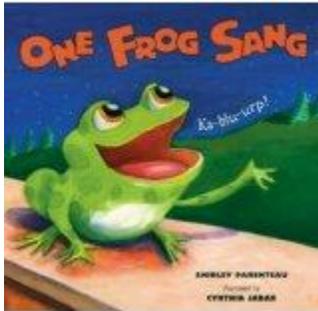


Interview With Author Shirley Parenteau (2/7/2010)



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

SP. This is my second time around as a children's book author. When my three were young, I wrote eight books for children. Later, I wrote women's fiction. Now that I have six granddaughters, I'm seeing the world through their eyes.

I didn't expect to return to children's books, but one spring evening, while standing on the porch of our 100-year-old farmhouse, listening to a passing car interrupt frogs singing, I suddenly thought, "Counting book." To my delight, Candlewick Press bought *One Frog Sang*. Artist Cynthia Jabar created beautiful illustrations and I was launched into writing for children again—and loving it!

Q. Why do you like to write for children?

SP. I love the way everything is new to children. Their enthusiasm and often uniquely insightful way of looking at the world inspire lots of ideas. When I talk to children in schools, their questions always surprise and intrigue me.

Q. How did you come up with the idea for your picture book *Bears On Chairs*?

SP. My granddaughter Elizabeth, then about three, was playing with small chairs and stuffed animals in a corner of a bookstore while her mother shopped. When I watched Elizabeth place a toy on every chair, the phrase, "Bears on chairs," came to mind. She had to make do with a ball for the final chair, but I wondered what she would do if she had more bears than chairs. The idea stayed with me. I had never written in rhyme, but this book demanded it. Candlewick found David Walker who created incredibly sweet bears to illustrate the story. The book has been a joy to share with children in classes. The love I've seen for the book across the internet has been heartwarming!

Q. What other books have you written?

SP. Recently I sold three English language toddler board books to a publisher in Korea for use in a home school program there. I found it a challenge to tell a story in a few short lines. As with any new experience, I've learned a lot through these apparently simple stories.

I'm working on a sequel to Bears on Chairs. This will be a bedtime book.

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

SP. There are so many! I love reading picture books to my granddaughters and browsing through picture books in bookstores. I find new favorites with every visit! Dr. Seuss is a longtime favorite, of course. Jane Yolen has some wonderful books. And I especially enjoy Sandra Boynton's joyful board books.

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

SP. I hope everyone will visit my website: www.shirleyparenteau.com. It's meant to be fun for young visitors and includes coloring pages to download. Candlewick Press has a page with biographical info for each author and illustrator published there.

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

SP. I enjoy visiting blogs written by librarians, teachers, bookstore staff and parents describing books they've discovered. I'm humbled and thrilled if I happen to see my books mentioned, as on your blog, Lauri. Thank you so much for inviting me for an interview!