burn his fingertip with a match to teach him a lesson. But every time his mother came close, his younger sister would get upset and blow out the match. "I was mad she was doing it, but glad," Leslie Curtis remembered. Christopher never played with matches again, and he gained a family anecdote that would appear years later in his first book.

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Curtis's parents loved to read. "My parents were addicted to reading," he noted. "My father would read a book a night." There were always stacks of books and magazines around the house, and Curtis enjoyed paging through them from an early age. In the early 1960s, his parents made a financial sacrifice to buy two sets of encyclopedias for their children. "I used to spend hours and hours looking through the *Child Craft,* and when I got older the *World Book,*" Curtis recalled. In fact, he still remembers a number of interesting facts from those days, such as the names of many works of art and of all the different dog breeds.

Part of Curtis's desire to become a writer grew out of the storytelling of his two colorful grandfathers — Earl "Lefty" Lewis, who was a pitcher in the Negro Baseball League, and Herman E. Curtis, who was a bandleader in the 1930s. At first, he appeared not to know or care about their tales. "I was at that age, when they were telling these wonderful stories,

that I was doing everything I could to avoid listening to them," he admitted. But even though the stories did not seem to make much of an impression on Curtis as a boy, they have since figured in much of his writing.

Another strong influence on Curtis's youth was the fight for racial equality that was taking place in the United States during the 1960s. "When I was around ten years old and the civil rights movement was just beginning, my father was very active in it and he did a lot of traveling with the UAW [United Auto Workers union]," he recalled. "For some reason that has been very vivid in my mind, so that's probably the thing that I remember most about my childhood." At this time in American history, particularly in the South, there were laws that segregated people by race. For example, white people and "colored" people were required to use separate restrooms, drinking fountains, schools, theaters, and restaurants. Known as "Jim Crow" laws, these laws discriminated against blacks and placed them in an inferior position in society. In the North, where the laws didn't separate the races, the culture did. Blacks were often treated unfairly and faced discrimination in almost every walk of life. This is the culture that Curtis grew up in, and that he explores in his writings.

EDUCATION

Curtis was a good student at Clark Elementary School and Flint Southwestern High School. He was accepted at the University of Michigan—Flint after graduating from high school in 1972. But by that time he was "fed up with school," so instead he decided to work for a while at the Fisher Body Plant, a local automotive assembly plant. His mother was very opposed to him working in the plant, because she worried that the lure of earning money would prevent him from ever going to college. But his father actually encouraged him to work on the assembly line, because he thought that once his son saw how difficult the job was he would leap at the chance to go to college. It ended up that both of his parents were partially right. "I hated every single minute of working on the line," Curtis admitted, but the generous income he was able to earn nonetheless kept him there for 13 years.

Curtis's job at the Fisher Body Plant involved lifting heavy car doors—one per minute over an eight-hour shift—and attaching them to Buicks as the car bodies rolled down the assembly line. But before long he made arrangements with the worker next to him to combine their two jobs, so that they would each work twice as hard for 30 minutes per hour and then take a 30-minute break. Curtis spent much of this free

time at work writing. "When I was working in the factory, I used to write during breaks because it took me away from being in the factory. I didn't like being there so I would sit down and write. It was much like reading, it would take me away from where I was," he explained. Outside of

work, he used his hard-earned money to buy a stereo system and a new 1973 Chevrolet Camaro. He also moved into an apartment of his own and started going out on dates.

Finally, in 1985, Curtis quit his job at the plant to continue his education. He worked part-time as a maintenance man and as a warehouse worker at different companies while attending the University of Michigan in Flint. During his time as a student, he won two of the school's prestigious Hopwood Awards for his creative writing. Curtis finally completed the long process of earning his bachelor's degree in 1996.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

By the time he quit his job at the automotive assembly plant in 1985, Curtis had married and started a family. When he began to win awards for his writing as a student, his wife suggested that he take some time off from his part-time work and concentrate all his efforts on writing. "My wife, Kaysandra, told me I better hurry up and do something constructive with my life or find another place to live," he recalled. "She believed in my writing more than I did." So in 1993, with the strong support of his family, Curtis took six months off to see whether he could make it as a full-time writer. Kaysandra continued her work as an intensive-care nurse in order to pay the bills, while their teenage son, Steven, typed Curtis's handwritten pages into the family's computer every night. In addition to doing the typing, Steven also gave his father valuable advice on his stories. "Lots of people can say they like it or they don't, but not many can say what exactly doesn't work. He can," Curtis noted.

When the six months ended, Curtis had finished a young adult novel about an African-American family from Flint who visits relatives in the segregated South during the civil rights movement. But he soon found that it was very difficult for an unknown author to have a book published. "Most publishers won't read unsolicited manuscripts, and most agents won't take on unpublished authors," he explained. In order to get around this problem, he entered his novel into two writing contests—a multicultural children's fiction contest sponsored by the Little, Brown publishing house, and a contemporary young adult fiction contest sponsored by Delacorte Publishers. Curtis was crushed when he received a letter informing him that his book did not win the Little, Brown contest.

In early 1994, Curtis received a phone call from an editor at Delacorte telling him that since his book took place in the 1960s, it did not meet

the qualifications for their contemporary fiction contest. But, the editor added, Delacorte loved the book and wanted to publish it anyway. "It was cause for celebration in the Curtis household," Curtis remembered. After a frustrating revision process that lasted nearly two years, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* was finally published in 1995.

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963

Curtis's first novel tells the story of the Watsons, a middle-class African-American family from Michigan who travels to Birmingham, Alabama, during the civil rights movement. It is narrated by 10-year-old Kenny Watson, a fourth-grader who has some trouble fitting in because of his lazy eye and his high intelligence. Kenny is convinced that all the neighbors in Flint call his family "the Weird Watsons," and he recounts a series of funny anecdotes to explain why. For example, Kenny's five-year-old sister, Joetta, bundles up in so many layers of clothing during the cold Michigan winters that she says she is the "laughing sock" of her kindergarten class. Kenny's 13-year-old brother, Byron, has recently begun rebelling against their parents and getting himself into trouble. Byron picks on his younger siblings, skips school, plays with matches, and dyes his hair bright red and has it straightened. One icy morning, Byron likes the way he looks so much that he gives himself a kiss in the sideview mirror of the family car. Unfortunately, his lips get stuck to the frosty glass and the rest of the family must come to his rescue in the driveway.

Eventually, Kenny's strict but loving parents decide that they have had enough of Byron's misbehavior. So they pack the children into the family car, known as the "Brown Bomber," and drive south to visit stern Grandma Sands and see if she can talk some sense into Byron. Segregation during that time meant that few bathroom and restaurant facilities were available to African Americans. So the Watsons must take along everything they will need on the drive. Once the Watsons arrive in Birmingham, the mood of the novel shifts from a lighthearted picture of family life to a frightening look at the racial tensions in the South of the 1960s. Racism hits close to home for the Watsons when a nearby black church is bombed, killing four young girls. At first, Kenny thinks that Joetta may have been among the victims of the blast. Although it turns out that the whole family is safe, they are all changed by the experience. Kenny, who takes the incident especially hard, barely talks to anyone when they return home and begins hiding behind the couch. It is Byron who, with a new level of maturity, teaches his brother how to face his fears with courage.

Turning Real Life into Fiction

The first half of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* is based upon some of Curtis's own experiences growing up in Flint. "The Watson family is really kind of an amalgam of a lot of different families that I knew. It's part my family, it's part other people's families," he explained. "One of the great things about writing is that you can use your imagination and you can make all kinds of different combinations of people in situations."

"I believe that young people are often blessed with the best ears for detecting what rings true or what feels right in a particular piece of writing. To me the highest accolade comes when a young reader tells me, 'I really liked your book.' The young seem to be able to say 'really' with a clarity, a faith, and an honesty that we adults have long forgotten. That is why I write."

The original idea for the story came to Curtis during a road trip to Florida with his wife and children. He made the questionable decision to drive all the way from Michigan to Florida—nearly a full 24 hours in the car—without stopping to rest. "We drove through actual mountains, and I can't even remember them!" he recalled of that trip. In order to keep himself awake while driving, he kept the story of the Watson family going in his head.

At first, Curtis had planned for his fictional family to travel to Florida as well. But "when they got there, the story just died," he noted. Then one day his son brought home a school assignment to read about the bombing of the 16th Avenue Baptist Church in Birmingham that took place on September 15, 1963. Four young girls who had been there attending Sunday school were killed that day. At that point, "a light went off," Curtis remembered. "That was it, and I tied the family in with the bombing." Although Curtis did not experience this type of racial violence himself, there were actually more than 50 bombings of black businesses, homes, and churches in Birmingham in the first half of 1963—most of which have never been solved.

Critical and Popular Success

Curtis's publishers gave *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* a small initial printing, which is typical for first novels by unknown authors.

Still, it received excellent reviews and soon began winning the hearts of readers. Many critics praised the novel's humor, warmth, and realism. "When the 'Weird Watsons' drive to Birmingham," Ann Valentine Martino wrote in the *Ann Arbor News*, "you feel like you're riding along in the back seat—with Kenny's little sister drooling in your lap." Kermit Frazier of the *New York Times Book Review* called it "a marvelous debut, a fine novel about a solid and appealing family."

Other reviewers appreciated the way that Curtis handled the Watsons' encounter with racial violence. "It is a mark of Curtis's skill that he so easily makes the transition from humorous family vignettes to a life-threatening run-in with racism. Perhaps because Curtis didn't think the novel would be for children when he started it, there's nothing heavy-handed or preachy about the Watsons' brush with the civil rights movement," Linnea Lannon noted in the *Detroit Free Press*. In 1996, *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* received the prestigious Newbery Honor, presented each year for a distinguished contribution to children's literature, as well as the Coretta Scott King Honor, given annually to a book that promotes peace and understanding. To top it all off, Curtis received word that actress Whoopi Goldberg was interested in turning his novel into a movie. "The book has done very well, beyond my wildest expectations," he stated.

Message for Young Readers

The success of *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* enabled Curtis to quit his job for good in 1996 and become a full-time writer. Other than that, however, his life has not changed too much. For example, he still writes his books in longhand on a legal pad. "I like that much better than word processors. They go too fast," he explained. "With longhand, you think as you're writing. It's a much better pace." Curtis also still does his writing while sitting at a table in the children's room of the local public library. "He'll talk to the children, help someone with homework, make faces. It's not a distraction for him," his wife noted.

One of Curtis's favorite things about being a writer is that it gives him the opportunity to visit schools and meet children. "I believe that young people are often blessed with the best ears for detecting what rings true or what feels right in a particular piece of writing," he stated. "To me the highest accolade comes when a young reader tells me, 'I really liked your book.' The young seem to be able to say 'really' with a clarity, a faith, and an honesty that we adults have long forgotten. That is why I write."

Curtis with his family

Curtis is pleased that *The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963* is increasingly finding its way into classrooms across the United States and around the world. He is proud that his book has introduced so many young readers to the civil rights movement and the concerns of African Americans. "I'm hoping that this is a book kids can connect with, see what happened through Kenny's eyes. I hope it will get them interested in such a heroic time. It's one of the shining moments in history," he stated. "There aren't a lot of African-American young male voices out there. I think there's a real need for us to be heard." Curtis still sees racism in American society and believes that it needs to be addressed. "I'm afraid of what's happening now. Racism is alive and well. It's just got to be more clever and less blatant," he explained. "As long as one person is being treated unfairly, we all are."

ADVICE TO YOUNG WRITERS

Curtis particularly enjoys talking with young people who hope to become writers someday. "The best advice I can give to any aspiring author

is to write. Write anytime you have the opportunity. Set up particular times everyday when you write and stick to the schedule. I think writing is like any other skill, you have to work at it and you have to have practice. It's like an instrument or a sport. The more you do it, the better you're going to get at it," he noted. "It's something that takes a lot of time, so be patient and don't worry if you're not writing stuff that's very good right from the word go. Just keep working at it and things will come around."

Curtis is proud that his book has introduced so many young readers to the civil rights movement and the concerns of African Americans. "I'm hoping that this is a book kids can connect with, see what happened through Kenny's eyes. I hope it will get them interested in such a heroic time. It's one of the shining moments in history. There aren't a lot of African-American young male voices out there. I think there's a real need for us to be heard."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Curtis and his wife, Kaysandra Anne Sookrum Curtis, live in Windsor, Ontario, Canada, just across the border from Detroit. Kaysandra Curtis's family was originally from Trinidad, but later moved to Hamilton, Ontario. Christopher and Kaysandra first met because the cities of Hamilton, Ontario, and Flint, Michigan, shared an annual sports competition in the 1970s. The location would alternate each year between the two cities. One year, Curtis attended the competition in Hamilton and saw Kaysandra in the audience. They began dating, which involved Curtis driving several hours to visit her in Hamilton every weekend for many years. The couple were eventually married and had two children, son Steven Darrell and daughter Cydney McKenzie.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

When he is not busy writing, Curtis enjoys reading, playing basketball, collecting old record albums, and eating Mexican or Indian food.

WRITINGS

The Watsons Go to Birmingham—1963, 1995

HONORS AND AWARDS

Best Books of the Year (*New York Times Book Review*): 1995, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*
Best Books of the Year (*Publishers Weekly*): 1995, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*
Best Books for Young Adults (American Library Association): 1996, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*
Bank Street College Award: 1996, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*
Coretta Scott King Honor Book: 1996, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*
Newbery Honor Book: 1996, for *The Watsons Go to Birmingham — 1963*

FURTHER READING

Books

Something about the Author, Vol. 93, 1997

Periodicals

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Anne Frank 1929-1945

German Holocaust Victim
Author of *The Diary of Anne Frank*

BIRTH

Anneliese Marie Frank was born June 12, 1929, in Frankfort, Germany, to Otto and Edith (Hollander) Frank. Otto Frank was a prosperous businessman who worked at his family's bank in Frankfort. Anne had one older sister, Margot, who was born three years earlier.

GERMANY AND THE RISE OF THE NAZIS

The Frank family was Jewish. They were living in Germany at a time when anti-Jewish prejudice (also known as anti-Semitism) was a growing problem there. By the early 1930s, a worldwide economic slump known as the Great Depression sparked a series of events that had a terrible impact on the Franks and on millions of other families. The Great Depression, which started in 1929 and continued for several years, severely damaged the economies of countries in the United States, Europe, and around the globe. Many businesses failed, many people lost their jobs, and poverty became a major problem. Lots of families had trouble finding food, shelter, and clothing, and even people who kept their jobs worried about the future.

Germany was hurt by the Depression, too, and by the early 1930s many people in the country were frightened about their ability to care of their families. It was in this atmosphere that a young politician named Adolf Hitler rose to control the entire nation. Hitler was the leader of the Socialist German Worker's Party, a political organization more commonly known as the Nazi Party. Guided by Hitler, the Nazis espoused a philosophy that was based on hateful anti-Semitism and a belief that German people were superior to all other people in the world. As the German economy struggled, more and more citizens began to support Hitler, who roamed the country making fiery speeches in which he blamed all the nation's woes on Jews and other minorities like Communists, homosexuals, and gypsies. He claimed that he could return Germany to prosperity by getting rid of those "outsiders" and assuming control over all aspects of the German nation. Unfortunately, many Germans believed him.

By 1933 Hitler and his Nazi Party were in almost complete control of the country. They established concentration camps to imprison people who disagreed with their ideas. These camps later became scenes of mass murder. They also burned books that they did not like, and stripped Jewish citizens of many basic rights. Jewish people were forbidden from holding government jobs, for example, and as time passed they were not even allowed to own businesses. Sometimes Jews were beaten up in the street for no reason by Nazi secret policemen known as the Gestapo.

ANNE FRANK'S EARLY CHILDHOOD

Anne Frank spent her first years in a middle-class neighborhood in Frankfort. Her family was Jewish, although they had many non-Jewish friends. In 1933 Hitler ordered Jewish children out of German schools

and into their own classes. This separation—known as segregation—deeply alarmed her father, Otto Frank. He had hoped that the German people would turn away from Hitler's words of hate and ignorance, but instead the situation kept getting worse. He decided to take his wife and daughters out of Germany immediately, for he feared that it was only a matter of time before the Nazis would strip Jews of their right to travel to other countries.

In December 1933 the Frank family relocated in Amsterdam in the Netherlands, a country on Germany's western border. Amsterdam was a city that had a reputation for treating its large Jewish population fairly, and Otto Frank hoped that his wife and daughters would be happy and safe there. He quickly established his own food products business and the rest of his family began the process of getting used to their new surroundings. Anne was only four years old when her family moved. In the months immediately following their arrival in Amsterdam, neighbors recalled that she was shy and quiet. Before long, however, the Frank family settled into a routine and their youngest daughter came out of her shell.

A LIVELY YOUNG GIRL

Indeed, Frank was a playful and exuberant youngster. Her daring sense of humor made her very popular with the other children in the neighborhood and at school, although adults sometimes thought that she got carried away. In fact, one of her childhood friends recalled Frank as "a mischief-maker who annoyed the neighbors with her pranks and continually was in hot water at school for her conduct."

Whether playing with friends or attending family get-togethers, Frank was never very good at hiding her feelings. She often blurted out whatever was on her mind, and her outgoing nature and strong personality became well-known all around the neighborhood in which her family lived. Her boisterous ways appealed to her father, and the two of them were very close. Her mother, though, wished that Anne could be more like her older sister Margot, who was always quiet and obedient. As Anne grew older, her mother's efforts to curb her youngest daughter's exuberance and sometimes-disobedient behavior sparked many arguments between the two of them, and their relationship suffered.

As a youngster, Frank played a wide variety of games. She and her friends played marbles, hopscotch, Ping-Pong, and Monopoly for hours, and she made her chums roar with laughter at her ability to impersonate other people, including friends and teachers. She even did impersonations of her beloved cat, Moortje. Frank was also a big fan of the movies, and she

read magazine articles about movie stars like Clark Gable and Shirley Temple with great interest. "I adored [Anne] because she was such a good sport—always ready for any fun or game," remarked one of her cousins. He recalled that she also was an enthusiastic organizer of elaborate games of dress-up and plays performed in front of amused parents. "Anne had a very keen sense of fairness and justice," said her cousin. "Whenever we'd get dressed up to act out our scenes, Anne never took the best garments for herself. She always gave them to me, and the funnier I looked the better she liked it. She was a friendly, happy girl."

"I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart," Frank wrote in her very first entry. "I don't want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary as most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Kitty."

EDUCATION

Frank attended kindergarten at a Montessori school in Amsterdam before moving on to elementary school. She did not do particularly well in school. One of her classmates recalled that Frank's teachers thought that the "compositions Anne wrote in school were just ordinary, no better than average." Frank's mediocre grades may have been due at least in part to her tendency to fool around in class. In fact, she came to be known among the school's faculty as a real handful to have in the classroom. Frank loved to talk and be the center of attention, and she and her girlfriends spent far too much time giggling over cute boys and not enough time paying attention to their lessons. One of her teachers even took to calling her "Miss Chatterbox" and "Miss Quack-Quack" in recognition of her talkative ways. But even though her grades were not terrific, Frank was quietly nurturing a secret belief that she might one day be a writer. She sometimes wrote little notes to herself at school, shielding the paper with one hand so that her curious classmates could not see, and she wrote many letters to friends and relatives.

GERMANY'S GROWING AGGRESSIVENESS

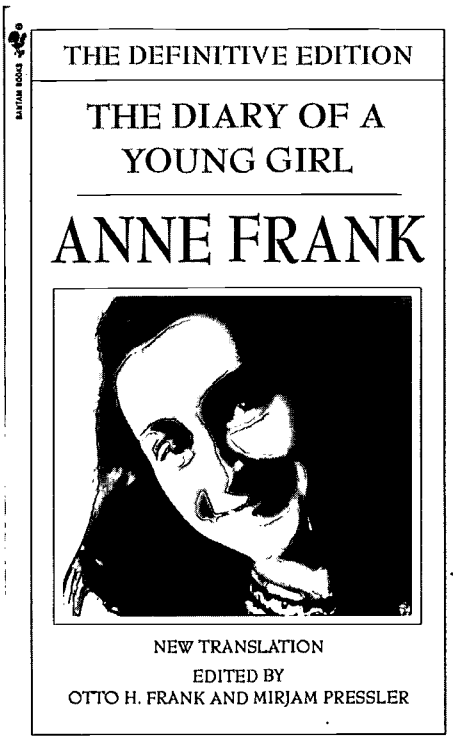
Frank's father, meanwhile, watched events back in Germany with growing dread. By 1935—less than two years after he had moved his family to Amsterdam—Germany had taken all political rights away from its

Jewish citizens, and thousands of Jews fled the country in fear. Hitler's new laws stripped all legal protections from Jews, who became the victims of increasing numbers of assaults and harassment. In November 1938 Hitler's troops attacked large numbers of Jews and launched an awful campaign of destruction against Jewish homes, shops, and synagogues. At the same time, Hitler maneuvered to gain control of other nations in Europe. Only 20 years after the end of World War I, people all over the world worried that Germany's hate-filled ruler was going to trigger another world war with his power-mad schemes.

In September 1939, Germany invaded Poland. This was an early step in Hitler's plan to gain control of all of Europe and, eventually, the world. When news of the invasion reached France and Great Britain, they declared war on Germany. Just as many people had feared, Hitler's thirst for power had sparked World War II. In May 1940 German troops overwhelmed the Netherlands, seizing control of the country even though the tiny nation had declared its neutrality in the war.

When Otto Frank heard that Germany had invaded, his heart sank. He had believed that he had delivered his family to safety, only to find that the Nazis' monstrous appetites threatened them once again. The Nazi Party quickly took control of the Netherlands, and before long they began stripping Jews of their rights. Jewish schoolchildren were segregated once again, and their parents were forbidden from teaching or working in the government. After awhile, Jews were not even allowed to go to the library or the movie theatre, and increasing numbers of Jews were dragged off the street and thrown into concentration camps simply because they were Jewish. By 1942 all Jews were required to wear a yellow Star of David on their clothes so that everybody could tell that they were Jewish. Sympathetic non-Jews in the Netherlands tried to help their Jewish neighbors, and some even began wearing the Star of David too. But the Nazis arrested or attacked all sympathizers, and before long all efforts to help the Jews had to be undertaken in secret.

Anne Frank watched all of these developments with growing apprehension. Her family was trapped in the country, and she was very worried about what would happen to them and their friends. Miep Gies, a friend and employee of Otto Frank, recalled that "[Anne] was very indignant about the injustices being heaped on the Jewish people. . . . It was as though the terrible events in the outside world were speeding up this little girl's development, as though Anne were suddenly in a hurry to know and experience everything. On the outside, Anne was a delicate, vivacious . . . girl, but on the inside, a part of her was suddenly much older."



A SPECIAL BIRTHDAY GIFT—THE CREATION OF THE DIARY

Despite the threat that the Nazis posed, the Frank family continued to celebrate special anniversaries and milestones in their lives. In June 1942, Frank received a very special gift from her father for her 13th birthday. It was a diary with a red checkered cover and plenty of blank white pages just waiting to be written on. Thrilled with the gift, Frank quickly became a dedicated diary keeper. "I want to write, but more than that, I want to bring out all kinds of things that lie buried deep in my heart," she wrote in her very first entry. "I don't want to set down a series of bald facts in a diary as most people do, but I want this diary itself to be my friend, and I shall call my friend Kitty."

Frank treasured the diary, but within a matter of days the shadow of fear crept into her journal entries. On July 5, 1942, she wrote that "A few days ago Father began to talk about going into hiding. He sounded so serious that I felt scared. 'Don't you worry,' he said. 'Just enjoy your carefree life while you can.' Oh, may these somber words not come true for as long as possible!"

Sadly, Frank's desperate hope did not come true. The same day that Anne wrote those hopeful words, her family received a letter telling her sister, Margot, that she had to turn herself in for transport to a forced labor camp back in Germany. This letter chilled the blood of Otto Frank and his family. Nazis were rounding up Jews in all the cities that they controlled, and horrible rumors that Jews were being put to death in large numbers were filtering through Jewish neighborhoods. Day after day, Jews were disappearing from the streets of Amsterdam. Determined to save Margot and the rest of his family, Otto Frank announced that the entire family was going to go into hiding in a secret room above

Exterior of the house where Frank and her family hid during World War II.

his business office. This storage area, which was known as the "Annex," would have to serve as their home until the threat from the Nazis subsided. They would live there with another Jewish family, Mr. and Mrs. van Daan and their 15-year-old son, Peter. Miep Gies and her husband Henk, along with a few other employees of Otto Frank's company, had agreed to help the families hide by bringing them food and other items, even though they knew that they might be killed by the Nazis if their actions were discovered.

The very next day, the Franks made their way to the Annex one by one. Anne Frank recalled in her diary that none of them could carry suitcases since that would arouse suspicion. Instead, she noted that "we put on heaps of clothes as if we were going to the north pole." It was a sad day for Anne, because she could not tell any of her friends that she was leaving, and she had to leave behind nearly all of her belongings. But she made sure that she included her diary in her little school bag, and on the morning of July 6, 1942, she set out for the hiding place that would be her home for the next two years.

A day or two later, one of Frank's childhood friends dropped by her house, only to find the Frank family gone. "At first, I didn't know what to think," Ed Silverberg recalled. "I was very sad, but it wasn't unusual for families to disappear. I knew instinctively I would never see her again."

LIFE IN THE ANNEX

As soon as the Frank family was together in the Annex, they set about trying to make the storage area a home. When the van Daans joined them a week later, everybody pitched in to try and create a living area that both families could share. In mid-July, Frank wrote in her diary that the whole experience was "like being on vacation in some strange boardinghouse. It

may be damp and lopsided, but there's probably not a more comfortable hiding place in all of the Netherlands. Up to now our bedroom, with its blank walls, was very bare. But thanks to Father, who brought my movie-star collection, I was able to plaster the walls with pictures."

But life in the Annex was hard in many ways. There were only a few rooms, so conditions were very crowded, and it was hard for anybody to get any privacy. In addition, during the day they had to be very quiet so that nobody working in the offices below them would hear them. This meant that they could not even use the toilet during the day. "We are as quiet as mice," Frank wrote in October 1942. "Who, three months ago, would ever have guessed that quicksilver Anne would have to sit still for hours—and, what's more, could?" The only time that they could leave the Annex was late at night, and even then, they could only go down into the deserted offices below to listen to the radio. Being forced to stay indoors was also difficult on both families. As the days passed, everybody came to miss the simple pleasures of feeling the sun and wind on their faces. "I can't tell you how oppressive it is never to be able to go outdoors," Frank wrote in one diary entry.

Frank also devoted pages of her diary to speculation about how her life would be after the war was over. "To become a journalist—that's what I want!" she wrote one day. "I know I can write. I want to go on living even after my death! And that's why I am so grateful to God for having given me this gift, which I can use to express all that's inside me!"

The worst aspect of life in the Annex, though, was the ever-present possibility that they would be discovered and taken away by the Nazis to the concentration camps. "I'm very afraid that we shall be discovered and be shot," wrote Frank. At night she sometimes peeked out a window onto the streets below, only to be chilled by what she saw there. "When it's dark, I often see long lines of good, innocent people walking on and on. All are marched to their death. I feel wicked sleeping in a warm bed and get frightened when I think of close friends now at the mercy of the cruelest monsters ever to stalk the earth. And all because they are Jews!"

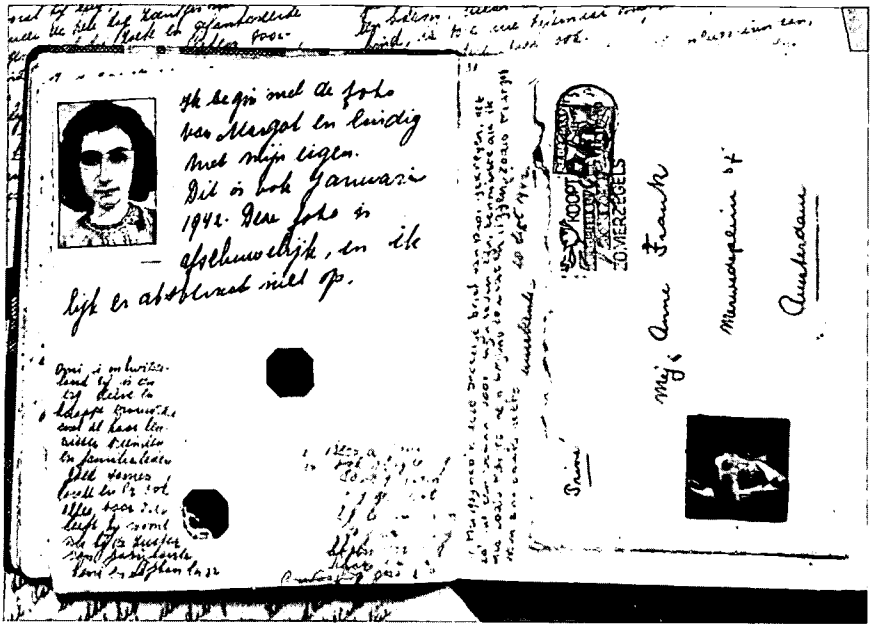
In November 1942 a Jewish dentist named Albert Dussel was secreted into the Annex, which made conditions even more crowded. Anne was forced

to share her bedroom area with Dr. Dussel, and after awhile she began to complain in her diary about his snoring and his lecturing manner. Indeed, the cramped situation up in the Annex made Frank feel very claustrophobic sometimes. "Talk, whispers, fear, stench, farting and people continually going to the bathroom; try sleeping through that!" she wrote.

Frank's relationship with her mother grew worse as well. "My contempt for mother is growing daily," she wrote one day, and on another occasion she referred to her mother as "the most rotten person in the world." She thought that her mother treated her like a baby, and vowed that she would be very different from her mother when she reached adulthood.

By mid-1943, the increasing scarcity of food outside made it harder for Gies to smuggle nourishing food into the Annex. On many occasions, she was able to bring little more than "a few beans, some wilted lettuce, half-rotten potatoes," wrote Frank. Everybody fantasized about what they would do when the Nazi threat finally went away; some dreamed of taking a hot bath, while others spoke longingly of taking a walk in a park or spending a sunny afternoon window shopping. Frank tried to keep her hopes up, but sometimes she could not help expressing her sorrow in the pages of her diary. "Will anyone ever understand that I am simply a teen-ager badly in need of some good plain fun?" she wrote on one occasion. And on the evening of October 29, 1943—15 months after she had first set foot in the Annex—Frank wrote that "the atmosphere [in the Annex] is so oppressive, and sleepy and heavy as lead. You don't hear a single bird singing outside, and a deadly close silence hangs everywhere, catching hold of me as if it will drag me down deep into an underworld. . . . I wander from one room to another, downstairs and up again, feeling like a songbird whose wings have been ripped off and who keeps hurling itself against the bars of its dark cage." On some evenings, Frank found it impossible to hold back the tears, and she would retreat to her room, where she would pray for an end to the war.

As the months dragged by, Frank often felt that the only things that kept her going were her loving relationship with her father and her writing. She spent long hours huddled over her diary, and wrote many short stories and fables as well. "Who would ever think that so much could go on in the soul of a young girl?" she wrote in her diary after completing a particularly long examination of her circumstances. Frank also devoted pages of her diary to speculation about how her life would be after the war was over. "To become a journalist—that's what I want!" she wrote one day. "I know I can write. I want to go on living even after my death! And that's why I am so grateful to God for having given me this gift, which I can use to express all that's inside me!"



Original pages from Frank's diary

Indeed, Frank worked very hard to keep her spirits up. She periodically tried on all of her sweaters—even though they were all too small for her by this time—to decide which one she would wear when they could go outside again, and she observed how puberty was changing her body with great interest. She also devoured the movie magazines and books that Gies smuggled into the Annex. "I've often been down in the dumps, but never desperate," she wrote. "I look upon our life in hiding as an interesting adventure, full of danger and romance, and every privation as an amusing addition to my diary. . . . What I'm experiencing here is a good beginning to an interesting life, and that's the reason—the only reason—why I have to laugh at the humorous side of the most dangerous moments. I'm young and have many hidden qualities; I'm young and strong and living through a big adventure. . . . Every day I feel myself maturing, I feel liberation drawing near, I feel the beauty of nature and the goodness of the people around me."

ROMANCE AND HOPE

As the first weeks of 1944 passed, the atmosphere in the Annex changed. For a long time, Anne had regarded Peter van Daan as a gawky, uninteresting boy, but her loneliness and physical maturation combined to give

her a different perspective. The two teenagers began to spend a good deal of their time together in his room. They would discuss their dreams for the future, complain about their parents, and even talk about sex. After a while, Frank confided in her diary that she had "a queer feeling each time I looked into his deep blue eyes," and by March 1944 she was wondering whether she was falling in love with him. On April 16, 1944, she happily wrote, "Remember yesterday's date. Isn't it an important day for every girl when she gets her first kiss?"

When her father learned of the budding romance, however, he told his daughter to "be careful" and to spend less time with Peter up in his room. Anne and her father ended up getting in a big argument about the whole issue. "I cried my eyes out, and he cried too," she wrote. Afterwards, Anne decided that she needed to do a better job of granting her parents' wishes. In addition, she gradually came to realize that her infatuation with Peter was mostly due to her loneliness for a companion her own age. She and Peter remained friends, but the romantic aspect of their relationship quietly faded away.

Besides, the attentions of Anne and Peter and their families were increasingly focused on the radio reports that they listened to in the dead of night. Radio broadcasts from England indicated that the war was going very badly for the Germans, and that the Allied forces that opposed Germany (the United States, England, Russia, Canada, and several other nations) were on the offensive. On June 6, 1944, a jubilant Anne wondered, "Could we be granted victory this year? We don't know yet, but hope is revived within us; it gives us fresh courage, and makes us strong again."

> *"It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals because they seem so absurd and impossible to implement. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I believe that people are truly good at heart. It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness. I hear the approaching thunder. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that this cruelty will end and that peace and tranquility will return."*

With each passing day, everyone in the Annex waited for word of their liberation, even as they thought about the horrible toll that the war had taken on so many people. On July 15, 1944, Anne wrote that "It's really a wonder that I haven't dropped all my ideals because they seem so absurd and impossible to implement. Yet I keep them, because in spite of everything, I believe that people are truly good at heart. It's utterly impossible for me to build my life on a foundation of chaos, suffering and death. I see the world being slowly transformed into a wilderness. I hear the approaching thunder. I feel the suffering of millions. And yet, when I look up at the sky, I somehow feel that this cruelty will end and that peace and tranquility will return."

THE HIDING PLACE IS DISCOVERED

On August 4, 1944, Frank's worst nightmare came true; their hiding place in the Annex was discovered by the Nazis. The Nazis had received a tip that told them where to look, and that afternoon they marched through the offices of the building and up into the Annex to arrest the Franks, the van Daans, and Dr. Dussel. Later, it was learned that an informer had betrayed them for about one dollar each.

Anne and the others had nowhere to run, and they were quickly taken into custody. The Nazis gave their terrified prisoners five minutes to pack a few belongings. Anne kept her diary—which by this time filled several notebooks—in her father's briefcase, but one of the Nazis dumped all her papers out onto the floor so that he could use the briefcase to steal the silverware that they had used. Within a matter of minutes, all eight Jews had been pushed out of the Annex. Anne's diary was left behind, scattered on the floor.

A little later, Miep Gies and another woman who had helped hide the fugitives crept up to the attic. Stunned, they stared around at the now-empty space until they saw Anne's diary lying on the floor. Gies gathered it together and took it home with her, devastated by the sudden turn of events.

In the meantime, all eight residents of the Annex were transported to Auschwitz, which was one of the worst concentration camps of all. At Auschwitz and other camps, the Nazis subjected their Jewish prisoners to terrible physical labor and horrible conditions. Many prisoners at these camps slowly starved to death because of the lack of food, and they were given only the most meager clothing to warm themselves through the long winters. Worst of all, the Nazis murdered literally millions of Jewish people at these camps, either by shooting them or poisoning them with lethal gas. This horrible murder of more than six million

Jewish people came to be known as the Holocaust. It was into this hellish environment that Anne and her family were thrown.

In late October 1944 Anne and Margot were transferred to the Bergen-Belsen concentration camp. The loss of her daughters destroyed Edith Frank. She lost the will to live, and died in Auschwitz on January 6, 1945. Once they reached Bergen-Belson, Anne met Hannah Gosler, a childhood friend who had already been there for months. One night they were able to speak briefly from opposite sides of a barbed wire fence. "This was not the voice of the Anne I knew," Gosler recalled. "It was a girl who was totally broken. She said she had no hair, and then she said they had nothing to eat."

Neither Anne or Margot were able to survive the brutal conditions at Bergen-Belsen. "Margot was the first to succumb," wrote Cynthia Ozick in the *New Yorker.* "A survivor recalled that she fell dead to the ground from the wooden slab on which she lay, eaten by lice, and that Anne, heartbroken and skeletal, naked under a bit of rag, died a day or two later." It is believed that both Anne and Margot died in March 1945.

Later that spring, the Germans surrendered and the remaining prisoners at the Nazi concentration camps were liberated by Allied troops. Freed from the horrors of Auschwitz, Otto Frank returned to Amsterdam, only to find that he was the lone survivor of the eight people that had hidden in the Annex for those two long years. All the others had perished, either at Auschwitz or Bergen-Belsen. He gratefully accepted an offer from Miep Gies and her husband to live with them. Shortly after his arrival, Gies handed Mr. Frank his daughter's diary, confessing that her sadness had been so great that she had not been able to bring herself to read it.

PUBLICATION OF THE DIARY

Over the next several weeks, Otto Frank read his daughter's diary, marveling at her insights and crying at points where she talked about her abiding love for her father. He could only read a little at a time because of his grief, but finally he finished it. "Never had I imagined the depths of her thoughts and feelings," he later admitted. When he told friends about the diary, many of them urged him to find a publisher for it. At first he resisted, but gradually he came to recognize that his daughter's words of bravery and her embrace of life under even the most difficult circumstances deserved to be heard.

Mr. Frank began the difficult process of editing her daughter's diaries. "Anne was very self-critical," he explained. "In May 1944 she copied the

Otto Frank, Anne's father, shows Queen Juliana of the Netherlands the hiding place of the Frank family during World War II. (June 12, 1979)

whole diary into another book, leaving out some parts that she didn't think were well-written. So, when Miep gave me Anne's papers after the war, I had a total of 360 pages that Anne had copied, and it was my job to combine the two diaries in one." Anne's father also decided to delete some passages. He was uncomfortable with some of the passages in which Anne complained about her mother or talked about her growing sexual awareness.

In 1947 Anne Frank's diary was published as *The Secret Annex,* and it was immediately hailed as the most powerful document to emerge out of the Holocaust. Over the next several years, the book, which came to be known as *The Diary of Anne Frank,* was published in countries all around the world, and it became a staple in school classrooms. The first American edition of Anne's diary, published in 1952, included an introduction by Eleanor Roosevelt, wife of president Franklin D. Roosevelt. In 1955 a Pulitzer Prize-winning play based on Anne's diary opened on Broadway, bringing her story to even more people. By the late 1950s, Anne's stories and fables had been collected for publication as well. Although these never approached the fame of her diary, they confirmed people's opinions that a brilliantly talented young writer had been lost to the world when she died at Bergen-Belsen. In 1991 a "definitive edi-

tion" of the diary was published. This edition, which included the passages that Otto Frank had deleted, was praised for providing a fuller picture of a very brave and complicated young woman. By the mid-1990s it was estimated that more than 25 million copies of Anne's diary had been published in 55 languages.

Otto Frank, meanwhile, died in 1980 at the age of 91. The loss of his family had been a terrible blow to him, but as the years passed he was able to build a new life for himself. In 1953 he married Elfriede "Fritzi" Markovits, a fellow survivor of Auschwitz, and together they raised her daughter Eva—who had been a playmate of Anne's. In addition, he spent the last four decades of his life working to ensure that his daughter's powerful testimonial remained in the consciousness of people around the globe. In addition to overseeing publication of the diary around the world, in 1957 he established the Anne Frank Fund. This fund collected royalties from the sale of the diary and donated the money to various charitable causes. The Annex in which Anne Frank and her family lived, meanwhile, became a museum that continues to attract thousands of visitors every year.

ANNE FRANK'S LEGACY

Anne Frank's diary became a symbol of the resilience of the human spirit and an enduring statement for the millions of people who were silenced by the Holocaust. Over the years, her father received thousands of letters from children and adults who were touched by her story and vowed to do whatever they could to make sure that a horror like the Holocaust never again ravaged our planet. "Anne's name became known all around the world," wrote her father, "and she is now regarded as a symbol of all those who were and still are persecuted innocently because of race, belief or color."

In her diary, "her voice was preserved," wrote Ernest Schnabel. "Out of the millions that were silenced, this voice no louder than a child's whisper . . . has outlasted the shouts of the murderers and has soared above the voices of time."

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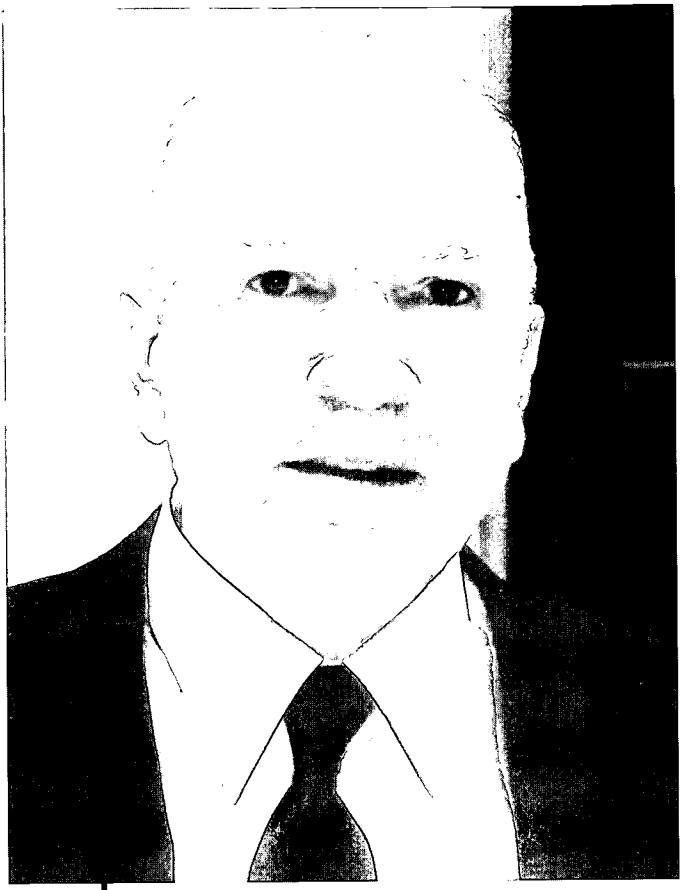
http://www.annefrank.com
http://www.afet.org.uk



Robert Heinlein 1907-1988

American Novelist and Short Story Writer
Author of Science Fiction Books, Including *Stranger in a Strange Land*

BIRTH

Robert Anson Heinlein (pronounced hine-line) was born on July 7, 1907, in Butler, Missouri. His parents were Rex Ivar Heinlein, an accountant, and Bam Lyle Heinlein, a homemaker. He and his six brothers and sisters were raised in Kansas City, Missouri.

YOUTH

Heinlein became interested in science fiction and fantasy literature at a young age. He especially loved the stories of Edgar Rice Burroughs (creator of Tarzan), H.G. Wells (author of *War of the Worlds* and *The Time Machine*), and Jules Verne (author of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*). But for a long time Heinlein never even entertained the idea of becoming a writer of science fiction or anything else. "As a child and as a young man I had never had any intention of becoming a writer," he later admitted. "I had neither the inclination nor any reason to think I had any talent for it." Still, he did think that he might like to study the stars for a living when he grew up. "Science of all sorts and astronomy in particular were my hobby as a boy and I planned to become an astronomer," he recalled.

Heinlein spent long hours of his childhood playing with friends and siblings or tailing along behind his maternal grandfather, who was a doctor. Heinlein admired his grandfather very much, and he sometimes rode along with him when he took his horse and buggy out to the homes of sick patients. Other influences on him, Heinlein later said, included his "parents and six siblings and everything I have seen, touched, eaten, endured, heard, and read."

EDUCATION

Heinlein attended Greenwood Grammar School in Kansas City. After graduating, he moved on to Central High School, where he studied hard and engaged in a wide range of extracurricular activities. He was a member of all sorts of clubs, including the Shakespeare Club, the Student Council, the Rifle Club, the Debate Team, the Inter-Society Council, and the National Honor Society. He graduated from high school in 1924 and enrolled at the University of Missouri. But after one year he left Missouri for Annapolis, Maryland, to enter the U.S. Naval Academy.

MILITARY CAREER

Heinlein excelled at the Academy. He did well in his studies and became an academy champion at fencing. In 1929 he graduated from the Academy, finishing 20th in a class of 243 cadets. He later claimed that his class ranking would have been even higher if he had not received so many demerits for missing curfew. He went out with a variety of girls during this period, and he did not always keep as close an eye on the clock as he should have. A few months after graduation he married Leslyn Mcdonald.

After graduating, Heinlein was assigned to serve on a couple of Navy destroyers and battleships before being commissioned aboard the *U.S.S. Lexington*, one of America's first aircraft carriers. He served as a gunnery officer on the vessel until 1934, when he contracted tuberculosis (TB). This contagious disease is caused by bacteria that affects the lungs, making breathing difficult. The Navy insisted that Heinlein retire from active service. He was tremendously disappointed, but he did receive a lifetime medical disability as a lieutenant (junior grade). Years later, Heinlein confessed that he never quite got over his disappointment at having his naval career shortened by illness. He told the *Washington Post* that "I write stories for money. What I wanted to be was an admiral."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

In the fall of 1934 Heinlein returned to college, taking graduate courses in physics and mathematics at the University of California at Los Angeles. But poor health forced him to drop out of school, and he relocated to Colorado to recuperate. Over the next few years, Heinlein tried his hand at a number of careers. He sold real estate, acquired part-ownership of a silver mine, and even launched an unsuccessful campaign for political office in California. Nothing seemed to work out, however, and by the late 1930s he was struggling to pay the mortgage on his house.

> *"As a child and as a young man I had never had any intention of becoming a writer. I had neither the inclination nor any reason to think I had any talent for it."*

"As is the case with many writers, leisure imposed by ill health gave me the opportunity [to give writing a try]," remembered Heinlein. In 1939 he saw a contest announcement in a magazine called *Thrilling Wonder Stories*. The magazine's publishers were offering a $50 prize to the best amateur story that they received. "I wrote a short story under this stimulus, then decided to send it to the open market rather than to the contest," Heinlein said. He sent his first story, a sci-fi tale called "Life-Line," to *Astounding Science Fiction*. Editor Joseph Campbell offered him $70 for the story, and Heinlein accepted the offer.

After several years of career frustration, Heinlein had finally found a profession that suited him.

After "Life-Line" was accepted, the fledgling writer quickly wrote another sci-fi tale and sent it off to Campbell. This short story, called "Requiem," appeared in the January 1940 issue of *Astounding Science Fiction*. The story tells the tale of an old man with a bad heart whose dreams of space flight spurred the first manned journey to the moon, though he could not go himself. But the man becomes determined to walk on the moon before he dies, so he arranges a space flight despite the objections of government officials and friends. Although the journey proves deadly, he lives just long enough to touch the moon's surface. This story was very popular with the readers of *Astounding Science Fiction*, and critics would later cite it as very early evidence of Heinlein's talent.

A Regular Voice in *Astounding Science Fiction*

Over the next few years Heinlein became a regular contributor to *Astounding Science Fiction*. He got along very well with Campbell, who recognized that his readers loved Heinlein's creativity and style. In fact, the editor eventually asked Heinlein to submit stories under pseudonyms so that he could publish a couple of his stories in each issue.

By the end of 1941, Heinlein had become one of the most popular writers of science fiction in America. A big reason for his popularity—and perhaps his greatest innovation—was his unparalleled ability to write believable stories about the future. Indeed, Heinlein used his scientific background and Navy experiences to give even the most fanciful story lines a core of reality. He would base his ideas on scientific fact, starting with the way the world really was and then creating a plausible future. Of course, he also recognized that his stories had to grab the attention of his audience. "Science fiction is realistic fiction," Heinlein once said. "A serious science fiction writer must attempt to start with the real

world and ask, 'What if—?' He must do it alone, then turn his scenario into a story that will entertain a reader—thousands of readers—or he has failed, no matter how logically he has extrapolated the present into the future."

Heinlein's promising writing career was interrupted in 1942 after the United States entered World War II. Although his medical condition prohibited him from active duty, he spent the next three years working as a civilian engineer in the Philadelphia Navy Yard. He worked on the design and testing of materials associated with naval aviation, including new plastics for aircraft and high-altitude pressure suits.

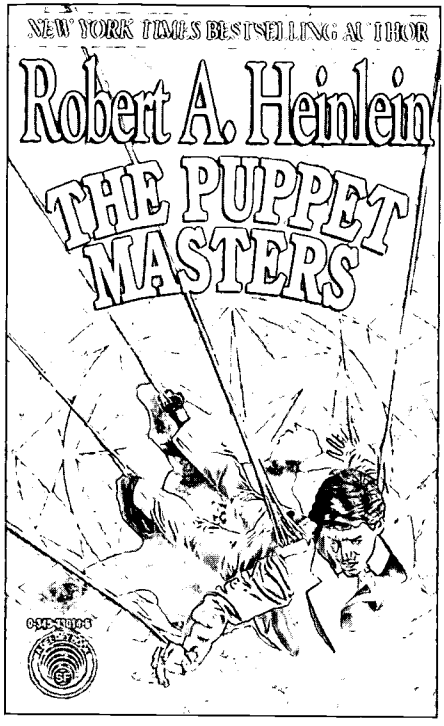
After World War II Heinlein returned to his writing career. At first he attempted stories in a variety of genres, including detective stories, stories intended for young girls, and articles warning about the dangers of nuclear war. In 1947, however, Heinlein returned to science fiction for good.

"Science fiction is realistic fiction," Heinlein once said. "A serious science fiction writer must attempt to start with the real world and ask, 'What if—?' He must do it alone, then turn his scenario into a story that will entertain a reader—thousands of readers—or he has failed, no matter how logically he has extrapolated the present into the future."

A Golden Era of Science Fiction

From 1947 to 1959 Heinlein enjoyed a period of amazing productivity and growing fame. During that time he published 26 short stories, 16 novels, two screenplays, and a number of radio and television scripts. Many of these tales concerned the exploration and colonization of space by intrepid adventurers from earth, and they often appeared as both novels and in serial form in *Astounding Science Fiction* and general interest magazines like the *Saturday Evening Post* and *Town and Country*. The appearance of his stories in mainstream magazines like the *Post* marked a major milestone in the acceptance of science fiction as legitimate literature and established Heinlein as America's best-known science fiction writer.

Heinlein's writings during this period were nominally categorized as juvenile books. But as critic H. Bruce Franklin observed, "there is no clear demarcation of Heinlein's 'juvenile fiction' from his adult fiction."



Indeed, some of his "juvenile" novels were serialized in adult magazines. "When an editor assigned me the task of writing a juvenile novel, I entered the field with determination not to 'write down' to children," recalled Heinlein. "The so-called boys' books are usually published in serial form as adult novels and are invariably published as 'adult' in other countries."

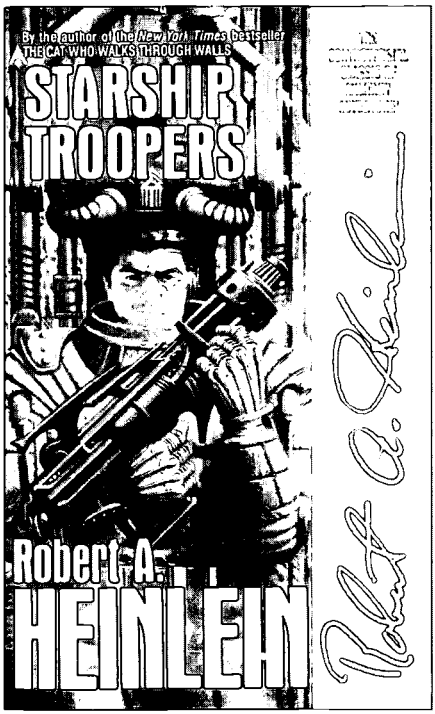
In these early works, Heinlein often featured young protagonists enjoying heroic adventures in faraway places. Among the best known of these early works are *Rocket Ship Galileo* (1947), a tale of four teens who rocket to the moon; *The Red Planet* (1949), a novel about intrigue and treachery on a Mars outpost manned by Earth colonists; *Farmer in the Sky* (1950), in which an overpopulated earth struggles to raise food on a distant planet; and *The Green Hills of Earth* (1951), a short story collection. In 1950 *Rocket Ship Galileo* was made into a movie called *Destination Moon* that is regarded as one of the best early science fiction films.

Throughout the 1950s Heinlein continued to publish short story collections and novels. But as time passed, readers noticed changes in his writing style. "Each year another Heinlein teen-age book appeared, and each year the fabric became richer and the writing more adult," wrote Sam Moskowitz in *Seekers of Tomorrow.* With his newer works, Heinlein began to focus less on heroic youthful adventures and more on ideas and on the place of the individual in society. Indeed, he began to explore social issues within the framework of the science fiction story in such novels as *The Puppet Masters* (1951), an invasion story; *Double Star* (1956), the Hugo Award-winning novel about an actor who impersonates a galactic politician; and *The Door into Summer* (1957), a time travel story. Years later, Heinlein admitted that he became increasingly interesting in writing stories that would "make the American public think about the future."

Starship Troopers and *Stranger in a Strange Land*

In 1959 Heinlein published *Starship Troopers,* which became one of his most controversial novels. Heinlein's book depicted a civilization in which all aspects of government are controlled by a military elite. "*Starship Troopers* seethes with conviction," wrote one critic. "It was written in a hard white flame. The first controversial subject Heinlein had chosen to defend was one he knew best—the military." Reaction to the novel was mixed. Some readers said that *Starship Troopers* was at heart a salute to courage and patriotic duty. Critics charged, though, that the novel glorified war and narrow-minded militarism. In fact, concerns about its tone led Heinlein's first publisher to turn the book down. Some reviewers even said that the idealized society had fascist elements to it. Despite such criticism, however, *Starship Troopers* won Heinlein his second Hugo Award. In 1997, *Starship Troopers* was adapted as a film.

Two years later, Heinlein published one of his most famous books, *Stranger in a Strange Land* (1961). It tells the story of Valentine Michael Smith, a human raised by an ancient and wise race of Martians. He is eventually returned to Earth, where he finds that the societies and governments on his home planet are corrupt. Heinlein had this to say about the main character, Valentine Michael Smith: "Absolutely everything about Earth is strange to him . . . its orientations, motives, pleasures, evaluations. On the other had, he himself has received the education of a wise and subtle and very advanced—but completely nonhuman—race." Heinlein criticizes a wide range of American institutions in *Stranger in a Strange Land*—including the military, the government, and organized religion—and suggests that everybody would be better off if society loosened restrictions on sexual behavior and encouraged a greater sense of community.



When *Stranger in a Strange Land* was first published in 1961, its primary readers were science

fiction fans. But within a few years, it had been embraced by a wide cross section of readers. By the mid-1960s the book was so popular that it became the first science fiction book ever to make the *New York Times*

bestseller list. It added a new word to the language—"grok," which means an intuitive understanding. *Stranger in a Strange Land* has became a cult classic, read and enjoyed by each new generation of fans.

Heinlein's Later Works

During the 1960s and 1970s, Heinlein's books continued to show an increased emphasis on social commentary. Books like *The Moon is a Harsh Mistress* (1966), *I Will Fear No Evil* (1970), and *Time Enough for Love* (1973) challenged many aspects of American life, especially in the areas of sex and marriage. He also increasingly criticized the government. Some reviewers and fans have faulted these later works for glorifying war and the military and denigrating women and minorities, and many consider them inferior to his earlier fiction. But Heinlein was unapologetic. "Although my primary purpose in writing is to entertain, my work naturally reflects my personal evaluations," he said, listing off several of his most deeply held convictions: "A man without learning is crippled; nothing in this life is free; the universe does not forgive stupidity; honesty, courage, loyalty and duty are not only their own reward, but the only reward a self-respecting person needs."

By this point in his career, Heinlein felt that he had nothing else to prove as a writer. During the 1960s and 1970s he was almost universally regarded as America's greatest living science fiction writer. So great was his reputation that he was asked to serve as a guest commentator when American television broadcast the Apollo 11 moon landing in 1969. In 1975, Heinlein was awarded the first Grand Master Nebula Award for lifetime achievement from the Science Fiction Writers of America.

In 1978 Heinlein underwent brain surgery. He had a successful operation to fix an artery that was preventing the flow of blood and oxygen to part of his brain. Over the next few years, Heinlein devoted relatively little time to writing. Instead, he traveled around the world with his wife for months at a time. But because he wrote so quickly, he was able to publish a number of novels in the 1980s, including *Job: A Comedy of Justice* (1984) and *The Cat Who Walks through Walls* (1985). By the mid-1980s Heinlein had become known as a sort of cranky but beloved grandfather figure in the science fiction world. "I am hopelessly old fashioned in many of my opinions and this annoys some people," he admitted.

HEINLEIN'S LEGACY

Heinlein died of heart failure on May 8, 1988, in Carmel, California. His death marked the end of a remarkable career. Testimonials from all cor-

ners of the world of science fiction and literature poured in, attesting to his enduring importance and his influence on generations of science fiction writers. The publisher of the sci-fi magazine *Locus* said, "[Heinlein] was the leading science-fiction writer in the world. His influence among science-fiction writers was second only to H.G. Wells." Another commentator wrote that "Heinlein bears the same relation to modern science fiction that George Washington bore to his country." Still another claimed that he "raised science fiction from the gutter status of pulp space opera . . . to the altitude of original and breathtaking concepts."

Indeed, many testimonials observed that Heinlein had almost singlehandedly transformed our concepts of space exploration while simultaneously bringing the genre of science fiction literature into the mainstream. Author and critic H. Bruce Franklin said that Heinlein was, "perhaps more than any other single person, responsible for the popularization in America of the concept of space travel and for the commitment to undertake it. . . . Heinlein is the only author who has won the Hugo Award four times. He was the first writer of hardcore science fiction to break into general circulation magazines. He is a leading figure in the development of the modern science-fiction movie, science-fiction television serials, and the modern science-fiction juvenile novel. Words coined in Heinlein's fiction have become part of our language."

The publisher of the sci-fi magazine Locus *said, "[Heinlein] was the leading science-fiction writer in the world. His influence among science-fiction writers was second only to H.G. Wells."*

The enduring popularity of Heinlein's stories can still be seen today, for in the mid-1990s several Hollywood studios announced plans to make films of Heinlein's novels. In 1997 a film version of *Starship Troopers* was released, and movie treatments are being considered for *Stranger in a Strange Land, The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathan Hoag, Glory Road,* and *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress.*

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Heinlein was married twice. In 1929 he married Leslyn Mcdonald, but they were divorced after World War II. In 1948 he married Virginia Doris Gerstenfeld, who survived him. They had no children.

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Heinlein had a wide variety of hobbies and interests. For many years he enjoyed working on stone masonry. Other hobbies included fencing, astronomy, sculpture, target shooting, studying fiscal theory, figure skating, and figure drawing. He also traveled around the world with his second wife, visiting dozens of countries. Heinlein was also well-known for his sponsorship of blood drives. He even established an organization called Robert Heinlein Blood Drives that concentrated on finding donors at science fiction conventions.

SELECTED WRITINGS

Novels

Rocket Ship Galileo, 1947
Beyond This Horizon, 1948
Space Cadet, 1948
Red Planet, 1949
Sixth Column, 1949 (published as *The Day After Tomorrow,* 1951)
Farmer in the Sky, 1950
Waldo and Magic, Inc., 1950
Between Planets, 1951
Universe, 1951 (published as *Orphans of the Sky,* 1963)
The Puppet Masters, 1951
The Rolling Stones, 1952
Revolt in 2100, 1953
Starman Jones, 1953
The Star Beast, 1954
Tunnel in the Sky, 1955
Double Star, 1956
Time for the Stars, 1956
The Door into Summer, 1957
Citizen of the Galaxy, 1957
Methuselah's Children, 1958
Have Space Suit—Will Travel, 1959
Starship Troopers, 1959
Stranger in a Strange Land, 1961 (revised and uncut edition published in 1990)
Podkayne of Mars: Her Life and Times, 1962
Glory Road, 1963
Farnham's Freehold, 1964
The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress, 1966

I Will Fear No Evil, 1973
Time Enough for Love: The Lives of Lazarus Long, 1973
The Number of the Beast, 1980
Friday, 1982
Job: A Comedy of Justice, 1984
The Cat Who Walks Through Walls: A Comedy of Manners, 1985
To Sail Beyond the Sunset: the Life and Loves of Maureen Johnson, Being the Memoirs of a Somewhat Irregular Lady, 1987

Short Story Collections

The Man Who Sold the Moon, 1950
The Green Hills of Earth, 1951
Assignment in Eternity, 1953
The Menace from Earth, 1959
The Unpleasant Profession of Jonathon Hoag, 1959 (published as *6 x H,* 1962)
The Worlds of Robert Heinlein, 1966
The Past through Tomorrow: Future History Stories, 1967
The Best of Robert Heinlein, 1939-1959, 1973 (two volumes)
Destination Moon, 1979
Expanded Universe: The New Worlds of Robert A. Heinlein, 1980

HONORS AND AWARDS

Guest of Honor, World Science Fiction Convention: 1941, 1961, 1976
Hugo Award (World Science Fiction Convention): 1956, for *Double Star;* 1960, for *Starship Troopers;* 1962, for *Stranger in a Strange Land;* 1967, for *The Moon Is a Harsh Mistress*
Boys' Clubs of America Best-Liked Book Award: 1959
Best All-Time Science Fiction Author (*Locus* readers' poll): 1973, 1975
Humanitarian of the Year (National Rare Blood Club): 1974
Nebula Grand Master Award (Science Fiction Writers of America): 1975
Council of Community Blood Centers Award: 1977
American Association of Blood Banks Award: 1977
Distinguished Public Service Medal (National Aeronautics and Space Administration): 1988

FURTHER READING

Books

Aldiss, Brian W. *Billion Year Spree: The True History of Science Fiction,* 1973
Authors and Artists for Young Adults, Vol. 17, 1995

Bleiler, E.F., ed. *Science Fiction Writers,* 1982
Contemporary Authors, New Revision Series, Vol. 53, 1997
Contemporary Novelists, 1986
Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 8, 1981
Downing, Nancy Bailey. *A Robert Heinlein Encyclopedia: A Complete Guide to the People, Places, and Things in the Fiction of Robert A. Heinlein,* 1989
Encyclopedia of Science Fiction, 1993
Franklin, H. Bruce. *Robert Heinlein: America as Science Fiction,* 1980
Fuller, Muriel, ed. *More Junior Authors,* 1963
Gunn, James. *The Road to Science Fiction: From Heinlein to the Present,* 1979
Moskowitz, Sam. *Seekers of Tomorrow: Masters of Modern Science Fiction,* 1966
Slusser, George Edward. *Robert A. Heinlein: Stranger in His Own Land,* 1976
Something About the Author, Vol. 9, 1976; Vol. 69, 1992
Twentieth-Century Science-Fiction Writers, 1991
Twentieth-Century Young Adult Writers, 1994
World Book Encyclopedia, 1997

Periodicals

Current Biography Yearbook 1955
Humanist, Mar.-Apr. 1989, p.16
Los Angeles Times, Dec. 19, 1985, p.A5
Miami Herald, Sep. 30, 1984, p.G1
National Review, Feb. 4, 1983, p.122
New York Times, May 10, 1988, p.D26
New York Times Book Review, Aug. 24, 1980, p.26
Newsweek, May 23, 1988, p.64
Philadelphia Inquirer, May 11, 1988, p.E1
Publishers Weekly, July 2, 1973, p.44; Oct. 10, 1994, p.13; Nov. 20, 1995, p.21
San Francisco Chronicle, May 10, 1988, p.A7
Time, May 23, 1988, p.80
Washington Post, May 10, 1988, p.1

OBITUARY

Marguerite Henry 1902-1997

American Writer of Books for Children
Author of Such Classic Horse Stories as *Misty of Chincoteague, Justin Morgan Had a Horse, King of the Wind,* and *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*

BIRTH

Marguerite Breithaupt Henry was born on April 13, 1902, in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. She was the youngest of five children born to Louis Breithaupt, who owned a printing business, and Anna (Kaurup) Breithaupt, who was a homemaker.

Marguerite had three sisters, Marie, Elsie, and Gertrude, and one brother, Fred.

YOUTH

Henry grew up as the much-loved youngest child in a family with siblings who were much older. She liked to tell a story from her youth to explain what it was like. According to her family, a flash flood hit Milwaukee shortly before she was born. The high waters of a creek near their home washed away whole nests of duck eggs, so that only one egg remained. "The lone egg hatched out," she explained, "and instead of the usual spring sight of the mother ducks, each with a trail of ducklings, there was only one yellow duckling with a whole parade of ducks and drakes waddling along behind him!" So as a child, "instead of having one mother to hover over me it seemed as if I had a whole flock of mothers and two fathers!" she explained. "If I called out the window to a playmate, 'Mama says I can't go with you today,' the answer usually was, 'Ask one of your *other* mamas.'"

"Papa was a printer and his shop a wondrous place. Presses whirred. Long sheets of paper streamed out of them. They went in clean and came out covered with words. On rainy Saturdays, when I was ten years old, my father used to let me read proof in his little printing establishment. It was then, I think, that printer's ink got into my blood."

Thanks to her father's job as owner of a printing company, Henry always loved words and wanted to be a writer from an early age. "Papa was a printer and his shop a wondrous place. Presses whirred. Long sheets of paper streamed out of them. They went in clean and came out covered with words," she related. "On rainy Saturdays, when I was ten years old, my father used to let me read proof in his little printing establishment. It was then, I think, that printer's ink got into my blood." One of Henry's fondest memories of childhood was the Christmas when her father set up in a corner of the kitchen "a little red table with all the wondrous tools of writing"—including pencils, scissors, paste, a hole punch, paper clips, and many pads of colored paper. "At last I had a world of my very own—a writing world—and soon it would be populated with all the creatures of my imagination,"

she recalled. "While I scribbled and sketched at the little red table I was supremely happy."

At the age of 11, Henry responded to an advertisement in the popular women's magazine *Delineator* asking children to write stories about the seasons of the year. She composed a highly descriptive story about playing hide-and-seek in the autumn leaves and sent it in. To her amazement, it was accepted for publication and she received a check for $12. Although the extra spending money was nice, it was more thrilling just to see her words in print. "It was just one step from heaven, and the gate was ajar!" she stated. "I was overwhelmed to the point of dizziness. Writing was not only fun, it was such a pleasant way of earning a living. Already I was addicted!"

Henry's love of words also made her a tremendous reader as a girl. Every other day she would roller-skate a mile to the local library "to take out a new book and return the old one in whose spell I continued to live and breathe," she noted. One time, she was so caught up in the story of Hans Brinker and his silver skates that she forgot to look where she was going and got knocked down by a passing motorcycle. She was not hurt, but the library book lay battered and torn in the street. Henry immediately began worrying that her library privileges would be revoked because she had ruined the book. Instead, the friendly librarian took her into the room where books were mended, and Henry found it so interesting that she ended up working there after school.

EDUCATION

Henry had contracted rheumatic fever as a young girl, which left her rather sickly. So her parents kept her out of school until she was 12. After that, she attended the public schools in Milwaukee. Unfortunately, she did not find her school years to be very enjoyable. "I was skinny as an eel and awkward as well, and the boys referred to me as 'that long drink of water.' I wore two pairs of stockings at a time to 'fatten' my pipe-stem legs," she recalled. Although she struggled with math, Henry was an excellent student in English at Riverside High School. Throughout her years there, the student newspaper never appeared without one of her stories.

After graduating from high school around 1921, Henry went on to attend the Milwaukee State Teachers' College and then the University of Wisconsin in Milwaukee. She gained some confidence during her college years and enjoyed acting in dramatic productions, while also continuing to write. Before completing her degree, however, she met her future

In a photo from 1950, the real Misty attends a library conference. The librarians look like they're trying not to laugh.

husband, businessman Sidney Crocker Henry. She dropped out of school when they were married in 1923 and moved to Chicago.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

While living in Chicago, Henry began to achieve her dream of becoming a professional writer. But the types of things she wrote then were much different than the children's horse stories that would later make her famous. For example, she produced a sales bulletin for her husband's company, and she visited manufacturing plants in order to write technical articles for the magazine *Nation's Business*. She also wrote a series of articles called "Turning Points in the Lives of Famous Men" for the *Saturday Evening Post*.

In 1939, Henry and her husband moved to a farm in rural Wayne, Illinois. They both loved animals, so they immediately started collecting a whole houseful of them. It was then that Henry was first inspired to begin writing animal stories for children. "I had always been interested

in the ways of boys and girls and birds and pups and foals and green growing things. Now, for the first time, I found myself in the midst of all this lively treasure. And I, too, began to live!" she said. Her first book, *Auno and Tauno,* was published in 1940. It grew out of the stories she was told by an older couple from Finland who helped her out around the house. Henry soon realized that writing for children came very naturally to her. "I knew that this was it! This was the kind of writing I liked best," she related. Over the next few years, she completed two series of pictured geographies for third and fourth graders, as well as several picture books for very young children.

Award-Winning Horse Stories

Henry first gained recognition for her writing when *Justin Morgan Had a Horse,* published in 1945, was named a Newbery Honor Book. Like many of Henry's most successful books, it is based on a true story and chronicles the relationship between a young person and a remarkable animal. *Justin Morgan* traces the beginning of the Morgan breed of horses back to the late 18th century in rural Vermont. The story centers around Joel Goss, a boy who works as an apprentice to schoolmaster Justin Morgan during the American Revolution. In payment for a debt, Morgan receives a colt that is rather small, but also intelligent, fast, and strong. Joel trains the tough little horse in the evenings and grows very fond of it. The two are separated after Justin Morgan dies, but eventually Joel finds the horse again and it becomes the sire of a new breed.

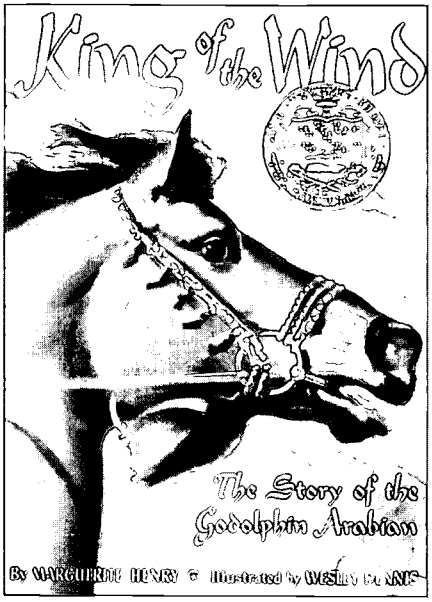
After Henry finished writing *Justin Morgan,* she went to the local library to find just the right artist to illustrate it. She ended up falling in love with the pictures drawn by a man named Wesley Dennis in a book called *Flip.* She mailed Dennis a copy of the manuscript for *Justin Morgan* and, a few weeks later, arranged to meet with him in person in a hotel lobby. On first meeting Henry, Dennis strode directly across the room to her and said,

"I'm dying to do the book and I don't care whether I get paid for it or not."This meeting marked the beginning of a close collaboration between author and illustrator that lasted nearly 20 years.

Misty of Chincoteague

Henry's next book, which also featured illustrations by Dennis, was *Misty of Chincoteague.* Named a Newbery Honor Book when it was first published in 1947, it has since become a classic of children's literature. *Misty* tells the story of the annual Pony Penning Day that still takes place on the coastal islands of Virginia. Once a year, the residents of Chincoteague Island go to nearby Assateague Island to round up wild ponies and herd them across the water separating the two islands. The ponies are then auctioned off to raise funds for the community's fire department. The book centers around Paul and Maureen Beebe, two local children who dream of buying one of the wild ponies. The main object of their desires is a mare known as the Phantom, which has managed to avoid capture in the past. Paul ends up capturing her in his first year partic-

Statue of Misty, dedicated on Chincoteague Island, Virginia, July 29, 1997



ipating in the roundup because the mare has a young foal to protect. Named Misty by the children, the foal lives happily on the Beebe farm while the Phantom escapes back to Assateague and returns to her wild ways.

Henry decided to write a story about Pony Penning Day upon the suggestion of her editor. She actually attended the event and met the Beebe family. Misty was a real pony Henry noticed because of her golden coat and a white marking on her flank that looked like a map of the United States. Misty came to live at Henry's farm in Illinois for several years and served as a real-life model for the character in the book. Thanks to the success of the book, Misty became quite a celebrity, and children came to the farm from all around to give her treats of carrots and apples. In the late 1950s, Henry reluctantly returned Misty to the Beebes so that she could have foals of her own. The whole town of Wayne turned out to watch Misty leave for Virginia, along with dozens of reporters from local newspapers and national magazines. Henry ended up writing follow-up stories about two of Misty's foals, Sea Star and Stormy.

King of the Wind

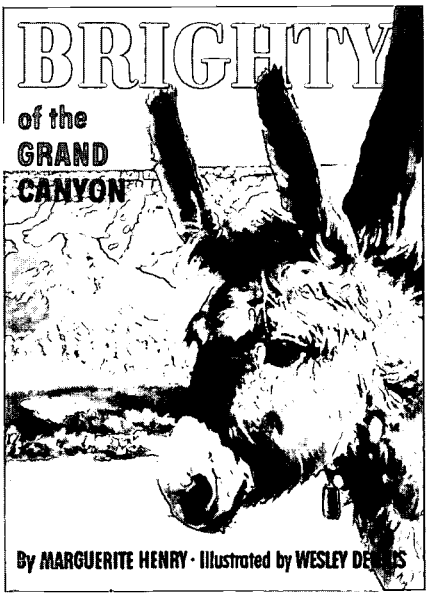
In 1948, Henry received the Newbery Medal for her book *King of the Wind.* It tells the story of the Godolphin Arabian, a horse that lived in the early 18th century and was an ancestor of modern thoroughbred racehorses, including the legendary Triple Crown winner Man o' War. Her partner Dennis had heard details of the story years before, and Henry was fascinated by it. But both her publishers and her family worried about the extent of the research she would have to do. Henry decided to pursue the story anyway and soon found that history came alive. "With great excitement I began to probe and pry into the life of this famous stallion who had rubbed shoulders with sultans and kings, with cooks and carters. Here were no burned-out cinders of history. Here were the live coals showering their sparks all over Morocco, France,

England," she noted. In fact, she became so involved in writing the book that she claimed "it was the present that grew dim and the long ago that became real!"

King of the Wind tells the story of the legendary Arabian stallion Sham through the eyes of Agba, the mute stableboy who cares for him. Born in Morocco, Sham is sent to France as a gift for the country's young king. But the horse is starved during the sea voyage and ends up pulling a cart on the streets of Paris. Abused and neglected, Sham leads a difficult life until he finally ends up in the stables of the Earl of Godolphin in England, where he sires colts that become the fastest in the land. "In spite of his degrading experiences and menial tasks, no one could quench the fire in his veins," Henry explained of Sham. "He lived to become one of the greatest foundation sires of the thoroughbred line." *King of the Wind* went on to become one of Henry's most beloved books, winning the Newbery Medal in 1948.

Brighty of the Grand Canyon

Another of Henry's most popular and successful books is *Brighty of the Grand Canyon,* published in 1953. It tells the story of Bright Angel, an independent-minded burro who helps prospectors in the Old West. During his many hardships and adventures, Brighty ends up forging the trail into the bottom of the Grand Canyon that mule trains and hikers follow to this day. In preparation for writing the book, Henry visited the Grand Canyon and rode down to the bottom on the back of a mule. She also brought a burro to live on her farm and serve as the real-life model for Brighty. "He fell madly in love with Misty, who barely tolerated him," Henry recalled.



HENRY'S LEGACY

Marguerite Henry died at her home in Wayne, Illinois, on November 26, 1997, at the age of 95. She had been ill for several months following a series of strokes. Overall, she wrote 59

books for children during her career. Her books were translated into 12 languages, and several were made into movies. According to critic Miriam E. Wilt in *Elementary English,* Henry was "the best author of children's horse stories in this era, perhaps of all time," and her writings are among "the most beautiful and worthwhile books ever published for children.... People of all ages thrill to the beauty of language; richness of illustration; homely philosophy; authentic information spiced with imagination and fantasy; the portrayal of characters, four-footed and two, rich in human values; and the awareness of the fundamental needs of all God's creatures."

"Books aren't just one-sided. It takes an understanding reader to discover his own book. The writer is no more than the farmer with his bag of seeds. The reader is a field, new plowed in spring. The farmer scatters his seeds, but all the plants that grow from them do not come up alike. Some are small and spindling and some are big and strong. That's the way it is with books. Sometimes a book gives you a small moment of happiness; and sometimes when you close the cover, the book grows big within you, like a boll of cotton bursting its seams."

Henry has often been praised for making history come alive for young readers and for creating strong, believable characters—both human and animal. "Henry's books bring to life legends of the origins of great horses, traditions of the past, historical events, carefully recorded facts about breeds and generations of horses. Her imagination gleams through the portrayal of the characters and their conflicts. Few animal stories can surpass Henry's in suspense," Rebecca Lukens wrote in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography.* "When examined as fiction, the novels are engrossing; when seen in the light of the history they present, they are enlightening; and when read for their insight into human and animal natures, they are highly satisfying." As Norine Odland added in *Elementary English:* "Individuals of all ages who read Marguerite Henry's horse stories know these stories introduce the reader to horses and to much more. Persons and places are a vivid and integral part of each story. The reader may begin to read because the book looks like a horse story. When he finishes reading, he has visited new places and he has met interesting, real people."

Henry explained that she chose to write primarily about horses because "It is exciting to me that no matter how much machinery replaces the horse, the work it can do is still measured in horsepower . . . even in this space age. And although a riding horse often weighs half a ton and a big drafter a full ton, either can be led about by a piece of string if he has been wisely trained. This to me is a constant source of wonder and challenge." She claimed that her greatest joy in writing was giving children books that they could make their own. "Books aren't just one-sided. It takes an understanding reader to discover his own book," she stated. "The writer is no more than the farmer with his bag of seeds. The reader is a field, new plowed in spring. The farmer scatters his seeds, but all the plants that grow from them do not come up alike. Some are small and spindling and some are big and strong. That's the way it is with books. Sometimes a book gives you a small moment of happiness; and sometimes when you close the cover, the book grows big within you, like a boll of cotton bursting its seams."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Marguerite Breithaupt met Sidney Crocker Henry when both his family and hers were on vacation at a fishing camp in northern Wisconsin. "We fished by day and danced by moonlight to the music of a volunteer pianist on a piano that could have stood tuning," she recalled. They were married on May 5, 1923. Although Henry never had any children of her own, she adopted all the young people who became fans of her books. "To Sid's and my surprise we had no chick or child of our own, even though we both came from large families," she related. "I am instead taking care of the children I never had. These young readers identify with the people and animals in my stories so they think of me in a familial role—someone who should be able and willing to answer their questions about life." Sid Henry was very supportive of his wife throughout her career, acting as her attorney, agent, and best critic. They traveled together all over the world until his death in 1987.

WRITINGS

Auno and Tauno: A Story of Finland, 1940
Dilly Dally Sally, 1940
Birds at Home, 1942
Geraldine Belinda, 1942
Their First Igloo on Baffin Island, 1945 (with Barbara True)
A Boy and a Dog, 1944

Justin Morgan Had a Horse, 1945
The Little Fellow, 1945
Robert Fulton, Boy Craftsman, 1945
Misty of Chincoteague, 1947
Always Reddy, 1947
Benjamin West and His Cat Grimalkin, 1947
King of the Wind, 1948
Little-or-Nothing from Nottingham, 1949
Sea Star, Orphan of Chincoteague, 1949
Born to Trot, 1950
Album of Horses, 1951
Brighty of the Grand Canyon, 1953
Wagging Tails: An Album of Dogs, 1955
Cinnabar, the One O'Clock Fox, 1956
Misty, the Wonder Pony, by Misty, Herself, 1956
Black Gold, 1957
Muley-Ears, Nobody's Dog, 1959
Gaudenzia, Pride of the Palio, 1960
All about Horses, 1962
Five O'Clock Charlie, 1962
Stormy, Misty's Foal, 1963
White Stallion of Lipizza, 1964
Mustang, Wild Stallion of the West, 1966
Dear Readers and Riders, 1969
Stories from around the World, 1971
San Domingo: The Medicine Hat Stallion, 1972
A Pictorial Life Story of Misty, 1976
Dear Marguerite Henry, 1978
The Illustrated Marguerite Henry, 1980
Marguerite Henry's Misty Treasury: The Complete Misty, Sea Star, and Stormy, 1982
Our First Pony, 1984
Misty's Twilight, 1992
Marguerite Henry's Horsehew Library, 1992
Marguerite Henry's Album of Horses, 1993

"Pictured Geography" Series

Alaska in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Argentina in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Brazil in Stories and Pictures, 1941

Canada in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Chile in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Mexico in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Panama in Stories and Pictures, 1941
West Indies in Stories and Pictures, 1941
Australia in Stories and Pictures, 1946
The Bahamas in Stories and Pictures, 1946
Bermuda in Stories and Pictures, 1946
British Honduras in Stories and Pictures, 1946
Dominican Republic in Stories and Pictures, 1946
Hawaii in Stories and Pictures, 1946
New Zealand in Stories and Pictures, 1946
Virgin Islands in Stories and Pictures, 1946

HONORS AND AWARDS

Junior Scholastic Gold Seal Award: 1948, for *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*
Award of the Friends of Literature: 1948, for *Justin Morgan Had a Horse*
Newbery Medal: 1949, for *King of the Wind*
Young Readers Choice Award: 1951, for *King of the Wind;* 1952, for *Sea Star, Orphan of Chincoteague*
William Allen White Award: 1956, for *Brighty of the Grand Canyon*
Sequoyah Children's Book Award: 1960, for *Black Gold;* 1970, for *Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West*
Children's Reading Round Table Award: 1961
Lewis Carroll Shelf Award: 1961, for *Misty of Chincoteague*
Clara Ingram Judson Award (Society of Midland Authors): 1961, for *Gaudenzia: Pride of the Palio;* 1973, for *San Domingo: The Medicine Hat Stallion*
Western Heritage Award (National Cowboy Hall of Fame): 1967, for *Mustang, Wild Spirit of the West*
Kerlan Award (University of Minnesota): 1975

FURTHER READING

Books

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Dictionary of Literary Biography, Vol. 22, 1983
Hoffman, Miriam, and Eva Samuels. *Authors and Illustrators of Children's Books,* 1972

Kunitz, Stanley J., and Howard Haycraft, eds. *Junior Book of Authors,* 1951
Miller, Bertha Mahony, and Elinor Whitney Field, eds. *Newbery Medal Books: 1922-1955,* 1955
Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children's Books and Their Creators,* 1995
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Time, Dec. 8, 1997, p.35
Washington Post, Oct. 29, 1990, p.B1; Nov. 29, 1997, p.C7

WORLD WIDE WEB SITE

http://www.modelhorses.com/mcs/mcs.html

Lois Lowry 1937-

American Novelist
Newbery Medal-Winning Author of *Number the Stars, The Giver,* and the "Anastasia" Series

BIRTH

Lois Ann Lowry was born Cena Hammersberg in Honolulu, Hawaii, on March 20, 1937, to Robert E. Hammersberg, a dentist in the U.S. Army, and Katharine Landis Hammersberg. She was originally named Cena, after her paternal grandmother. But her grandmother had always disliked the name, and she convinced Robert and Katharine Hammers-

berg to rename the child. "Hastily my name was changed," recalled Lowry, "and when at the age of 11 months I was baptized, with a tiny lei of Hawaiian flowers around my neck, it was with the name Lois Ann, in honor of my father's two sisters back in Wisconsin." Lois Ann was the second of three children. She had an older sister, Helen, and a younger brother, Jon.

YOUTH

As a young girl, Lowry spent large amounts of time off by herself reading or exploring. "I've always felt that I was fortunate to have been born the middle child of three," she said. "My older sister, Helen, was very much like my mother: gentle, family-oriented, eager to please. Little brother Jon was the only boy and had interests that he shared with our father. . . . That left me in-between, and exactly where I wanted to be: on my own. I was a solitary child who lived in the world of books and my own imagination."

"Until I was about 12, I thought my parents were terrific, wise, wonderful, beautiful, loving, and well-dressed. By age 12 and a half, they turned into stupid, boring people with whom I didn't want to be seen in public. Often when I talk at schools, I'll ask the 13-year-olds, 'Have you noticed how suddenly your mother has turned into a stupid and boring person?' and they all light up with a sense of recognition, but also with a sense of humor about it. That happens to all kids, and to the kids in my books as well."

In December 1941, when Lowry was living in Hawaii, Japan attacked the U.S. naval base at Pearl Harbor in Hawaii. After that assault, the United States declared war on Japan and entered World War II. A short time later, Roger Hammersberg was called to serve overseas. The rest of the family moved to Carlisle, Pennsylvania, where they lived with Lois's maternal grandfather and step-grandmother. "My step-grandmother didn't like children much, and I didn't like her," said Lowry. "But I adored my grandfather. He was the president of a bank and very distinguished."

Despite her grandfather's attention, though, Lowry wished that the war would end so that her father could return home. "He was gone during a great deal of my childhood," recalled Lowry. "I remember all these rela-

tively normal Christmases with trees, presents, turkeys, and carols, except that they had this enormous hole in them because there was never any father. I have very fond memories of him, and I'm sure that he did come back on leave; nevertheless, he was lost to me for a number of formative years. That's probably why I've written a terrific father figure into almost all of my books—sort of a fantasy of mine while growing up."

Lowry liked spending her afternoons at the local library, which she called her "special place." She also loved going to her grandparents' summer home, a huge stone building with massive fireplaces that looked out on a pretty lake. The Hammersberg family spent long portions of their summers at the lake. "Down the dirt road was the wide-porched general store where we all would gather in the evenings," remembered Lowry. "Adults to gossip, teenagers to flirt, we children to eat ice cream and play tag in the twilight." Those summer evenings, she would later recall, were typical of her young life, "which was quiet, well-ordered, predictable, safe, and happy."

When World War II ended in 1945, Robert Hammersberg was stationed in Japan as part of the occupation force. In 1948 he finally sent for his family to come live with him. "I was the only kid finishing sixth grade who wasn't going to go to the local junior high but would, instead, be sailing on an ocean liner from New York, down through Panama, and across the Pacific to a place we had actually studied in our geography textbooks," said Lowry. "An exotic place. In truth, I spent the summer miserable with fever from the series of typhus, cholera, typhoid, yellow fever, and encephalitis injections which are required. Then, on the month-long voyage to Japan, I endure seasickness for the first week and excruciating boredom for the remaining three."

The Hammersberg family lived in Tokyo, where many buildings still bore the marks of the war that had ended just a few short years before. In fact, large numbers of Japanese families whose homes had been destroyed by planes were living in makeshift shacks of corrugated tin. Lowry explored the metropolis with wide-eyed wonder, taking in the "huge, sprawling, noisy, crowded city by bike and bus and train without a qualm." She recalled that the Japanese people she met were courteous and kind, even though it was obvious that she was American. Lowry's family spent two years in Japan, but in 1950 the Korean War erupted in Asia. All American women and children in Japan were told to evacuate, or leave the country. Lowry was forced to say goodbye to her father once again as she returned to Pennsylvania with her mother and siblings.

EDUCATION

Lowry first attended elementary school at the Franklin School in Carlisle, Pennsylvania. "I do remember the feeling of being set apart from the other children," she admitted. While her classmates would play games, "I sat in the corner of the classroom instead, reading." Lowry complained that the activities in her first grade class were boring, so her teachers "got even with me. They put me into third grade, with a see-how-you-like-that attitude, and I liked it just fine —the books were more interesting." But then she was confronted with homework on multiplication tables, and she did not even know how to add or subtract. "I was humbled," she said. "For the remainder of my official academic life I was the youngest, usually the smallest in every grade, and the one who suffered from math anxiety long before the term was invented. But I read, and it is a bountiful compensation."

Lowry recalled that by junior high school most of her classmates were more physically developed than she was. "It probably increased my tendency to be an introvert," she said. "I wasn't friendless or unpopular, but my friendships tended to be singular, close ones rather than large groups of giggling girls. I was never a cheerleader-type person and I'm glad, but I sort of envied them in a quiet way."

While living in Tokyo, she and her sister attended the English-speaking Meguro School along with other children of military personnel. After returning to the U.S., Lowry attended several schools between her freshman and senior years of high school. In 1954 she graduated from the Packer Collegiate Institute, a private school for girls in Brooklyn Heights, New York.

By the time of her high school graduation Lowry was sure that she wanted to be a writer, so she started looking at colleges that had good writing programs. In the fall of 1954 she began classes at Pembroke College, part of Brown University in Providence, Rhode Island. Pem-

broke was the women's college at Brown; at that time it wasn't uncommon for universities to have separate colleges for women and men. "In between dates and bridge games I worked hard at writing," she remembered. "I was in a special honors program for aspiring writers."

Looking back on her early college days, however, Lowry expressed regrets about the priorities that she and her girlfriends shared. Back in the 1950s, many young college women were expected to concentrate on finding a husband rather than studying for a career of their own. "One of the saddest comments I can make about those times is that to this day I don't know what any of my college friends majored in, or what their professional aspirations were," admitted Lowry. "But without hesitation I could tell you which of them had some guy's fraternity pin attached to her sweater."

Leaving College and Early Marriage

On June 11, 1956, Lowry married Donald Grey Lowry and left college. "That was the '50s, and that's what you did when somebody asked you to marry him; immediately you gave up your academic aspirations," said Lowry. "I married young. Women did that so often in those days. I had just had my 19th birthday—and finished my sophomore year in college—when I married a naval officer and continued the odyssey that military life requires."

Lowry and her husband lived all around the country over the next few years until he left the service and entered Harvard Law School. After he earned his law degree, they moved to Maine, where he opened a law office and she cared for their rapidly growing family. "By the time I was 25 I had four children, all under the age of four," she recalled. Lowry spent the next several years taking her kids to school activities and looking after the house, but as time passed she become increasingly restless. By the late 1960s all of her children were in school, and she realized that she could return to college and get her bachelor's degree if she wished.

"I wasn't friendless or unpopular, but my friendships tended to be singular, close ones rather than large groups of giggling girls. I was never a cheerleader-type person and I'm glad, but I sort of envied them in a quiet way."

Returning to College

Lowry promptly enrolled in the writing program at the University of South Maine. Her return to college marked a significant turning point in her life. "I entered college, second time around, when I was in my 30s," she said. "The kids and I did our homework together in the evenings, seated in the kitchen around a big pine table which had come from my grandmother's summer home; they thought I studied too hard and too much and wondered why I couldn't be as casual about school as they were." But Lowry's early departure from college had taught her how important education was, and she made no apologies for her dedication to her classes. "I'm sure I got a lot more out of college in my 30s than when I was 18 and worrying about clothes and dates," she stated.

In 1972 Lowry graduated from the University of South Maine with a B.A. in writing. She then enrolled in some graduate school classes, but she also began writing short stories and magazine articles. Lowry was determined to establish herself as a professional writer, "the thing I had dreamed of doing since those childhood years when I had endlessly scribbled stories and poems into notebooks."

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Becoming a Writer

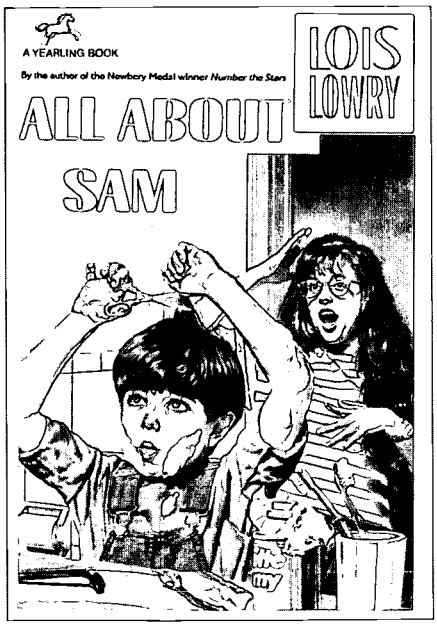
By the mid-1970s Lowry had carved out a niche for herself in the writing profession. A few of her short stories were accepted for publication in magazines, and she wrote two textbooks, *Black American Literature* and *Literature of the American Revolution.* In addition, she had begun writing her first novel. Lowry was happy about her writing success, but at the same time she realized that her marriage was an increasingly troubled one: "As I look at it in retrospect, I wasn't the person he'd married anymore. And he didn't want to be married to somebody who now said she was a writer and was going to go off and do stuff and earn money."

In 1977 Lowry and her husband decided to get a divorce. "My kids were in college and high school and I didn't want to be a lawyer's wife anymore," remembered Lowry. "I wanted to go out and work, have a career. My mother had never worked a day after she got married. She'd been the traditional 'Leave It to Beaver' mother, there in the kitchen baking chocolate chip cookies. Now, when we talk, she becomes very wistful because she never had the chance to do the things I've done."

Lowry knew that her life would be very different after the divorce. She prepared for this new stage with a mixture of excitement and nervousness. "I was interested in exploring any new avenues professionally because for the first time in my life I was going to have to earn a living, to make my way alone," she said. Even though she had been able to land fairly steady freelance writing assignments over the previous few years, she knew that "making ends meet was going to be very tough."

In the spring of 1977, however, Lowry's first novel appeared, and it immediately established her as a promising new writer of literature for children and young adults. *A Summer to Die* was the story of two sisters, one of whom dies of cancer. Lowry based a good deal of the story on her own sister, who had died several years earlier. "That book was not strictly autobiographical," Lowry stated. "I changed a lot, but when my mother read it, she recognized the characters as my sister and me."

In 1979 Lowry moved from Maine to Boston, Massachusetts, where she continued to write novels for children and young adults. Later that year her second novel, *Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye,* was published. The book, which tells the story of an adopted 17-year-old girl who decides to find her birth parents, was warmly received by critics and readers alike. But it was her third novel that launched Lowry on the path to literary fame.



The Anastasia Series

In 1979 Lowry published *Anastasia Krupnik,* a novel that relates the adventures of a precocious 10-year-old girl who expresses her anxiety about the arrival of a baby brother, Sam, in a variety of poignant and funny ways. The book was named an American Library Association Notable Book and was tremendously popular with young readers. In fact, the book's popularity, along with Lowry's own fondness for Anastasia and the Krupnik family, led the author to start an ongoing series of books. "I think my psyche requires amusement from time to

time, and the Anastasia books provide that," Lowry explained. "They are very easy to write because I know all the characters, I know where the books are set, I know where Anastasia lives, and I know her friends. And, while I try to introduce new elements in each book, the basic stuff is all there. So when I just need to relax and tee-hee a little to myself, I say, 'It's time to write another book about Anastasia.'"

Lowry was inspired to create the Anastasia Krupnik character in part because she remembered so clearly what it was like to be young, and she figured that things had not changed that much for the current generation. "Until I was about 12, I thought my parents were terrific, wise, wonderful, beautiful, loving, and well-dressed," she remembered. "By age 12 and a half, they turned into stupid, boring people with whom I didn't want to be seen in public. Often when I talk at schools, I'll ask the 13-year-olds, 'Have you noticed how suddenly your mother has turned into a stupid and boring person?' and they all light up with a sense of recognition, but also with a sense of humor about it. That happens to all kids, and to the kids in my books as well."

The Anastasia series—as well as the growing series of books about her younger brother Sam—has been hailed by reviewers, teachers, and students alike for their skillful blend of humor and perceptive comments on adolescent life. "The Anastasia stories are very funny," said one reviewer, "but woven into that humor is far more worldly insight than is usual for such popular fiction. In an age of conformity, Lois is a unique and important voice."

Lowry did not limit her writing to tales about the Krupnik family, however. During the 1980s she wrote several other novels, including *Auburn Street* (1980), *The One Hundredth Thing about Caroline* (1983), *Taking Care of Terrific* (1983), and *Rabble Starkey* (1987). As with the Anastasia books, each of these stories featured a young girl as the novel's central character.

Number the Stars

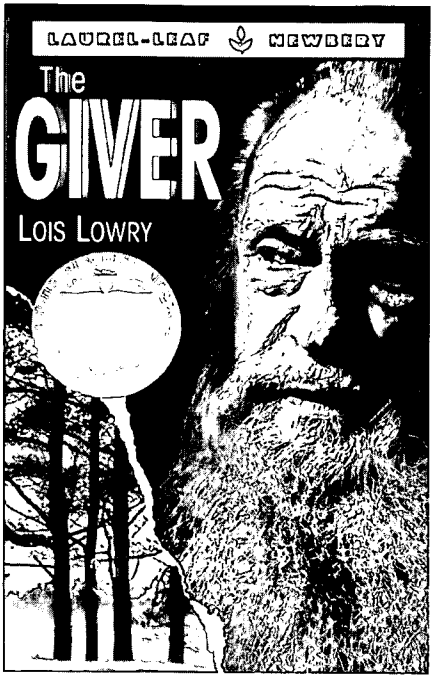
In 1989 Lowry published *Number the Stars*, which examines some of the horrible events that took place during World War II, showing them through the eyes of two young girls growing up in Copenhagen, Denmark. During that war, the Nazis that controlled Germany murdered millions of people in concentration camps simply because of their ethnic background. The major targets of this terrible campaign were Jewish people; an estimated six million Jews were killed by the Nazis during the war. This mass extermination of the Jewish people came to be known as the Holocaust.

Lowry's book tells the tale of a Danish family's efforts to save a Jewish family after Denmark is taken over by the Nazis. The novel details how the close friendship between 10-year-old Annemarie Johansen and her Jewish friend Ellen Rosen leads the Johansen family to help the Rosens escape from Denmark before the Germans can capture them. But the story also informs readers about the larger Danish Resistance. This group, which refused to accept the Nazi presence in their country, managed to smuggle nearly 7,000 Jews out of Copenhagen, Denmark, to safety in Sweden during the war. *Number the Stars* reminds readers about the power that individual can have to help others. The book, which Lowry dedicated to a Danish friend who had been a child in Copenhagen during the war, was hailed by critics and readers alike as a powerful reminder of bravery and friendship. In 1990 the book received the prestigious Newbery Medal from the American Library Association, considered the highest honor in children's literature.

The Giver

In the 1990s Lowry continued to spin her tales about the Krupnik family in such books as *Attaboy, Sam!* (1992), *Anastasia Absolutely* (1995), and *See You Around, Sam!* (1996). But her best-known book of this period is *The Giver* (1993), a novel set in a seemingly perfect world of the future. In this world, disease, crime, poverty, and racial strife have all been eliminated. But the people of the world pay a high price to ensure their safety from such threats. The communities of the future have also eliminated love and memories from their societies, and its members have little control over how they will live their lives.

The central character in *The Giver* is Jonas, a 12-year-old boy who learns that he is to become a Receiver of Memories for his community. This position is one of the most important in the society, for this person holds all memories of love, pain, beauty, and grief for the entire community.



But as he undergoes his training at the hands of "the Giver," who is the current holder of the memories, Jonas begins to understand that the absence of these emotions and feelings from the larger community has crippled the society's development and understanding of itself. He subsequently decides to release his memories into the community, which learns to handle these long-forgotten emotions and feelings with the help of the Giver.

Reviewers and young readers were enthralled by the novel, which Lowry admitted was quite different from anything she had ever written before. But she indicated that her Newbery Medal for *Number the Stars* had "freed me to risk failure" in attempting to write *The Giver.* Her gamble paid off, for *The Giver* proved very popular and received the 1994 Newbery Medal. *The Giver* confirmed Lowry's place as one of the world's best writers of literature for children and young adults.

Lowry's Writing Style

Lowry is admired for her ability to write skillfully about both humorous and serious subjects. "Books that ring as true as Lois Lowry's virtually always emerge from honest exploration of experience and from an inner ear finely tuned to what is going on both within and around the writer's life," said Shirley Haley-James. "She can tickle funny bones with her books because she sees and appreciates the humorous and the ridiculous in the things she, and all of us, say and do. She can touch the pain in our lives because she has lived through her own and because she is not afraid either to relive it when that serves a purpose or to enter ours when she can be of help."

Other reviewers cited Lowry's ability to identify with the uncertainties of growing up as a big key to her success. "While avoiding shocking 'problem novels,' Lowry does not shelter her adolescent readers from

the real world," said one critic. "They can identify, laugh, and cry with these believable characters who grow wiser with each problem resolved. Thus, Lowry helps children answer their own baffling questions about self-identity and human relationships."

For her part, Lowry indicated that she tries to infuse all of her books with a common theme. "My books have varied in content and style," she said. "Yet it seems to me that all of them deal, essentially, with the same general theme: the importance of human connections. *A Summer to Die,* my first book, is a fictionalized retelling of the early death of my sister, and of the effect of such a loss on a family. *Number the Stars,* set in a different culture and era, tells of the same things: the role that we humans play in the lives of our fellow beings. *The Giver* takes place against the background of yet another very different culture and time. Though broader in scope than my earlier books, it nonetheless speaks to the same concerns: the vital need for humans to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment. . . . I have grandchildren now. For them, I feel a greater urgency to do what I can to convey the knowledge that we live intertwined on this planet and that our future as human beings depends upon our caring more, and doing more, for one another."

"My books have varied in content and style. Yet it seems to me that all of them deal, essentially, with the same general theme: the importance of human connections. . . . I have grandchildren now. For them, I feel a greater urgency to do what I can to convey the knowledge that we live intertwined on this planet and that our future as human beings depends upon our caring more, and doing more, for one another."

HOME AND FAMILY

Lois Ann Hammersberg and Donald Grey Lowry were married on June 11, 1956. They had four children, daughters Alix and Kristin and sons Grey and Benjamin, before they divorced in 1977. Lowry usually celebrates holidays with her children, who are now grown, but the rest of the time she lives by herself. "I spend my days happily alone, reading and writing," she said. "I live and work in Boston, in the old section of the city called Beacon Hill, where the sidewalks are bumpy and brick

and the streetlights are still gas, as they were a century ago. Weekends, I go to New Hampshire, where I have an old brick farmhouse surrounded by flower gardens, woods, and birds."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Lowry has been an avid photographer for years. In addition, she enjoys traveling to different countries and exploring other cultures. "I do a lot [of traveling] for business purposes, but I've been all over the world. I enjoy it because I can combine it with photography, just for my own pleasure." Lowry also enjoys gardening during the summer, knitting during the winter, watching movies, cooking, and reading, especially biographies and memoirs.

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Find a Stranger, Say Goodbye, 1978
Anastasia Krupnik, 1979
Autumn Street, 1979
Anastasia Again! 1981
Anastasia at Your Service, 1982
Taking Care of Terrific, 1983
Anastasia Ask Your Analyst, 1984
Us and Uncle Fraud, 1984
One Hundredth Thing about Caroline, 1985
Anastasia on Her Own, 1985
Switcharound, 1985
Anastasia Has the Answers, 1986
Rabble Starkey, 1987
Anastasia's Chosen Career, 1987
All about Sam, 1988
Number the Stars, 1989
Your Move J.P.! 1990
Anastasia at This Address, 1991
Attaboy, Sam! 1992
The Giver, 1993
Anastasia Absolutely, 1995
See You Around, Sam! 1996
Stay! Keeper's Story, 1997

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Children's Book Award (International Reading Association): 1978, for *A Summer to Die*
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Boston Globe-Horn Book Award: 1987, for *Rabble Starkey*
School Library Journal Best Book: 1988, for *All About Sam*
Newbery Medal (American Library Association): 1990, for *Number the Stars;* 1994, for *The Giver*
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Melissa Mathison 1950-

American Screenwriter
Scriptwriter for *The Black Stallion, E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial,* and *The Indian in the Cupboard*

BIRTH

Melissa Mathison was born in 1950 in California. Her father is Richard Mathison, a journalist; her mother, whose name is unknown, sometimes worked in publicity. She was one of five children. Mathison guards her privacy, and she has not released many details of her early life.

YOUTH

Mathison grew up in a California household that placed a great value on creativity and intellectual curiosity. "We weren't your mainstream '50s family," she remembered. "Both my parents had wonderful, eccentric, artist friends who treated us [children] as friends as well. How your mind worked was considered important." Mathison enjoyed reading and a wide range of artistic pursuits as a youngster, but she also recalled that one of her favorite pastimes was to go hunting for coyote tracks in the woods behind their Hollywood Hills home.

EDUCATION

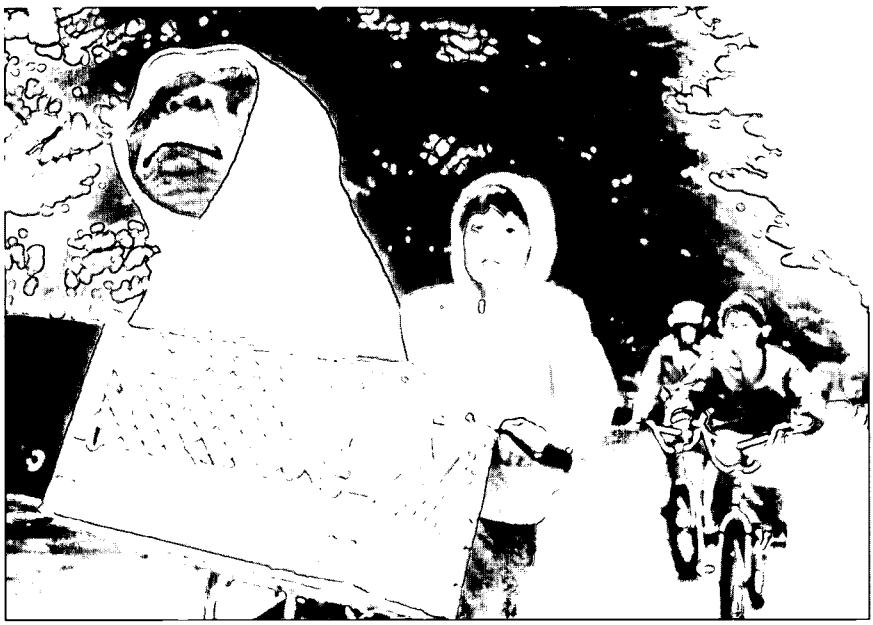
Mathison attended both elementary school and high school in the Los Angeles area. After graduating from high school in the late 1960s, Mathison enrolled at the University of California-Berkeley, where she planned to earn a degree in political science. She immersed herself in her studies, taking part-time jobs to help pay for her tuition. Midway through her schooling, however, she abruptly left the university to take a job as an assistant to film director Francis Ford Coppola, a long-time friend of her parents. Indeed, Mathison herself used to babysit Coppola's children during her high school days.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

Mathison loved the world of moviemaking. When she joined Coppola's crew, he was in the midst of filming *The Godfather, Part II,* his sequel to the classic 1972 film *The Godfather.* Mathison knew that Coppola was regarded as one of the most gifted directors in the world, and that the opportunity to watch him work could be very valuable for her. But she was also simply thrilled to be hanging around the set with glamorous movie stars. "All the things that were tedious and mundane to most people were exhilarating to me," she recalled. "I had been working in a bakery. Bringing coffee to Al Pacino was exciting."

Becoming a Writer

By the time that *The Godfather, Part II* was released in 1974 to rave reviews, Mathison was increasingly certain that she wanted to pursue a career in the film industry. Encouraged by Coppola, she started to write a script to bring Walter Farley's classic novel *The Black Stallion* to the screen. "I don't remember saying I wanted to write scripts as much as being told that I could," she recalled. "Francis said, 'You can do this,' and that was it. Somebody else might have said, 'How much am I being



Scene from the movie E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial

paid, and I need 12 weeks.' I just said OK. . . . We all agreed the movie should be like a children's book, just with pictures. That's when I learned to take out the words, to tell the story visually, which is the best training there is." She continued to maintain her ties to Coppola over the next few years, and when the director decided to go to the Philippines to film a movie about the Vietnam War, she went along as a script supervisor.

It was during the filming of Coppola's epic Vietnam film *Apocalypse Now* that Mathison met her future husband, actor Harrison Ford. Of course, Ford went on to become one of the leading actors in Hollywood after starring in the *Star Wars* movies, the Indiana Jones movies, and the recent hits *The Fugitive* and *Air Force One*. But at that time, he was not yet famous, and he only had a small part in *Apocalypse Now*. "I was attracted to her immediately," remembered Ford. "I don't know what it was about her, but I just sparked to her." They quickly fell in love, and before long the two of them were inseparable.

Creating *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial*

Both *Apocalypse Now* and *The Black Stallion* were released in 1979. Mathison's fine work on the latter film caught the attention of other

Hollywood movie directors, and she was quickly hired to write a movie script for a David Wagoner novel called *The Escape Artist.* Her big break, however, came when she got to know famed director Steven Spielberg. By the early 1980s Ford had become a major film star, in part because of his leading role as Indiana Jones in *Raiders of the Lost Ark,* which Spielberg directed. Since Mathison and Ford often traveled together, Spielberg got to know the young scriptwriter quite well. One day he asked her if she would be interested in writing a children's movie about a boy named Elliott who befriends a gentle visitor from outer space. Mathison loved the idea, and in December 1980 she turned in what *Entertainment Weekly* critic Kirsten McCumber called "a lovingly crafted first draft. [In Mathison's story] Elliott had become a boy whose father had walked out. Too young to hang with his bossy older brother and too old for his little sister, he finds kinship with someone just his size and in a similar fix: E.T., a waddling, abandoned alien fleeing scientists eager to get their instruments on him."

"I have a knack for children's tales," Mathison has said. "I have children of my own, and I've always had children in my life. I think I have an ear for them, how they actually talk and behave. So I have fun writing [for] them."

Spielberg was touched by Mathison's tale of interplanetary friendship, and he quickly made arrangements to begin filming *E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial.* After its release in June 1982, *E.T.* became one of the biggest hits in movie history. "The whole thing just jelled in a moment in history in a way that was really thrilling," Mathison said. She disagrees with occasional suggestions that her amazing success was due to luck more than anything else. "I read a good definition of luck—that it is being prepared when the situation arises," she said. "It's true that in the beginning I was given opportunities, but I was able to deliver. I've come up with the goods."

Mathison's involvement in *E.T.* made her a famous name in the Hollywood film community. She was deluged with job offers from producers and agents who desperately wanted her to work her magic on their own film ideas. But instead of jumping into another project, she and Ford decided to marry and start a family. They were married in 1983 in Santa Monica, California, and promptly moved to a beautiful 800-acre ranch in Jackson Hole, Wyoming, where they still spend much of their free time.

Melissa Mathison and her husband Harrison Ford arrive at the White House for an official dinner for the British Prime Minister.

Life in Jackson Hole

Over the next few years, Mathison concentrated her energy on raising her two children, Malcolm and Georgia. "They come first," she said. "If I was working as hard on my career as I possibly could, I couldn't be as big a part of my children's lives as I want to be. If someone doesn't know about my career, and just sees me as my husband's wife, I couldn't care less. I don't feel like I'm in my husband's shadow, wishing I had some kind of recognition of my own. We're really fortunate because I've had that."

Both Mathison and Ford enjoyed living in Jackson Hole, although Mathison confessed that the winters sometimes seemed too long. "Up here, the kids can just be known for themselves; it doesn't matter who their dad is," she said. "Basically, Harrison is old news where we live. The star sightings are at the hardware store, and nobody cares. . . . Living in Wyoming allows us the luxury of being part of a real world. I like L.A., I grew up there. But if we lived there, all of our friends would be show business people and we'd spend all of our time talking about movies. I don't think we would go to lunches and parties—we never have. But you cross the California border and you realize that the world does not begin and end with the movie business. It's important to know that."

Son of the Morning Star

For much of the 1980s, Mathison set aside her scriptwriting career. There was one notable exception, however. In 1984 Mathison read a book called *Son of the Morning Star* by historian Evan S. Connell. *Son of the*

Morning Star is a biography of George Armstrong Custer, the infamous U.S. Calvary commander. Along with 265 of his men, Custer was defeated by Sioux Indians at the Battle of Little Bighorn in 1876. Mathison was fascinated by Connell's account of the events that led to that massacre, which ranks as perhaps the U.S. military's most resounding defeat in its campaign against the Indians of the American West. A long-time history buff, she was convinced that Connell's story was ideally suited to be retold on film. At first, she tried to secure legal rights to develop the book for filming. She learned that NBC already had rights to Connell's book, but she was determined to work on the film. ABC eventually obtained the rights to the book and enlisted Mathison as its chief scriptwriter on the project.

Mathison subsequently devoted long hours to the project in an effort to transform Connell's riveting but scholarly account into a workable film script. "What was so fantastic is that I had to go to all the primary sources [Connell] went to and basically do the kind of research he did to find ways to dramatize things that were not dramatized in the book," she recalled. "Evan's book is a history book, not a dramatization." In 1991 the film version of Connell's book — also called "Son of the Morning Star" — was televised as a mini-series on ABC, with Gary Cole starring as Custer. The mini-series was critically acclaimed, and a number of reviewers made special mention of Mathison's skillful hand in adapting Connell's story for television.

The Indian in the Cupboard

Writing the script for *Son of the Morning Star* was a rewarding experience for Mathison, but during the early 1990s she felt herself drawn back to telling children's stories. "I feel, and I don't know why, that I have a knack for children's tales," she said. "I have children of my own, and I've always had children in my life. I think I have an ear for them, how they actually talk and behave. So I have fun writing [for] them." In addition, Mathison feels that it is very important for Hollywood to make quality movies that will encourage kids to think about their lives and their relationship to the world around them. "I go to movies with my children and see fat kids burping, parents portrayed as total morons, and kids being mean and materialistic," she complained. "There's a little dribble of a moral tacked on, but the story is not about that. We'd get back in the car after seeing a movie and I'd say, 'Now, what did you think about this?' and they had nothing to say. There was nothing to talk about, because the movie had just been pratfalls and stupid jokes. It needed no imagination to be appreciated."

So Mathison was delighted to be asked to write the screenplay for *The Indian in the Cupboard*, an award-winning children's novel by Lynne Reid Banks. This story concerns a nine-year-old boy, Omri, who receives an old cupboard, a small antique key, and a miniature plastic Indian for his birthday. To his amazement, Omri discovers that when he places the plastic Indian in the cupboard, it is magically transformed into a real—albeit three-inch tall—Iroquois Indian named Little Bear. The tiny Indian is initially terrified of the huge boy towering over him, but they gradually form a close friendship. Omri learns to protect Little Bear, who depends on him for his very survival, and in return the Indian educates the boy about his tribe's ways and beliefs.

The film version of *The Indian in the Cupboard* was released in 1995 to widespread acclaim. Film critics and moviegoers alike agreed that the film was one that both children and parents could enjoy. *Newsweek* critic David Ansen, for instance, called the film "an engaging and touching flight of fancy." The film also confirmed Mathison's standing as one of Hollywood's best writers of movies for young audiences.

"[The Indian in the Cupboard] *teaches children respect for the sanctity of human life on an individual level. . . . Obvious lessons about compassion and responsibility are there. But the first and foremost lesson I'd like kids to walk away with is knowing that there are stories that they can build into. I think that they can absorb so much more than they are given credit for, their attention spans can last for more than 30 seconds at a time. All of that empowers children.*"

For her part, Mathison was immensely proud of the finished product. "The movie teaches children respect for the sanctity of human life on an individual level," she said. "Omri doesn't get to have omnipotent power over another person just because he can. Obvious lessons about compassion and responsibility are there. But the first and foremost lesson I'd like kids to walk away with is knowing that there are stories that they can build into. I think that they can absorb so much more than they are given credit for, their attention spans can last for more than 30 seconds at a time. All of that empowers children." Indeed, Mathison feels that good films can be very instructive for children. "If

Mathison (right), with her husband Harrison Ford and the Dalai Lama of Tibet

children are given some real content, they can feel powerful with their own understanding of it. I think a movie like *Indian in the Cupboard* will instruct them how to proceed as people. They can think about whether they would have done something the way a character did, how they would have felt about an event in the story. There's stuff in it that they can think only they discovered. The material massages that imagination muscle in order to help it get bigger and stronger. Children are primed to take in something of more moral value than they're getting. I know I'm blowing my own horn here, but *E.T.* had value to it, in terms of the feeling about yourself that you walked away with."

Writing about Tibet

After completing *The Indian in the Cupboard,* Mathison turned her attention to writing a screenplay for a film project, *Kundun.* The movie would be produced by the Walt Disney Company and directed by Martin Scorsese, who is considered one of the greatest directors of his generation. Scorsese planned to do a film about the life of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama, a Tibetan religious leader who is familiarly known as "kundun" (presence). The Dalai Lama was exiled from his homeland in 1959 after he led a revolt against Chinese forces that had invaded Tibet nine years earlier. Today, nearly four decades later, the Dalai Lama remains in

exile, and China remains in control of Tibet. This situation has angered many people in the United States and elsewhere around the world. The Chinese, on the other hand, consider the Dalai Lama a subversive agent who wants to undermine Chinese control of Tibet.

Mathison and Ford had been devoted to the issue of Tibetan independence ever since the two of them met the Dalai Lama in the late 1980s. In fact, Ford even appeared before a U.S. Senate panel in 1995 to implore the government to "remember the courageous people of Tibet." Mathison wanted to make sure that the screenplay she was writing was accurate and complete, so she traveled to Tibet to conduct research for the film. But the Chinese government soon raised objections to the movie. Chinese officials warned the Disney Company that proceeding with the production of the movie might jeopardize the company's plans to expand into China. But Disney didn't back down.

Kundun was released in December 1997 over the objections of the Chinese government. The movie details the life of His Holiness, the Dalai Lama: from the earliest days when he was selected at just two years old as the reincarnation of the 13th Dalai Lama, to his spiritual education in Lhasa, the capital city of Tibet, to the entrance of the invading forces of the Communist Chinese, to his retreat into exile in India. Called a "lovely piece of old-fashioned movie-making," the movie was hailed for its deeply moving story and for its stunningly beautiful photography filled with spectacular scenery and costumes.

Approach to Writing

"A script is a jigsaw puzzle," said Mathison. "You pull a piece out and another whole piece doesn't work anymore. So you're starting from scratch over and over again. But that's screenwriting. All you do is rewrite, your whole life. They'd have you rewrite after the movie came out, if they could." One key to successful scriptwriting, she suggested, was to differentiate between the various types of criticism that inevitably come. "I avoid listening to too many people's comments about my script. I have learned to take in what is of use. . . . If somebody says, 'This stinks, and here are all the reasons,' that's not going to help you. You should listen to the people who like what you're trying to do."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Mathison, Ford, and their two children, Malcolm and Georgia, split their time between their 800-acre ranch in Jackson Hole, a three-bedroom apartment in Manhattan, and a home in Brentwood, California. Mathi-

son confirmed that she and Ford continue to avoid the trappings of celebrity existence as much as possible, even though he is now firmly entrenched as one of Hollywood's most famous leading men. "We're pretty normal," she said. "I have a very happy, blessed life."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

"There are lots of other things I like to do with my time besides write movies," Mathison once said. "I read a lot, love to do extensive research." Long-time friend Kathleen Kennedy, who produced *E.T.*, confirmed that both Mathison and Ford have many diverse interests beyond the world of filmmaking. "They talk about a wide variety of things, and that comes through in the kind of work that she does. She's a voracious reader and interested in other people, interested in what's going on around her. I think that's why her work is so sensitive to what's going on."

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E.T.: The Extra-Terrestrial, 1982
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Bill Peet 1915-

American Children's Book Author and Illustrator
Former Animator and Screenwriter for the Disney Films *Pinocchio* and *101 Dalmations*

BIRTH

William Bartlett Peet was born on January 29, 1915, in Grandview, Indiana, a small town along the Ohio River. His family name was originally Peed. Although he never legally changed his name, Bill began using the variation Peet around 1947. He was one of three sons born to Orion Hopkins Peed, a traveling salesman, and Emma (Thorpe) Peed, a handwriting teacher.

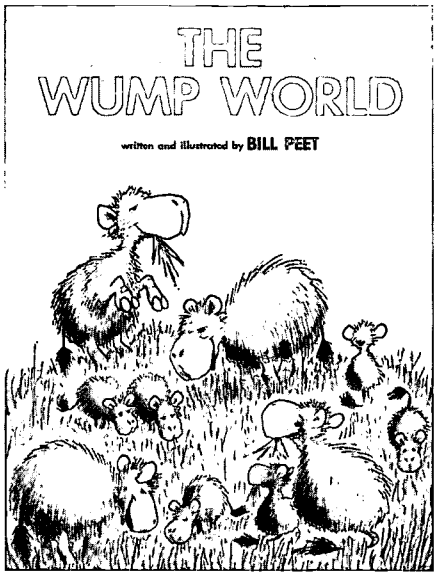
YOUTH

When Peet was three years old, his father was drafted into the army to serve in World War I. At this time, Peet and the rest of his family went to live with his grandmother on the outskirts of Indianapolis. When the war ended a short time later, Peet's father abandoned the family. He spent the next ten years traveling around the country as a salesman. "My brothers and I had never known our father, so his absence had very little effect on us except for the times when other kids would taunt us about not having a daddy," Peet recalled.

Peet enjoyed the part of his childhood that he spent at his maternal grandmother's house. He had two main forms of entertainment in those days—exploring the outdoors and sitting in the attic drawing pictures. "We lived near the edge of the city, no more than a half-hour hike from the open countryside, with its small rivers and creeks that went winding through the rolling hills and wooded ravines," he remembered. "On Saturdays and all during the summer my two brothers and I along with the neighborhood boys would organize safaris to explore this region." Each of the boys would wear a favorite hat on these occasions, and Peet's was an old metal army helmet.

One of Peet's best memories of his childhood was traveling by train to visit his paternal grandfather's farm in southern Indiana. He had always loved trains, so it was a great treat to be able to ride on one. And even though their grumpy grandfather made Peet and his brothers work hard at chores every morning, the boys found plenty of opportunities to explore when the old man took his afternoon nap. "Grandfather's rustic old farm was far more exciting and spectacular than the countryside around Indianapolis, for the land that was not planted in corn and wheat was a thriving wilderness," Peet related. "Hawks and buzzards sailed above the treetops, rabbits scampered everywhere, and six-foot blacksnakes slithered through the fields. The dark woods swarmed with squirrels, chipmunks, weasels, opossums, and raccoons."

All of this exploring in the outdoors helped Peet develop a strong interest in animals and nature. To satisfy this interest, he read all the books about wildlife in his local library. "Animal personalities have always intrigued me," he stated. "The desire to find out more about them made a reader out of me." Peet longed to travel to Africa on a real safari and draw pictures of all the animals he saw there, but instead he had to settle for occasional visits to the Cincinnati zoo. On his first trip to the zoo, he was so excited that he spent all the money he had saved "to buy film for a small box camera, hoping to get a picture of every animal there," he



recalled. Unfortunately, the camera did not function correctly and none of the pictures turned out. "But not all was lost, for I learned a bit of a lesson from that deceitful little camera which made all the proper clicking sounds without taking a picture," he noted. "On future trips to the zoo I was armed with a sketch pad and pencil; then if the pictures didn't turn out I had only myself to blame."

Whenever Peet was not out roaming the countryside near his grandmother's home, he could always be found up in the attic drawing pictures on the many pads of paper his mother kept for her handwriting classes. "Drawing had been my main hobby from the time I was old enough to wield a crayon, and I drew just about anything that came to mind," he admitted. "All sorts of animals (including dragons), trains, fire engines, racing cars, airplanes, gladiators, pioneers fighting Indians, World War I battles, Revolutionary War Battles, football games, and prizefights." He also carried a little sketchbook around with him everywhere so that he could draw all the things he saw.

EDUCATION

Peet's fascination with drawing often prevented him from concentrating on his schoolwork while he was attending the public schools in Indianapolis. Rather than listening to his teachers, he drew pictures in his notebook, on his desk, and even in the margins of his textbooks. "There was an art class in grammar school, but that wasn't enough, and my drawing soon crept into the other classes," he remembered. "Quite often I'd be surprised by the teacher standing over me and my tablet would be confiscated." Although most of his teachers were annoyed by his constant doodling, one teacher was impressed with his talent and held up his sketchbook for the rest of the class to see. This teacher encouraged him to continue drawing. "In those days my secret ambition was to be an illustrator of animal stories," Peet stated. "Yet, it was hard to believe that drawing could ever be practical as a career. It was too much fun and therefore it seemed wrong."

Just before Peet started high school, his father returned home. He has said that this event marked the end of his happy childhood. "After ten years on the road as a salesman [my father] was travel weary and flat broke, and out of desperation he decided to join us," Peet recalled. "In a very short time my parents were having their troubles. My father demanded money to finance another sales trip, and when my mother refused fierce quarreling broke out." The tense atmosphere of the household created a rift between Peet and his brothers and greatly upset their grandmother, who died soon afterward. The house where Peet had grown up was then sold, and his family was forced to move around to a series of rented apartments in the Indianapolis area. Peet lost touch with many of his childhood friends and became a stranger in each new place they lived.

"Drawing had been my main hobby from the time I was old enough to wield a crayon, and I drew just about anything that came to mind. All sorts of animals (including dragons), trains, fire engines, racing cars, airplanes, gladiators, pioneers fighting Indians, World War I battles, Revolutionary War Battles, football games, and prizefights." He also carried a little sketchbook around with him everywhere so that he could draw all the things he saw.

During this traumatic time, Peet entered Tech High School in Indianapolis, which was one of the largest public schools in the country. "Entering the campus was like being lost in a foreign city without a familiar face in sight," he noted. He was so overwhelmed as a freshman that he ended up failing all of his courses except physical education. "That class was only worth half a credit," he recalled. "At that rate I'd be stuck in high school for 32 years." The following year, at the suggestion of a friend, he began to take more art classes and to do better in school. "The art classes were a breeze, and they also gave me a head of steam that carried over into my other classes," he stated.

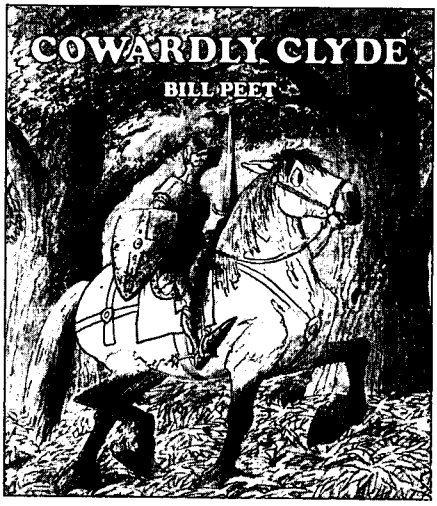
Peet's success in school increased his self-confidence and convinced him to pursue art as a career. "At some point during high school it occurred to me that drawing was something I couldn't possibly give up, and somehow it must be turned into a profession," he recalled. Upon graduating from Tech in 1933, Peet received a scholarship to attend the John Herron Art Institute in Indianapolis. He studied drawing, painting,

and design, and loved every minute of it. "Even though problems at home continued to disturb me, those years at art school were some of the happiest of my life," he related. Peet also continued to sketch and paint outside of school and won several prizes for his work. His favorite subjects were farm scenes and the circus, but he always managed to capture the darker aspects of these subjects. "I seemed to be attracted to the gloomy side of things, or the sordid," he stated. "No vases of flowers or water lilies for me."

In 1936, before he had earned enough credits for a degree, Peet decided to leave art school and try to make a living as an artist. "As much as I loved the art school I left after three years and set up my easel in an abandoned office building downtown. I was tired of being broke and running out of paint and canvas," he explained. "My plan was to divide my time between painting and department store ads." Unfortunately, he soon found that it "was a poor year to start a career as a painter, or a career of any kind for that matter." It was the middle of the Great Depression, a difficult economic time in the United States and around the world. Many businesses failed, many people lost their jobs, and poverty became a major problem. Lots of families had trouble finding food, shelter, and clothing.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

When he was unable to earn a consistent living by selling paintings and producing ads, Peet took a job at a greeting card company in Dayton, Ohio. He quit in 1937, however, when it appeared that his whole summer would be spent coloring in the flowers on sympathy cards. Then one day, while he was visiting a friend at the art school, Peet saw a brochure advertising jobs for artists at the Walt Disney Studios in California. He desperately wanted to land a steady job so that he could marry his girlfriend from art school, Margaret Brunst. So he decided to travel to California for a tryout at Disney, which was then gearing up to produce its first feature-length animated film.



When he arrived for his tryout, Peet was led into a room full of young artists who were hoping to land a job as well. He and the other applicants were instructed to draw pictures of Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck, and other Disney characters, imitating the style used by the studio's founder, Walt Disney himself, as closely as possible. By this time, Disney was known for his creative, innovative cartoons, but the company hadn't gone on to make its famous animated movies or create Disneyland or Disney World. That would come later, and Bill Peet would be part of it.

The nerve-wracking tryout continued for an entire month, with another one or two applicants being dismissed every few days. Finally, Peet was hired, along with two other survivors, and told to report to the Disney annex in an old building across the street from the main studios. He immediately sent word to Margaret, and they were married in November of 1937.

Seeing his first book in print gave Peet the confidence he needed to write and publish several more. "As a hobby I began to experiment with ideas for children's books. Once the first one was published it became more than a hobby; it grew into a second career."

Animating Films at Walt Disney Studios

Unfortunately, Peet found his initial job at Disney to be repetitious and unfulfilling. "We were put to work as in-betweeners, with the tedious, painstaking job of adding hundreds of drawings in between hundreds of other drawings to move Donald or Mickey from here to there," he recalled. "It was a matter of enduring the job with the hope of making it to the promised land across the street where big exciting things were going on. They were making *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs*, the very first feature-length animated film." For a few exciting weeks, Peet and his fellow in-betweeners were called in to help with the last-minute production of *Snow White*. He ended up working several late nights tracing pictures of dwarfs. When he attended the gala premiere of the film with his new wife, Peet knew that it would be a huge success and felt proud to be a part of something important. But the next day he had to return to his tedious job as an in-betweener.

Before long, the boredom became too much for Peet. "After drawing him a few thousand times I had begun to despise Donald," he recalled. "Finally, one unseasonably warm afternoon in March, another great

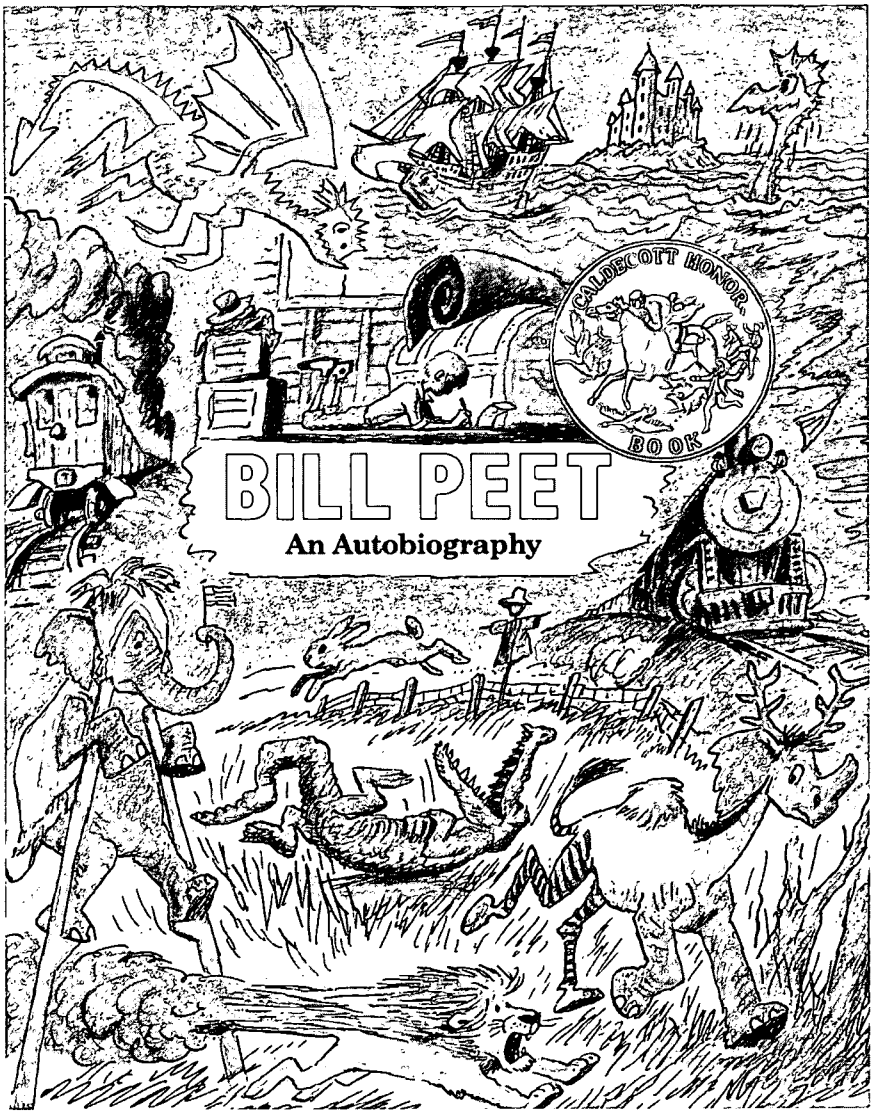
stack of duck drawings arrived to be in-betweened. It was too much! I went berserk and shouted at the top of my voice," 'NO MORE DUCKS!!!' much to the horror of my fellow in-betweeners." Peet then stormed out of the office and went home, fully expecting that he would be fired for his outburst. Unfortunately, he soon realized that he had left his jacket draped over the back of his chair at work, and he did not have the money to buy another one. The next morning, when he sheepishly returned to the office to retrieve his jacket, he found an envelope upon his desk. Much to his surprise, the envelope contained not a dismissal notice, but a letter informing him that he had been promoted to the main studios to work on a new animated movie, *Pinocchio*.

Pinocchio

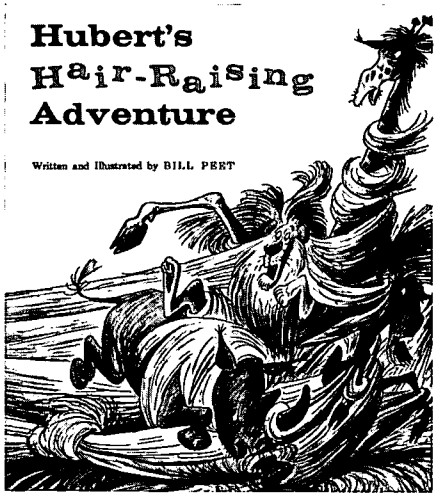
Peet's new job was as a "sketch man." Working from the ideas of a "story man," he filled four-by-eight-foot panels known as storyboards with series of sketches that showed the main phases of action in specific movie scenes. Dozens of storyboards created by various sketch men—after being looked over and approved by Walt Disney himself—would together form the plan for animation of an entire movie. Peet was very successful as a sketch man, and he continued working on *Pinocchio* for nearly two years. "Walt recognized my drawings as being 'great stuff' on many occasions, and my drawings did have something to do with the final versions of the characters. And I even put ideas of my own into the story while I did the sketching," Peet recalled. "It occurred to me that I was well suited for the Disney job, and I had thought of making a career of it until Margaret and I attended the special *Pinocchio* preview for the Disney staff. I was dumbfounded when the long list of screen credits didn't include my name. Being left off the credits made me realize I was still just another sketch man, just one of the mob, and I was depressed for weeks afterward."

Dumbo

Peet encountered similar problems while working on *Dumbo*. Although his drawings of the baby elephant—which were based on his observations of his own infant son—determined the way the character looked in the movie, he still did not receive due credit for his work. "Walt was enthusiastic about all my boards on *Dumbo*, and I thought sure I was established as a full-fledged story man on films to come. No such luck!" he remembered. Despite his frustration, Peet remained at Disney throughout World War II, when the studio made training films for the American



troops. Only after the war ended, while he was working on *Song of the South*—a combination of animation and live action that tells the Uncle Remus fables about Br'er Rabbit—did Peet finally catch the eye of the company's founder. "Walt was quick to categorize people, and if you were good at drawing that meant you were deficient in most other respects," he recalled. "So I do believe I convinced him on the Uncle Remus fables that I was a sketch man who could also handle the story end of it."



In the following years, Peet gradually rose through the Disney organization. Although he continued to enjoy many aspects of his job, he also continued to experience periods of frustration. Walt Disney was a perfectionist with very strong ideas about the direction of his company. He was also very moody, and could go from being playful and engaging one minute to being gruff and demanding the next. Peet found him especially difficult to deal with in his later years at the studio, when Disney was distracted by the company's expansion into TV shows, true-life adventure movies, and the Disneyland theme park. At one point, when Peet managed to land in the founder's doghouse, he was demoted to working on commercials for Peter Pan peanut butter.

101 Dalmatians

By the early 1960s, however, Peet had regained Walt Disney's favor and was asked to play an important role in the production of a new animated movie, *101 Dalmatians*. "Walt wanted me to plan the whole thing: write a detailed screenplay, do all the storyboards, and record voices for all the characters. That had been a job for at least 40 people on *Pinocchio* in 1938, but if Walt thought I could do it, then of course there was no question about it," he stated. "At last, I was out of Walt's doghouse and, by peculiar coincidence, up to my ears in dogs." Peet had similar duties on the studio's 1963 animated feature, *The Sword in the Stone*, based on the legend of King Arthur.

Starting to Write and Illustrate Stories for Children

Throughout his years at Disney, Peet tried not to take his success for granted and prepared for a time when his career in animation would end. For a while he painted in his spare time, but before long "I realized to my dismay I had lost touch with the brush, and the results were dull and uninspired," he admitted. He then tried drawing cartoons and sending them to newspapers and magazines, but they were rejected. All this time, Peet had been making up bedtime stories for his two young sons.

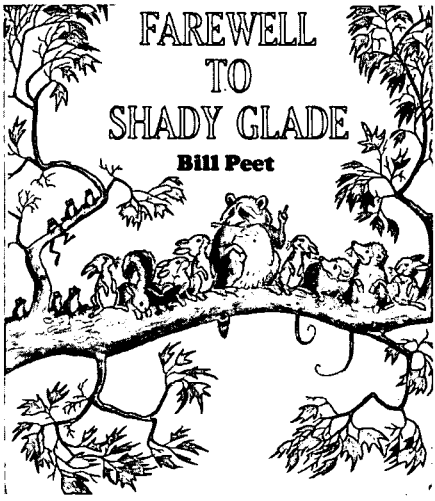
He finally decided to try writing and illustrating his own stories for children. But he soon found that while drawing characters came naturally for him, describing their actions in words was much more difficult. "It was impossible to put aside the drawing habit long enough to do much writing. I hardly ever wrote more than a paragraph before my wayward pen wandered off into a drawing," he related. But he soon realized that "if I couldn't write the stories, then my characters couldn't go anywhere and would be stranded on my dog-eared old tablets forever."

After several failed attempts, Peet's first children's book was published in 1959, while he was still working at Disney. Called *Hubert's Hair-Raising Adventure,* it tells the story of a snooty lion who ends up losing his mane in a fire. Seeing his first book in print gave Peet the confidence he needed to write and publish several more. "As a hobby I began to experiment with ideas for children's books. Once the first one was published it became more than a hobby; it grew into a second career," he noted.

"My early ambition to illustrate animal stories was finally realized, and a little bit more, since I had never considered writing one. This way I can write about things I like to draw, which makes it more fun than work. And I still carry a tablet around with me and sneak a drawing into it now and then. Sometimes I feel like I'm basically doing the same thing as when I was six years old: drawing lions and tigers in books."

Quitting Disney

One day, while he was working on a new Disney animated film called *The Jungle Book,* Peet had yet another in a long series of disagreements with founder Walt Disney. "Walt was a guiding spirit. He wasn't an artist, not a writer, not a humorist; he was a grouch," Peet recalled. "The Disney studio was a factory. Films were created by an army." Peet's long-standing frustration finally boiled over. On his birthday in 1964, he quit his job at Walt Disney Studios to become a full-time children's writer. "When I told Margaret of my birthday present she was not the least bit surprised," Peet stated. "She was aware that keeping Walt happy and doing the books on the side was walking a tightrope and after 27 years it was time for a new beginning."



The first book Peet published after leaving Disney was *Randy's Dandy Lions* (1964), the story of a group of performing lions who are afraid of their trainer. He later said that the story explained some of what he was feeling during his career at Disney—the lions represented him and the trainer was Walt Disney. Another book that includes elements from Peet's own life is *Chester the Worldly Pig*, published in 1965. This story follows the adventures of a talented pig who leaves the farm to join a circus, and then leaves the circus to become a star on his own. Given his own background as a talented young man who left Indiana to join the movie industry in California, and then wound up as a successful author, Peet called it "the one book of mine that reflects my past more than any others."

Critical and Popular Success as an Author and Illustrator

Peet went on to write and illustrate more than 30 popular books for children. Throughout his second career, he has earned the praise of readers and reviewers alike. "Countless readers of all ages have shared the joy, humor, and exuberance of his stories," Virginia Kalb wrote in the *Claremont Reading Conference Yearbook*. "Over the years, he has created a cast of characters so memorable and distinct that a roll call of their names is sure to bring clear mental images, both to our adult minds and to those of young readers. What do you see when you picture Huge Harold, the Whingdingdilly, Ella, Droofus the Dragon, Big Bad Bruce, the inhabitants of Shady Glade, and the Wump World? These wonderful creations of Bill Peet's mind and pen have enriched the awareness and experience of children and adults who share them together." A writer for *Children's Books and Their Creators* called his books "whimsical fantasies featuring a bevy of lifelike and loveable creatures," and praised him for his "rare combination of excellent storytelling with appealing, enduring illustrations."

Peet's books usually feature misfit characters who face universal problems like loneliness, fear, self-doubt, and rejection. He presents their stories in a warm and humorous manner, and usually allows his charac-

ters to succeed in the end through their resourcefulness. Many of his books also include a serious social message, such as the importance of protecting the environment. *Farewell to Shady Glade* (1966), for example, is about a small group of meadow animals that are uprooted by earth-moving machines as their natural home is developed for human use. Peet first became interested in environmental issues as a boy, when a creek that he loved to explore was polluted, creating a terrible smell and killing fish and frogs.

Peet enjoys receiving letters from his young readers and often makes visits to elementary schools. One of these visits gave him the idea for a book. He would always draw parts of different animals on the blackboard and have the children race to identify the animal. But one day he fooled a class by combining all sorts of animals into one. This experience grew into one of his most popular stories, *The Whingdingdilly* (1970), about a dog that wants to be a horse but ends up a jumbled combination of a variety of other animals.

Peet, who still finds it difficult to write sometimes, continues to love drawing and enjoy the second career he built for himself. "My early ambition to illustrate animal stories was finally realized, and a little bit more, since I had never considered writing one," he stated. "This way I can write about things I like to draw, which makes it more fun than work. And I still carry a tablet around with me and sneak a drawing into it now and then. Sometimes I feel like I'm basically doing the same thing as when I was six years old: drawing lions and tigers in books."

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Peet met his future wife, Margaret Brunst, when they were both students in art school in 1933. "In my very first class, on the elements of design, I found myself staring at a girl in the first row," he recalled. "Attractive girls always unnerved me, so it must have taken quite a few more weeks for me to manage so much as an awkward hello to her." They were married on November 30, 1937, and eventually had two sons, Bill Jr. and Stephen.

WRITINGS

As Author and Illustrator

Hubert's Hair-Raising Adventure, 1959
Goliath II, 1959
Huge Harold, 1961

Smokey, 1962
The Pinkish, Purplish, Bluish Egg, 1963
Ella, 1964
Randy's Dandy Lions, 1964
Chester the Worldly Pig, 1965
Kermit the Hermit, 1965
Capyboppy, 1966
Farewell to Shady Glade, 1966
Buford, the Little Bighorn, 1967
Jennifer and Josephine, 1967
Fly, Homer, Fly, 1969
The Whingdingdilly, 1970
The Wump World, 1970
The Caboose Who Got Loose, 1971
How Droofus the Dragon Lost His Head, 1971
The Ant and the Elephant, 1972
Countdown to Christmas, 1972
The Spooky Tail of Prewitt Peacock, 1972
Merle the High-Flying Squirrel, 1974
Cyrus the Unsinkable Sea Serpent, 1975
The Gnats of Knotty Pine, 1975
Big Bad Bruce, 1977
Eli, 1978
Cowardly Clyde, 1979
Encore for Eleanor, 1981
The Luckiest One of All, 1982
No Such Things, 1983
Pamela Camel, 1984
The Kweeks of Kookatumdee, 1985
Zella, Zack, and Zodiac, 1986
Jethro and Joe Were a Troll, 1987
Bill Peet: An Autobiography, 1989
Cock-a-Doodle Dudley, 1990

HONORS AND AWARDS

Outstanding Student in School History Citation (John Herron Art Institute): 1958
Blue Ribbon Award for Best Screenplay (*Box Office*): 1961, 1964
Little Archer Award (University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh): 1977, for *Cyrus the Unsinkable Serpent*

Children's Choice Award (International Reading Association): 1982, for *Encore for Eleanor*
George C. Stone Center Recognition of Merit Award: 1985, for body of work

FURTHER READING

Books

Children's Literature Review, Vol. 12, 1987
De Montreville, Doris, and Donna Hill. *Third Book of Junior Authors*, 1972
Douglass, Malcolm P. *Claremont Reading Conference 49th Yearbook*, 1985
Kingman, Lee, Grace Allen Hogarth, and Harriet Quimby. *Illustrators of Children's Books, 1967-76*, 1978
Norby, Shirley, and Gregory Ryan. *Famous Children's Authors, Book One*, 1988
Peet, Bill. *Bill Peet: An Autobiography*, 1989
Silvey, Anita, ed. *Children's Books and Their Creators*, 1995
Something about the Author, Vol. 78, 1994
Twentieth-Century Children's Writers, 1995
Wheeler, Jill C. *Bill Peet*, 1996 (juvenile)
Writers Directory, 1998-2000

Periodicals

Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books, June 1986, p.194
Christian Science Monitor, Nov. 9, 1981
Co-Ed, Sep. 1982, p.16
Early Years, Apr. 1984, p.22
Los Angeles Times, Dec. 23, 1990, p.E1
New York Times Book Review, Mar. 11, 1984, p.23; May 21, 1989, p.31

ADDRESS

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Boston, MA 02116

August Wilson 1945-

American Playwright
Author of the Pulitzer Prize-Winning Plays *Fences* and *The Piano Lesson*

BIRTH

August Wilson was born Frederick August Kittel on April 27, 1945, in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. His parents were August Kittel, a white man who worked as a baker, and Daisy Wilson, a black woman who worked as a janitor. Wilson had three older sisters and two younger brothers.

YOUTH

Wilson and his siblings grew up in a poor section of Pittsburgh known as "the Hill." They hardly ever saw their father, an irresponsible man who rarely even visited his family. Wilson's mother was left to care for the children alone, living in a two-room, cold-water apartment. She often struggled to provide enough food and clothing for her children, and she had to resort to welfare to supplement her cleaning wages. Despite their impoverished circumstances, though, Daisy Wilson encouraged her children to set goals for themselves. "My mother taught me and my five brothers and sisters how to read," Wilson remembered. "My mother believed that, if you could read, anything was possible. . . . Reading was the key to everything!"

Wilson was a reader by the age of four. "Jeez, I had three sisters so I read every Nancy Drew there is," he said. "I love Nancy Drew! I loved her better than the Hardy Boys! That was great, the Hardy Boys, but Nancy Drew was better." As he grew older he became a regular user of a public library located a few blocks from his home.

Wilson's early interest in books was due in part to his curiosity about the world around him. Indeed, he was a very observant child who recognized early on that white and black people in Pittsburgh usually lived in very different economic and social environments. "I began to identify positions of authority when I was about seven years old — the landlord, the bus driver, the storekeeper, the schoolteacher, the clerk at the welfare office. I recognized immediately that they were all white. So my relationship with society was dictated in my mind at that early point in my life."

When Wilson was an adolescent, his mother and father divorced and she remarried. Wilson's stepfather, a black man named David Bradford, moved the entire family to Hazelwood, a Pittsburgh neighborhood populated mostly by white families. Wilson's family did not receive a warm welcome in their new home. Some of their white neighbors were very prejudiced against black people, and they threw bricks through the family's front window. Wilson recalled that he and his brothers and sisters were also subjected to verbal and physical harassment. He and the few other black boys in the neighborhood always walked together to minimize the likelihood of getting beaten up.

EDUCATION

Wilson attended elementary school in the Pittsburgh public school system. It was here that his love of literature led him to start writing poetry.

"I first started writing poems for this girl in the seventh grade, Nancy Ireland," Wilson remembered. "I would leave the poems on her desk but would never sign my name on any of them." A short time later, she started going out with another boy. "I believe that he stole my poems and told Nancy that he had written them. After that, I vowed the next thing I wrote, no matter what it was, I would sign my name to it and claim it as something that *I* had written. . . . By the time I got to writing those poems for Nancy Ireland, I had already realized the power of writing."

In 1959 Wilson started ninth grade at Pittsburgh's Central Catholic High School. "I couldn't find a way to fit in," he remembered. "As the only black in the school, I caught pure hell. I didn't feel welcome, they wouldn't let me participate and I wasn't interested in staying there to beat down the doors for anybody else. I didn't want to be a first. Occasionally things would happen and the principal would send me home in a cab, but I always had to come back by myself. Eventually I got tired of that."

"I began to identify positions of authority when I was about seven years old—the landlord, the bus driver, the storekeeper, the schoolteacher, the clerk at the welfare office. I recognized immediately that they were all white. So my relationship with society was dictated in my mind at that early point in my life."

Soon after leaving Central, Wilson's mother enrolled him in a nearby trade school so that he could learn to become an auto mechanic. But that did not work out very well, either. "I was working at a ninth-grade level," Wilson said. "At the trade school ninth graders were working at about fifth-grade level." Bored and discouraged, he left the vocational program to try high school one more time. He enrolled in Pittsburgh's Gladstone High School, but his time there was miserable. None of the other students made friends with him, and nearly every day, anonymous letters reading "Nigger go home" were left on his desk.

Despite these incidents, Wilson stuck with his studies until one of his teachers accused him of plagiarizing (copying) a report. "I remember going to the library, taking out various books and writing a 20-page paper on Napoleon," he noted. After Wilson handed it in, the history teacher, who was black, apparently decided it was too good to have been written by a black boy. The teacher "called me in and showed me

the paper. He had two grades on it, an A+ and an F. He said I had to prove to him that I had written the paper. I pointed to the bibliography and the footnotes. I didn't feel I had to defend it, that he should take me at my word. He circled the failing grade and handed the paper to me. I tore it up, threw it in the trash basket, walked out and never looked back." Wilson was 15 and in ninth grade when he dropped out of high school. He knew that many youngsters who drop out of high school have trouble finding success later in life, but he was determined to buck the odds.

BECOMING A WRITER

Wilson didn't want to tell his mother that he had dropped out of school. He left home each morning but spent his time shooting baskets outside the principal's window, hoping he would come out to ask why he wasn't in school. The principal never did. Afternoons would find him at the library reading the works of many of America's leading African-American writers, including Ralph Ellison, Richard Wright, and Langston Hughes. "I felt I could learn what I needed at the library," he explained. "I knew by the time I was 15 that I was going to write. I knew it was my strong suit."

Of course, Wilson's mother figured out soon enough that he wasn't in school, and she pressured him into joining the U.S. Army when he was 17. He spent most of 1962 and 1963 in the Army. He then returned to Pittsburgh, where he worked at a variety of jobs, including sheet-metal worker, porter, gardener, and toy-store stock worker. In his free time, he wrote many poems and short stories. Indeed, even though he later became famous for his plays, poetry was Wilson's first love. "Poetry is the distillation of language," he once said. "The words are boiled down into their purest form. In poetry, you can make a few words do a lot of work."

The year 1965 proved to be a pivotal one for Wilson. It was during that year that he legally changed his name, taking his mother's maiden name as his own and ridding himself of the name of his absentee father. He also bought his first typewriter that year, a $20 purchase that had enormous implications for him. "I bought the typewriter with every cent I had—I didn't even have enough to pay the sales tax, but the guy said go ahead, take it," Wilson said. "Then I realized I didn't even have bus fare left—I had to walk all the way home carrying that heavy thing! When I got home, I realized I didn't know how to type. And I had no typing paper. But I figured I'd just spent $20 on this thing, so I'd better be a writer. So I ripped a page out of a notebook and put it on the roller, then with one finger, typed my name." For Wilson, it was a decisive moment. "When I bought that typewriter, that meant I was not going to be a bus driver and I was not going to be a lawyer," he said. "I was going to write."

Wilson (far right) with the cast of Fences, *Yale Repertory Theater Production, 1985*

In addition, 1965 was the year that Wilson fell in love with blues music, a musical genre grounded in the experiences of black people in America. "I was very poor, and I couldn't afford to buy any record albums, but I loved music," he remembered. "One day I came across a record called *Nobody in Town Could Make a Sweet Jelly Roll Like Mine* by someone named Bessie Smith. I put that record on, and I'll tell you, I felt as though she was talking directly to me. The universe stuttered when I heard her voice. I played it again and again, over and over. The world began to change in front of my eyes." Wilson played that record 22 times in a row.

Over the next few months, Wilson immersed himself in the songs of Smith and other blues singers, and he found that their words and music were slowly changing the way that he looked at other African-Americans. Before, he had dismissed many poor, struggling black people as "beaten." "I didn't see the value to their lives," he said. "You could never have told me there was a richness and a fullness to their lives." But after he began listening to the blues, he came to realize that all of the people around him had grown up dreaming of bright futures, and that many of them continued to nurture dreams for themselves despite the many hard knocks that they had endured. "From Bessie, I learned that as black

Americans we all had a song that was in us," Wilson said. It was through Bessie Smith's music that he found his voice as a writer. Years later, Wilson's famous plays would become known for their reliance on the music and themes of the blues.

CAREER HIGHLIGHTS

By the late 1960s Wilson was spending many of his days hanging around local gathering spots, listening to elderly African-Americans of the community. One of his favorite spots was called Pat's Place, where a group of retired black railroad porters often gathered to play checkers and talk. "They talked philosophy, history," Wilson remembered. "They discussed whatever the topic of the day was—the newspapers, the politics of the city, the baseball games, and invariably they would talk about themselves and their lives when they were young men." Wilson listened closely, for he knew that such stories mirrored the experiences of thousands and thousands of other African-Americans over the years.

In the late 1960s Wilson also became a political activist after discovering the works of the African-American leader Malcolm X. A former hustler and criminal, Malcolm X became the best known and most respected minister in the Nation of Islam. He was a charismatic and dynamic speaker who spoke powerfully on the issues of self-respect, self-discipline, and self-reliance. Here, Wilson describes the first time he heard a recording of a speech by Malcolm X: "Having heard Malcolm speak that first time you could not turn away from the clear unadulterated truth, his impeccable logic and a torrent of words that came straight at you. His public stance was that of a man who did not hold his tongue, a man who was unafraid, a man who was not seeking approval from whites. . . . [When] we saw or heard Malcolm we saw and heard ourselves. Whatever the self was: Malcolm the Intelligent, Malcolm the Bad Nigger, Malcolm the Boisterous, Malcolm the Defiant, Malcolm the Brave. He was all these and more."

Malcolm X urged black Americans to take pride in their race, enjoined blacks to become financially self-sufficient, and called for the separation of black and white people into self-governing communities. This philosophy was known as black or cultural nationalism. "Cultural nationalism meant black people working toward self-definition, self-determination," stated Wilson. "It meant that we had a culture that was valid and that we weren't willing to trade it in to participate in the American dream." Wilson and a friend subsequently established a theater company in Pittsburgh called Black Horizon on the Hill. Wilson characterized their group

as "very political and righteous," with a heavy emphasis on "black power." "We hoped that the type of performances we produced at our theater would raise the consciousness of people, and in doing so, we realized ourselves how powerful theater could be," Wilson said. "That led me to the first real instance of using theater as a medium for communication."

"[If] August Wilson has wanted anything in his career as a playwright it is to be recognized by the people of the ghetto as their voice, their bard," Samuel G. Freedman wrote in the New York Times. *"Wilson gives words to trumpeters and trash men, cabbies and conjurers, boarders and landladies, all joined by a heritage of slavery. Their patois is his poetry, their dreams are his dramas."*

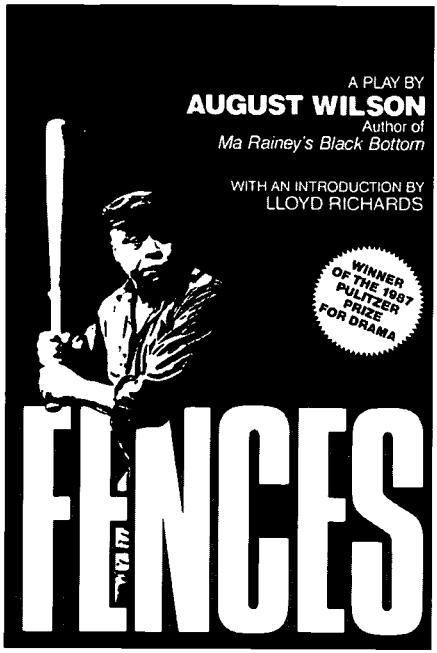
Becoming a Playwright

By the mid-1970s, Wilson's interest in the theater had led him to start writing plays. His earliest plays were performed by the Pittsburgh theater company that he had co-founded. In 1977, a friend convinced him to convert a series of poems he had written about a black magician named Black Bart into a play. "Me and my friend gathered a few other friends and we all got together for maybe four weekends in a row to talk about making my poems into a play," said Wilson. "And then I started thinking that I didn't want anyone else to write *my play*, so I stayed home from one Sunday to the next and wrote it myself."

In 1978 Wilson moved to St. Paul, Minnesota, where his play *Black Bart and the Sacred Hills* was first performed. At this point in his career, though, Wilson knew that he could not make a living just by writing plays and poems. He worked as a scriptwriter for the Science Museum of Minnesota, adapting plays for a theater troupe attached to the museum. He quit after 18 months, however, and took a job as a cook. "Cooking half a day was better for me," he recalled. "It left something for me to put into my own writing."

In the early 1980s Wilson continued to work very hard on his writing. He wrote *Jitney*, a drama about black cab drivers set in the year 1971, and *Fullerton Street*, another play about black Americans set in 1941. Both of these works caught the attention of the St. Paul theater community, but it was not until Wilson wrote his next play that his talent came to the attention of the rest of the country.

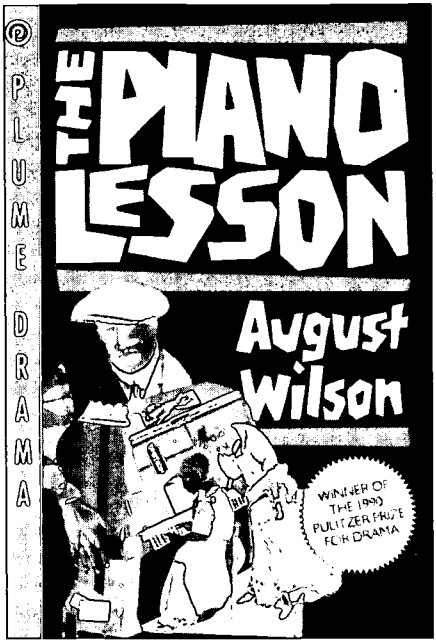
Ma Rainey's Black Bottom



In December 1981, Wilson completed a play called *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*. The play was set in a dingy Chicago recording studio in 1927. It explores themes of racism, hope, and despair as it follow the interactions between the proud blues singer Ma Rainey, the black musicians who provide accompaniment, and the white record producers who get rich off of their talent. Wilson sent his newest play off to the National Playwrights Conference at the Eugene O'Neill Theater Center in Waterford, Connecticut. This annual conference draws some of the country's best playwrights for a month of workshops and other activities. Each year, the conference selects a few plays that are given staged readings, and the competition to be chosen for this honor is fierce.

Wilson tried not to get his hopes up, especially since other plays that he submitted had been turned down in earlier years. But the judges at the conference were bowled over by *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom,* and it was given a staged reading at the prestigious event in 1982. The play also caught the attention of Lloyd Richards, who was artistic director of the Yale Repertory Theater and dean of the Yale School of Drama. Richards arranged to stage the play at Yale, becoming the director himself. He would go on to direct almost all of Wilson's plays.

"The talent was unmistakable," Richards recalled. "The characters were alive. They were people I had met in the barbershop on Saturday morning, talking about baseball, philosophy, politics. You'd hear humor, imagery, poetry—the poetry of oppressed people who have to create a sense of freedom in their words, people living more in their vision than their actuality." In this play, as in his later work, Wilson took the rhythm, intonation, and emotional immediacy of his characters' dialogue straight from the streets. "[If] August Wilson has wanted anything in his career as a playwright it is to be recognized by the people of the ghetto as their voice, their bard," Samuel G. Freedman wrote in the *New York Times.*



"Wilson gives words to trumpeters and trash men, cabbies and conjurers, boarders and landladies, all joined by a heritage of slavery. Their patois is his poetry, their dreams are his dramas."

After a successful run at the Yale Repertory Theater, *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom* moved in 1984 to Broadway, the famous theater district in New York City. Critical and popular reaction to the play was very positive. *New York Times* reviewer Frank Rich spoke for many when he wrote that "[the] play is a searing inside account of what white racism does to its victims—and it floats on the same authentic artistry as the blues music it celebrates. Harrowing as *Ma Rainey's* can be, it is also funny, salty, carnal, and lyrical." The response to the drama quickly vaulted Wilson to the forefront of young American playwrights.

It was at this point that Wilson decided to create a cycle of 10 plays, each of which would examine black life in America in a different decade of the 20th century. "I said, well, I have written plays set in three different decades [*Jitney*, 1971; *Fullerton Street*, 1941; *Ma Rainey's Black Bottom*, 1927]," Wilson remembered. "Why don't I continue to do that. It gave me an agenda, a focus, something to hone in on, so that I never had to worry about what the next play would be about. I could always pick a decade and work on that."

Fences

Wilson's next play was *Fences*, a powerful drama set in 1957. The story revolves around Troy Maxson, a very bitter and angry African-American former baseball player. In this story, Maxson played baseball during the era of racial segregation, when discrimination prevented blacks from playing in the Major Leagues. Instead, he was forced to play in the Negro Leagues at the height of his career. His anger leads him to make a number of bad decisions that threaten to destroy his family. James Earl Jones gave a searing performance in the character of Maxson.

Fences further cemented Wilson's growing reputation as one of America's finest playwrights. As William A. Henry III wrote in *Time* magazine, "Wilson's greatest gift is his ability to make sense of anger; he writes naturalistic scenes of genial humor turning into an explosive violence that flows from his characters and from the warping effect racism has had upon them. . . . In craftsmanship, poignance, and lingering impact, *Fences* represents a major step forward for Wilson." The play won a number of awards in 1986 and 1987, including the Pulitzer Prize for Drama.

Around the same time that *Fences* hit Broadway, Wilson's next play hit the stage at Yale. Titled *Joe Turner's Come and Gone,* the drama is set in a bording-house in Pittsburgh in 1911. It concerns Harold Loomis, an African-American freedman who was enslaved in indentured servitude for seven years by Joe Turner, a bounty hunter, long after the Emancipation Proclamation had put an end to slavery. The play focuses on how Loomis attempts to rebuild his life after his release, showing his quest for self-knowledge and a spiritual foundation. The play was warmly received by theater audiences and reviewers.

> *Actor Charles Dutton says, "I believe* The Piano Lesson *possesses the same universal power that [Alex Haley's]* Roots *did. It's potent and profound and provocative—and, at the same time, enlightening and entertaining."*

The Piano Lesson

But the play that truly sealed Wilson's reputation was *The Piano Lesson.* Set in Pittsburgh in 1936, *The Piano Lesson* relates one African-American family's struggle over an old piano that figured prominently in their family history. Boy Willie comes up to Pittsburgh from the South to visit his sister, Berniece. He wants to claim a family heirloom, a carved piano. Boy Willie wants to sell the piano to make enough money to buy land, the land on which their ancestors were slaves. But Berniece objects because of the role the piano has played in the family history: two of their slave ancestors were sold to buy it, a third ancestor carved the family history on it, and a fourth ancestor was killed while trying to retrieve it.

In addition to the stage production, *The Piano Lesson* was televised in 1995 as a Hallmark Hall of Fame movie starring Charles Dutton and Alfre Woodard. Here is how Charles Dutton described his experience of acting the part of Boy Willie: "Like all of August Wilson's work, *The*

Piano Lesson demands a life-or-death commitment from actors. If you do your job right in an August Wilson play, you leave an ounce of your very being on that stage every night—and you feel emotionally, physically, spiritually, and mentally drained. But on the plus side, you leave the stage with a joyous feeling inside you. You feel like you've accomplished something. In a very small and idealistic way, you've advanced civilization. I felt every night that I had the opportunity to change someone's life in that audience. . . . I believe *The Piano Lesson* possesses the same universal power that [Alex Haley's] *Roots* did. It's potent and profound and provocative—and, at the same time, enlightening and entertaining."

Critical and popular reaction to *The Piano Lesson* was overwhelmingly favorable. Critics called it stupendous, rich, resonant, feisty, and exuberant. Frank Rich, writing in the *New York Times*, called it "heart stopping . . . it has its own spacious poetry, its own sharp angle on a nation's history." The play garnered many awards, including the 1990 Pulitzer Prize for Drama, which made Wilson one of only seven American playwrights in history to win that award at least twice. "I'm glad *Piano Lesson* won the Pulitzer because, for me, in a way, it addresses larger issues than *Fences*," Wilson once said. "I mean, you know, it's about a black man in 1904 and his legacy. The piano is a symbol of his legacy, the metaphor. What the play talks about is what you do with that legacy. If you're true to it, where does it take you?"

Continuing the Play Cycle in the 1990s

By the end of the 1980s Wilson was known as one of the nation's greatest playwrights, and as perhaps the nation's finest chronicler of the black experience in America. The *New York Times* called him "the theater's most astonishing writing discovery of the decade." Wilson was happy that his talents had been recognized, and proud that he had been able to triumph over the racism that he had experienced during his life. "The teacher who challenged me on that paper and made me quit [school] is still around," he said in 1990. "He knows what became of my life. It would be nice to say that he wrote and told me he realized he was wrong. But it never happened."

In the 1990s Wilson continued to work on his cycle of plays. In 1990 he unveiled *Two Trains Running*, which is set in the 1960s in a Pittsburgh restaurant across the street from a funeral home and a meat market. The play tells the story of a neighborhood in the midst of renovation—the Hill neighborhood of Wilson's youth—and the people who live there. *Time* magazine called it "a candid, joyous evocation of black street life circa 1968. . . . The episodic structure and comedic tone differ radically

The cast of the television production of The Piano Lesson, *broadcast Feb. 5, 1995. Clock wise from upper right are Tommy Hollis (Avery), Carl Gordon (Doaker), Alfre Woodard (Berniece), Zelda Harris (Maretha), Charles Dutton (Boy Willie), Courtney B. Vance (Lymon) and Lou Myers (Wining Boy).*

from *Piano Lessons* and *Fences*. The main thing the newest play has in common with them is that it too is terrific." Wilson followed that up in 1995 with *Seven Guitars*. Set in 1948, again in the Pittsburgh neighborhood in which he grew up, the play explores the death of a talented blues guitarist, as well as the hopes and dreams of his bandmates. Vincent Canby, writing in the *New York Times*, called it a "big, fine tragicomic new melodrama" with "an almost biblical richness of character." Both of these plays won awards from theatrical groups.

In the mid-1990s, Wilson received a good deal of publicity for some controversial remarks that he made. In a couple of speeches, Wilson called for the establishment of separate black and white theater companies and criticized the lack of support given to black theater. He also claimed that white actors should not play characters that were originally conceived as black, and vice versa. Many people disagreed, and his statements sparked a nation-wide debate about these issues among critics and theater lovers. Some charged that Wilson was calling for precisely the sort of segregation that racist white people had employed in earlier decades to subjugate blacks. Wilson, though, insisted that the main point that he was trying to make was that blacks should embrace their own unique history and work to keep it alive for future generations.

"The blues are without question the wellspring of my art. It is the greatest source of my inspiration. I see the blues as the cultural response of black America to the world that they found themselves in. And contained within the blues are the ideas and attitudes of the culture. There is a philosophical system at work, and I simply transferred these things over to all the ideas and attitudes of my characters: these come directly from blues songs."

Approach to Writing

Wilson does very little research on the time periods that he writes about. Instead, he uses photographs, paintings, scraps of dialogue, and snippets of blues songs for inspiration. He finds the paintings of African-American artist Romare Bearden particularly inspirational. Wilson estimates that it takes him about two months to produce a first draft of a play, and another 18 months or so for rewrites. "I like to write in bars and restaurants, it's where I do most of my work," he said. He sometimes uses napkins and paper bags as writing paper, and he usually types up his notes at night, sometimes staying up as late as three or four in the morning.

Wilson continues to view blues music as an essential part of his writing style. "The blues are without question the wellspring of my art," said Wilson, who sometimes has his stage characters sing blues songs to express how they are feeling. "It is the greatest source of my inspiration. I see the blues as the cultural response of black America to the world that

they found themselves in. And contained within the blues are the ideas and attitudes of the culture. There is a philosophical system at work, and I simply transferred these things over to all the ideas and attitudes of my characters: these come directly from blues songs."

Wilson also believes that it is very important for people to retain a sense of their past. This belief is another major component in his writing. "I think it is important that we understand who we are and what our history has been, and what our relationship to society is, so that we can find ways to alter that relationship and, more importantly, to alter the shared expectations of ourselves as a people," he said. "The suffering is only a part of black history. What I want to do is place the culture of black America on stage, to demonstrate that it has the ability to offer sustenance, so that when you leave your parents' house, you are not in the world alone. You have something that is yours, you have a ground to stand on, and you have a viewpoint, and you have a way of proceeding in the world that has been developed by your ancestors. . . . I am going to show that this [black] culture exists and that it is capable of offering sustenance."

HOBBIES AND OTHER INTERESTS

Wilson likes to spend his free time at home, reading books or listening to the blues. He lives in Seattle, Washington.

MARRIAGE AND FAMILY

Wilson has been married three times. In 1969 he married Brenda Burton; they were divorced in 1972. They have one daughter, Sakina Ansari. In 1981 he married Judy Oliver, a social worker. They were divorced in 1990. In 1994 he married Constanza Romero, a costume designer.

SELECTED WRITINGS

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Guggenheim Fellowship: 1986
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Outstanding Play Award (American Theater Critics): 1986, for *Fences;* 1990, for *The Piano Lesson*
Drama Desk Award for Outstanding New Play: 1987, for *Fences;* 1989, for *The Piano Lesson*
Pulitzer Prize for Drama: 1987, for *Fences;* 1990, for *The Piano Lesson*
Antoinette Perry Award for Best Play: 1987, for *Fences*
Best Broadway Play (Outer Critics Circle): 1987, for *Fences*
John Gassner Best American Playwright Award (Outer Critics Circle): 1987
Artist of the Year (*Chicago Tribune*): 1987
Helen Hayes Award: 1988
American Theater Critics' Association Award: 1992, for *Two Trains Running*
New York Drama Critics' Circle Award: 1996, for *Seven Guitars*

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1	Salinger, J.D.	1919
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7	Rodriguez, Eloy	1947
8	Hawking, Stephen W.	1942
9	Menchu, Rigoberta	1959
	Nixon, Richard	1913
12	Limbaugh, Rush	1951
14	Lucid, Shannon	1943
15	Werbach, Adam	1973
16	Fossey, Dian	1932
17	Carrey, Jim	1962
	Cormier, Robert	1925
	Jones, James Earl	1931
18	Ali, Muhammad	1942
	Messier, Mark	1961
19	Askins, Renee	1959
	Johnson, John	1918
21	Domingo, Placido	1941
	Nicklaus, Jack	1940
	Olajuwon, Hakeem	1963
22	Chavis, Benjamin	1948
23	Thiessen, Tiffani-Amber	1974
25	Alley, Kirstie	1955
28	Gretzky, Wayne	1961
29	Abbey, Edward	1927
	Gilbert, Sara	1975
	Peet, Bill	1915
	Winfrey, Oprah	1954
31	Ryan, Nolan	1947

February		Year
1	Spinelli, Jerry	1941
	Yeltsin, Boris	1931
3	Nixon, Joan Lowery	1927
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4	Parks, Rosa	1913
5	Aaron, Hank	1934
6	Leakey, Mary	1913
	Zmeskal, Kim	1976
7	Brooks, Garth	1962
	Wang, An	1920
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8	Grisham, John	1955
10	Konigsburg, E.L.	1930
	Norman, Greg	1955
11	Brandy	1979
12	Blume, Judy	1938
	Kurzweil, Raymond	1948
15	Groening, Matt	1954
17	Anderson, Marian	1897
	Hargreaves, Alison	1962
	Jordan, Michael	1963
18	Morrison, Toni	1931
20	Adams, Ansel	1902
	Barkley, Charles	1963
	Cobain, Kurt	1967
	Crawford, Cindy	1966
	Hernandez, Livan	1975
21	Carpenter, Mary Chapin	1958
	Jordan, Barbara	1936
	Mugabe, Robert	1924
24	Jobs, Steven	1955
	Vernon, Mike	1963
	Whitestone, Heather	1973
25	Voigt, Cynthia	1942
27	Clinton, Chelsea	1980
28	Andretti, Mario	1940
	Pauling, Linus	1901

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1	Ellison, Ralph Waldo	1914
	Murie, Olaus J.	1889
	Rabin, Yitzhak	1922
	Zamora, Pedro	1972
2	Gorbachev, Mikhail	1931
	Seuss, Dr.	1904
3	Hooper, Geoff	1979
	Joyner-Kersee, Jackie	1962
	MacLachlan, Patricia	1938
4	Morgan, Garrett	1877
5	Margulis, Lynn	1938

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10	Guy, Jasmine	1964
	Miller, Shannon	1977
12	Hamilton, Virginia	1936
13	Van Meter, Vicki	1982
14	Hanson, Taylor	1983
15	Ginsburg, Ruth Bader	1933
16	O'Neal, Shaquille	1972
17	Hamm, Mia	1972
	Nureyev, Rudolf	1938
18	Blair, Bonnie	1964
	de Klerk, F.W.	1936
	Queen Latifah	1970
19	Blanchard, Rachel	1976
20	Lee, Spike	1957
	Lowry, Lois	1937
21	Gilbert, Walter	1932
	O'Donnell, Rosie	1962
22	Shatner, William	1931
25	Lovell, Jim	1928
	Steinem, Gloria	1934
	Swoopes, Sheryl	1971
26	Allen, Marcus	1960
	Erdös, Paul	1913
	O'Connor, Sandra Day	1930
27	Carey, Mariah	1970
28	James, Cheryl	
	McEntire, Reba	1955
30	Dion, Celine	1968
	Hammer	1933
31	Chavez, Cesar	1927
	Gore, Al	1948
	Howe, Gordie	1928

April		Year
1	Maathai, Wangari	1940
2	Carvey, Dana	1955
3	Garth, Jennie	1972
	Goodall, Jane	1934
4	Angelou, Maya	1928
5	Powell, Colin	1937
6	Watson, James D.	1928
7	Dougals, Marjory Stoneman	1890
8	Annan, Kofi	1938
10	Madden, John	1936
12	Cleary, Beverly	1916
	Danes, Claire	1979
	Doherty, Shannen	1971
	Letterman, David	1947
13	Brandis, Jonathan	1976
	Henry, Marguerite	1902
14	Rose, Pete	1941
16	Abdul-Jabbar, Kareem	1947
	Selena	1971
	Williams, Garth	1912
17	Champagne, Larry III	1985
18	Hart, Melissa Joan	1976
22	Levi-Montalcini, Rita	1909
	Oppenheimer, J. Robert	1904
25	Fitzgerald, Ella	1917
26	Pei, I.M.	1917
27	Wilson, August	1945
28	Baker, James	1930
	Duncan, Lois	1934
	Hussein, Saddam	1937
	Kaunda, Kenneth	1924
	Leno, Jay	1950
29	Agassi, Andre	1970
	Seinfeld, Jerry	1954

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2	Spock, Benjamin	1903
7	Land, Edwin	1909
9	Bergen, Candice	1946
	Yzerman, Steve	1965
10	Cooney, Caroline B.	1947
	Curtis, Christopher Paul	1953
	Jamison, Judith	1944
11	Farrakhan, Louis	1933
13	Rodman, Dennis	1961
14	Lucas, George	1944
	Smith, Emmitt	1969
15	Albright, Madeleine	1937
	Johns, Jasper	1930
	Zindel, Paul	1936
17	Paulsen, Gary	1939
18	John Paul II	1920
19	Brody, Jane	1941
21	Robinson, Mary	1944
23	Bardeen, John	1908
	O'Dell, Scott	1898
26	Ride, Sally	1951
27	Carson, Rachel	1907
	Kerr, M.E.	1927
28	Shabazz, Betty	1936
30	Cohen, Adam Ezra	1979

June		Year
1	Lalas, Alexi	1970
	Morissette, Alanis	1974
4	Kistler, Darci	1964
5	Scarry, Richard	1919
6	Rylant, Cynthia	1954

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7	Brooks, Gwendolyn	1917
	Oleynik, Larisa	1981
8	Bush, Barbara	1925
	Edelman, Marian Wright	1939
	Wayans, Keenen Ivory	1958
	Wright, Frank Lloyd	1869
10	Lipinski, Tara	1982
	Sendak, Maurice	1928
11	Cousteau, Jacques	1910
	Montana, Joe	1956
12	Bush, George	1924
	Frank, Anne	1929
13	Allen, Tim	1953
	Christo	1935
14	Bourke-White, Margaret	1904
	Graf, Steffi	1969
15	Horner, Jack	1946
16	McClintock, Barbara	1902
	Shakur, Tupac	1971
17	Gingrich, Newt	1943
	Jansen, Dan	1965
18	Morris, Nathan	1971
	Van Allsburg, Chris	1949
19	Abdul, Paula	1962
	Aung San Suu Kyi	1945
20	Goodman, John	1952
21	Bhutto, Benazir	1953
	Breathed, Berke	1957
22	Bradley, Ed	1941
23	Rudolph, Wilma	1940
	Thomas, Clarence	1948
25	Carle, Eric	1929
	Gibbs, Lois	1951
26	LeMond, Greg	1961
27	Babbitt, Bruce	1938
	Perot, H. Ross	1930
28	Elway, John	1960

July		Year
1	Brower, David	1912
	Diana, Princess of Wales	1961
	Duke, David	1950
	Lewis, Carl	1961
	McCully, Emily Arnold	1939
2	George, Jean Craighead	1919
	Marshall, Thurgood	1908
	Petty, Richard	1937
	Thomas, Dave	1932
5	Watterson, Bill	1958
7	Chagall, Marc	1887
	Heinlein, Robert	1907
8	Hardaway, Anfernee "Penny"	1971
	Sealfon, Rebecca	1983
9	Hanks, Tom	1956
	Hassan II	1929
	Krim, Mathilde	1926
10	Ashe, Arthur	1943
	Boulmerka, Hassiba	1969
11	Cisneros, Henry	1947
	White, E.B.	1899
12	Cosby, Bill	1937
	Yamaguchi, Kristi	1972
13	Ford, Harrison	1942
	Stewart, Patrick	1940
15	Aristide, Jean-Bertrand	1953
16	Johnson, Jimmy	1943
	Sanders, Barry	1968
18	Mandela, Nelson	1918
19	Tarvin, Herbert	1985
20	Hillary, Sir Edmund	1919
21	Reno, Janet	1938
	Williams, Robin	1952
22	Calder, Alexander	1898
	Dole, Bob	1923
	Hinton, S.E.	1948
23	Haile Selassie	1892
24	Krone, Julie	1963
	Wilson, Mara	1987
26	Berenstain, Jan	1923
28	Davis, Jim	1945
29	Burns, Ken	1953
	Dole, Elizabeth Hanford	1936
	Jennings, Peter	1938
	Morris, Wanya	1973
30	Hill, Anita	1956
	Moore, Henry	1898
	Schroeder, Pat	1940
31	Reid Banks, Lynne	1929

August		Year
1	Brown, Ron	1941
	Coolio	1963
	Garcia, Jerry	1942
2	Baldwin, James	1924
	Healy, Bernadine	1944
3	Roper, Dee Dee	
	Savimbi, Jonas	1934
5	Ewing, Patrick	1962
	Jackson, Shirley Ann	1946
6	Robinson, David	1965
	Warhol, Andy	?1928

August (continued)		Year
7	Byars, Betsy	1928
	Duchovny, David	1960
	Leakey, Louis	1903
8	Boyd, Candy Dawson	1946
9	Anderson, Gillian	1968
	Houston, Whitney	1963
	McKissack, Patricia C.	1944
	Sanders, Deion	1967
	Travers, P.L.	?1899
11	Haley, Alex	1921
	Hogan, Hulk	1953
12	Martin, Ann M.	1955
	McKissack, Fredrick L.	1939
	Myers, Walter Dean	1937
	Sampras, Pete	1971
13	Battle, Kathleen	1948
	Castro, Fidel	1927
14	Berry, Halle	?1967
	Johnson, Magic	1959
	Larson, Gary	1950
15	Ellerbee, Linda	1944
18	Murie, Margaret	1902
19	Clinton, Bill	1946
	Soren, Tabitha	1967
20	Chung, Connie	1946
22	Bradbury, Ray	1920
	Schwarzkopf, H. Norman	1934
23	Novello, Antonia	1944
	Phoenix, River	1970
24	Arafat, Yasir	1929
	Ripken, Cal, Jr.	1960
26	Burke, Christopher	1965
	Culkin, Macaulay	1980
	Sabin, Albert	1906
	Teresa, Mother	1910
	Tuttle, Merlin	1941
27	Nechita, Alexandra	1985
28	Dove, Rita	1952
	Evans, Janet	1971
	Peterson, Roger Tory	1908
	Priestley, Jason	1969
	Rimes, LeAnn	1982
30	Earle, Sylvia	1935
31	Perlman, Itzhak	1945

September		Year
1	Estefan, Gloria	1958
2	Bearden, Romare	?1912
	Galeczka, Chris	1981
5	Guisewite, Cathy	1950
7	Lawrence, Jacob	1917
	Moses, Grandma	1860
	Pippig, Uta	1965
8	Prelutsky, Jack	1940
	Thomas, Jonathan Taylor	1982
10	Gould, Stephen Jay	1941
13	Johnson, Michael	1967
	Monroe, Bill	1911
	Taylor, Mildred D.	1943
15	Marino, Dan	1961
16	Dahl, Roald	1916
17	Burger, Warren	1907
18	de Mille, Agnes	1905
	Fields, Debbi	1956
21	Fielder, Cecil	1963
	King, Stephen	1947
	Nkrumah, Kwame	1909
22	Richardson, Dot	1961
23	Nevelson, Louise	1899
24	Ochoa, Severo	1905
25	Locklear, Heather	1961
	Lopez, Charlotte	1976
	Pippen, Scottie	1965
	Reeve, Christopher	1952
	Smith, Will	1968
	Walters, Barbara	1931
26	Mandela, Winnie	1934
	Stockman, Shawn	1972
27	Handford, Martin	1956
28	Cray, Seymour	1925
29	Berenstain, Stan	1923
	Guey, Wendy	1983
	Gumbel, Bryant	1948
30	Hingis, Martina	1980
	Moceanu, Dominique	1981

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1	Carter, Jimmy	1924
2	Leibovitz, Annie	1949
3	Campbell, Neve	1973
	Herriot, James	1916
	Winfield, Dave	1951
4	Rice, Anne	1941
5	Fitzhugh, Louise	1928
	Hill, Grant	1972
	Lemieux, Mario	1965
	Lin, Maya	1959
7	Ma, Yo-Yo	1955
8	Jackson, Jesse	1941
	Ringgold, Faith	1930
	Stine, R.L.	1943

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9	Bryan, Zachery Ty	1981
	Senghor, Léopold Sédar	1906
10	Favre, Brett	1969
	Saro-Wiwa, Ken	1941
11	Perry, Luke	?1964
	Young, Steve	1961
12	Childress, Alice	?1920
	Ward, Charlie	1970
13	Carter, Chris	1956
	Kerrigan, Nancy	1969
	Rice, Jerry	1962
14	Daniel, Beth	1956
	Mobutu Sese Seko	1930
15	Iacocca, Lee A.	1924
17	Jemison, Mae	1956
18	Foreman, Dave	1946
	Marsalis, Wynton	1961
	Navratilova, Martina	1956
20	Kenyatta, Jomo	?1891
	Mantle, Mickey	1931
21	Gillespie, Dizzy	1956
22	Hanson, Zac	1985
23	Pelé	1940
26	Clinton, Hillary Rodham	1947
27	Anderson, Terry	1947
28	Gates, Bill	1955
	Salk, Jonas	1914
29	Ryder, Winona	1971
31	Candy, John	1950
	Paterson, Katherine	1932
	Pauley, Jane	1950

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2	lang, k.d.	1961
3	Arnold, Roseanne	1952
4	Combs, Sean (Puff Daddy)	1969
	Handler, Ruth	1916
8	Mittermeier, Russell A.	1949
9	Denton, Sandi	
	Sagan, Carl	1934
11	DiCaprio, Leonardo	1974
	Vonnegut, Kurt	1922
12	Andrews, Ned	1980
	Harding, Tonya	1970
13	Goldberg, Whoopi	1949
14	Boutros-Ghali, Boutros	1922
15	O'Keeffe, Georgia	1887
16	Baiul, Oksana	1977
17	Fuentes, Daisy	1966
	Hanson, Ike	1980
18	Driscoll, Jean	1966
	Mankiller, Wilma	1945
19	Devers, Gail	1966
	Strug, Kerri	1977
21	Aikman, Troy	1966
	Griffey, Ken, Jr.	1969
	Speare, Elizabeth George	1908
24	Ndeti, Cosmas	1971
25	Grant, Amy	1960
	Thomas, Lewis	1913
26	Pine, Elizabeth Michele	1975
	Schulz, Charles	1922
27	Nye, Bill	1955
	White, Jaleel	1977
29	L'Engle, Madeleine	1918
	Lewis, C. S.	1898
	Tubman, William V. S.	1895
30	Jackson, Bo	1962
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2	Macaulay, David	1946
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3	Filipovic, Zlata	1980
7	Bird, Larry	1956
8	Rivera, Diego	1886
12	Bialik, Mayim	1975
	Frankenthaler, Helen	1928
13	Fedorov, Sergei	1969
15	Aidid, Mohammed Farah	1934
	Mendes, Chico	1944
16	Bailey, Donovan	1967
	McCary, Michael	1971
	Mead, Margaret	1901
18	Sanchez Vicario, Arantxa	1971
	Spielberg, Steven	1947
19	Morrison, Sam	1936
	White, Reggie	1961
21	Evert, Chris	1954
	Griffith Joyner, Florence	1959
22	Pinkney, Jerry	1939
23	Avi	1937
25	Sadat, Anwar	1918
26	Butcher, Susan	1954
27	Roberts, Cokie	1943
28	Washington, Denzel	1954
30	Woods, Tiger	1975

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