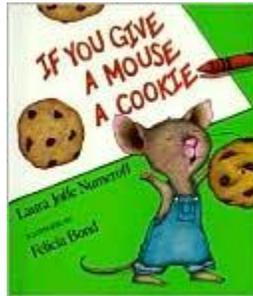


**Interview With Author Laura Joffe Numeroff (1/18/2010)**



**Q. When did you begin your career as a children's picture book author?**

**LJN.** When I was 9 years old! I remember getting my first library card! I couldn't believe how many books there were to choose from! It wasn't long before I became a voracious reader that I was inspired to write my own stories, and illustrate them! My favorite books were ELOISE and STUART LITTLE.

**Q. Why do you like to write for children?**

**LJN.** Because I don't have the attention span to write anything longer! Just kidding! I'm told I have a silly imagination. (O.K.! I'll admit it. I'm immature. Or "childlike" as I prefer to think!) And I LOVE making children laugh. There's nothing like watching a young child giggle with delight. And when they're laughing at something I wrote, it makes me feel so good. I also hoped I could inspire children to develop a love of reading.

**Q. How did you come up with the idea for your well-known picture book *If You Give A Mouse A Cookie*?**

**LJN.** I was on a loooooong, boooooooring car trip from San Francisco to Eugene, Oregon. My friend's family lived there and we'd visit twice a year. After the 4<sup>th</sup> or 5<sup>th</sup> time I thought, "If I never see another tree, I'd be fine". When I get bored, I get antsy. When I get antsy, I get silly. When I'm silly, I tend to think of silly things, which have turned into ideas for books!

This time I was thinking of animals eating my favorite foods. I pictured a beautiful black and white zebra eating Cheetos (the crispy kind), and getting his mouth covered with orange. (I've never understood, if they can put a man on the moon, why can't they get rid of the orange residue?!)

Then I pictured an orangutan eating pizza, and getting the long strings of cheese tangled up in his long arms.

In the late seventies, Mrs. Field's chocolate chip cookies were all the rage. (Unfortunately, I ate way more than a person should, so I gained a few pounds).

So, I thought it might be cute to see a little mouse nibbling on a giant cookie.

This time I kept going, and I pictured him drinking milk, getting a milk moustache, and on, and on, and on, until I got back to him wanting a cookie.

It was the first time I came up with a germ of an idea that turned into a whole book in my head. Sorry to say, it's never happened since.

When I got back home, I wrote it on my dinky typewriter that I got at a flea market (the "W" didn't work so well), and sent it out. It took forever to get nine rejections because that was in the old days of covered wagons and snail mail. (Now, I can get rejected the next day!)

**Q. I know that you have written several books. What are your favorites?**

**LJN.** Many people don't realize that MOUSE COOKIE (I shorten the titles when I write about them! Much easier!), was my tenth book, I published nine before then. They're all out of print except BEATRICE DOESN'T WANT TO, which I got re-published.

Of course, I love MOUSE COOKIE, although I love Moose most! Some of my other books I'm partial to are the WHAT MOMMIES DO BEST/WHAT DADDIES DO BEST series, illustrated by Lynn Munsinger, and WHEN SHEEP SLEEP, illustrated by David McPhail. SOMETIMES I WONDER IF POODLES LIKE NOODLES, illustrated by Tim Bowers, is definitely one of my faves! It's a collection of poems that I wrote, and I LOVE reading them to kids.

But, I'd have to say I'm most proud of a book I wrote called THE HOPE TREE: CHILDREN SPEAK OUT ABOUT BREAST CANCER. I was asked to write it for an October release in paperback, to be given out for just one month. I was paired with a doctor who is a survivor, and I created a group of children who talk about their experiences. It was illustrated by David McPhail.

When the month was up, I was able to sell it to one of my publishers. All the money it made went to Susan Komen. Unfortunately, it went out of print. We gave the rights to the foundation, and they send them to the appropriate venues.

**Q. What new titles should we look for?**

**LJN.** War and Peace 2, the sequel, and A Tale of Two Cities, Tampa and Helsinki. Sorry, I couldn't help myself. IF YOU GIVE A DOG A DONUT, OTIS & SYDNEY: THE BEST BIRTHDAY EVER!, THE JELLYBEANS AND THE BIG BONANZA (The second in a series of 4), LOTS OF LAMBS (an interactive book), and a few others that I'm keeping secret!

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

**LJN.** I LOVE all the Eloise books by Kay Thompson. I love Helen Lester. WODNEY WAT is hysterical! David McPhail is another of my favorites. His books are very sweet and so are his illustrations. And, Dr. Seuss is my idol! I'm always blown away by his talent!

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

**LJN.** My website is: [lauranumeroff.com](http://lauranumeroff.com).

Be forewarned, there's music when you get to it! I couldn't decide between Bon Jovi or Frank Sinatra, so I didn't go with either of them. See, now this is when I worry that people won't be able to differentiate when I'm kidding or not!

Actually, now that you mention it, I think it's time to change the song from JINGLE BELL ROCK, which I had for Christmas.

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

**LJN.** I think they make the best gifts! They don't come in a box which is usually more fun than the thing that came in it, they're lots more enjoyable than a pair of pajamas, and they read them again as adults, they bring back wonderful memories.

I would like to add something to the questions. Being a published author is a dream come true. It's absolutely amazing to share my silly imagination with my favorite people, kids!

My mother or father read to me every night. I highly encourage parents to set up a night time routine: getting washed, getting into bed, picking a book, and reading.

Who knows, you might have a budding author on your hands!