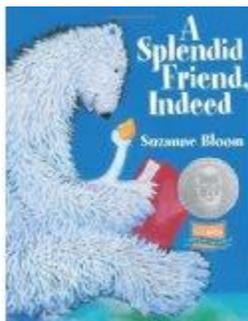


Interview with Author and Illustrator Suzanne Bloom (1/24/2010)



Q. When did you begin your career as a children's picture book author and illustrator and which did you do first, write or illustrate?

SB. A little over 25 years ago, our first son was 4 and my husband and I had been making wooden toys for over a decade. I finally had enough faith in a particular story idea to jump out of the dusty, noisy workshop. Thank goodness I didn't know how challenging it would be. The drawing and writing developed together.

Q. Why do you like to write for children?

SB. As my collection of picture books grew, so did my admiration of the form. The privilege of putting beautiful art in the hands of children seems a powerful magic.

Q. How did you come up with the idea for your picture book *A Mighty Fine Time Machine*?

SB. For about three years, the anteater and her pals, the aardvark and armadillo were rollerblading in my brain. Really. They were crashing around but not revealing their story. Recalling the fun of playing with cardboard boxes, big and small, gave me the next piece of the puzzle. But when I heard Samantha say, "Boys, you've been bamboozled!" I knew I had my first line and the quest began. What was the problem? What were the attitudes and how in 28 pages could I convey their shifting enthusiasm and focus?

Q. What other books have you written and/or illustrated?

SB. WE KEEP A PIG IN THE PARLOR was my first book. As with all my books, you will find many details from my life in it. The barns and house are just down the road from me. Yes, I live on a

dirt road in the country. The ducks and sheep belonged to friends who farm. Our cats and dogs, kids, friends, and kitchenware show up all over the place.

A FAMILY FOR JAMIE is a story about adoption.

THE BUS FOR US was the result of a brainstorming with first grade teachers.

And PIGGY MONDAY was inspired by our younger son's kindergarten class. Those kids are graduating from college this spring, or already out working.

NO PLACE FOR A PIG features my brother's Manhattan kitchen.

Other titles are: A SPLENDID FRIEND INDEED, TREASURE and new this spring, a third goose & bear story – **WHAT ABOUT BEAR?**. I can't wait to share that with students because the characters have to solve the problem of being left out.

I've had the honor of illustrating two books by Eve Bunting: GIRLS A-Z and MY SPECIAL DAY AT THIRD STREET SCHOOL and one by Pat Brisson: MELISSA PARKINGTON'S BEAUTIFUL, BEAUTIFUL HAIR.

In every book there are many personal details.

Q. Do you have a favorite medium or technique you like to work with when creating your illustrations?

SB. I've graduated from tempera to gouache with colored pencils. Goose & bear begged for pastels. I treat my pictures to finer materials now. Walking into the art store is heavenly.

When faced with all those drawings and a deadline, I usually choose to do the one I know best. That leads me to the next.

Q. Who are the picture book authors and artists that you most admire?

SB. There are many many many and my shelves are lined with their books! Patricia Polacco had very kind and encouraging words for me as I drove her to the airport. In fact, that gave me the courage to continue. Leo and Diane Dillon leave me breathless. Summertime Song by Irene Haas is so delicate and masterful, an exquisite use of black. Tedd Arnold's Green Wilma cracks

me up and Laura Rankin's Ruthie from Ruthie and the Not So Teeny Tiny Lie tugs at my heart strings. There are so many others, whose work inspires and transports me as a reader and an artist.

Q. Where can fans go to learn more about you and your books?

SB. For more information about me, my work and school visits please visit my web site – www.suzannebloom.com . Thank you for sharing your space, Lauri.

Q. Is there anything else you'd like to tell picture book fans?

SB. In the "horn tooting department", I am pleased to share that A MIGHTY FINE TIME MACHINE has been selected for the TEXAS 2x2 list of 20 best picture books in 2010. It follows in the paw prints of A SPLENDID FRIEND INDEED, a 2005 pick.