

## BOOKS TO GROW WITH NEWSLETTER FOR OCTOBER 2004

Hello! This month we talk with Eve Bunting, the talented and prolific author of more than 100 children's books.

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### EDITOR'S NOTE

It's been a busy and interesting time! This month I enjoyed presenting at the Oregon Education Media Association's annual conference as well as at the annual conference of the Oregon Association for the Education of Young Children. For all of you who wonder, as I do, about the topics on which school librarians, teachers and parents most hope to find books, you'll be interested in my unofficial results from these two conferences.

Just as I did when presenting with Peggy Sharp this summer, I asked attendees to share the issues on which they most need books. Their answers are shown below. (If an issue was cited more than once, the number shown in parentheses represents the number of participants who listed that issue):

- Adoption
- Aggression/hitting (3)
- Anger
- Being different
  - Bi-racial
  - Gender non-conformity
  - Gay families (2)
- Blended families
- Bossiness
- Cancer
- Childhood disabilities
- Chronic illness
- Divorce (3)
- Grandparents as parents
- Jailed family member (2)
- Picky eaters
- Poverty (2)
- Self esteem (2)
- Separation anxiety (2)
- Shared custody
- Shyness
- Single parent families (2)
- Starting a new school
- Stealing
- Toilet training issues

Don't forget to check out the new books I recommend on "What's New" at [www.lutrapress.com](http://www.lutrapress.com)!

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## An Interview with Eve Bunting

### Introduction:

Eve Bunting is the author of more than 100 books that span a wide variety of genres, from picture books to young adult novels, on subjects that include scary noises (*Ghost's Hour, Spook's Hour*), homelessness (*Fly Away Home*), a modern-day look at a Civil War battlefield (*The Blue and the Gray*), the Irish village where she was born (*Market Day*), and the Los Angeles riots (*Smoky Night*). Eve's books have won many awards, including the Golden Kite Award from the Society of Children's Book Writers and the PEN Los Angeles Center Literary Award for Special Achievement in Children's Literature.

Eve's books have inspired me for many years. Her books helped me realize the power of picture books to convey ideas along with providing entertaining reading. We could not hope to persuade folks of the significance of a good book in helping a child handle issues without books as beautifully written as Eve's books are.

Cheryl: Hello Eve, and welcome to the *Books to Grow With* newsletter. Eve, I can't imagine having mothered so many wonderful books! Do you have favorites among them?

Eve: I actually don't. Perhaps the ones with an Irish background are rather special to me.

Cheryl: When did you begin exploring realistic themes? Or have your books always embodied real experiences, sometimes difficult, that children have?

Eve: I never knew I was writing "Socially Conscious" books until a reviewer so named them! I handle so many realistic themes in my books because that's what moves me. I read about a horrible situation, such as homelessness, in my newspaper and as sort of a catharsis for myself I write. I began with *How Many Days to America*, a story of boat people coming to America, facing such heartbreak and difficulties in their journey. Yikes! That was in 1988. I've been writing for a long time!

Cheryl: Did you ever run into resistance when you wanted to write children's books about difficult or upsetting experiences?

Eve: Not really. I have wonderful, caring, open-minded editors. I've been lucky!

Cheryl: Are there topics you think deserve a good children's book that you hope to write?

Eve: Well there are lots. We need books that talk to children about tolerance, about accepting others who are not like you, about loving one another. Yes, I hope to write some of them.

Cheryl: Are there topics you've been asked to write about, but don't want to?

Eve: Yes, 9/11. I may someday, but not now.

Cheryl: Why do you think that so few children's authors write about difficult or challenging topics?

Eve: Actually, it isn't easy to "bring down" to a child's level something as serious as war or riots or immigration. And also there's a degree of uncertainty...will this subject be accepted by an editor? By the critics? Will it be interesting to a young reader? Will teachers and parents think it's suitable?

Cheryl: You grew up in a small village that you portray in *Market Day*. Do images, experiences or stories from your childhood show up in other books you've written?

Eve: In *Spying on Miss Muller* I practically re-live my life in an Irish boarding school. And, speaking as we were, of favorite books of mine, this one for me is way up there. My editor coined a phrase for it "an autobiographical novel" which pretty well sums it up.

Cheryl: Who were your favorite children's authors, when you were young or when you were choosing books for your children?

Eve: I adored *Anne of Green Gables*. My kids weren't so interested in it although I tried. Mostly they chose their own books. In my daughter's case she immediately loved the "classics" -- *Catcher in the Rye*, *The Phantom Tollbooth*. She's a librarian now! My sons mostly read sports books -- anything with baseball or football.

Cheryl: Your books provide such a rich portrait of so many different human experiences. Do teachers use them to work with children? Do you provide materials for teachers to assist them?

Eve: Sometimes my publishers provide teachers' guides. I just try to make my books easy to understand and I know, if they aren't, our smart teachers can work with them and help the children grasp what I'm trying to say.

Cheryl: Please tell us about your latest book...

Eve: I have a book coming, *Apple Cider*, about a Muslim girl going to a U.S. school. It isn't that easy for her. (Here I go again!) Also, a book called *The Red Balloon* about a little boy going to the docks to meet his dad coming home from the war, any awful war. But of course I was thinking of Iraq. Also, *What Leprechauns Do* which, as you can tell, isn't exactly one of my serious compositions but sure was fun to write!

Cheryl: Eve, thank you so much for the opportunity to talk with you.

Eve: Thanks, Cheryl, for the opportunity to talk to more children and teachers.

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