

BOOKS TO GROW WITH NEWSLETTER FOR JUNE 2004

Hello,

In this month's issue, we talk with Carrie Kitze, author of children's fiction about adoption and mother of two adopted daughters from China.

* * *

EDITOR'S NOTE

This month I'll travel to the American Library Association's annual meeting in Orlando, and report back in the July issue on the many workshops and presentations.

We've added "It takes a library to raise a child" t-shirts to the Lutra Press website (by popular demand!), as well as a toll-free number for ordering t-shirts and *Books to Grow With: A Guide to Using the Best Children's Fiction for Everyday Issues and Tough Challenges* (Lutra Press; ISBN 0-9748025-7-3). The new toll-free number is 1-866-311-0265.

* * *

NEW BOOKS AND TOPICS OF INTEREST

We're now featuring our new books and topics each month right on the Lutra Press website, at www.lutrapress.com. Check the tab marked "Idea of the Month" for the latest new books on a variety of topics.

* * *

OUR DISCUSSION TOPIC FOR JUNE: ADOPTION BOOKS

A Conversation with Carrie Kitze

Interview Questions about your books

Cheryl: Hello Carrie. You've tackled an important topic within the genre of fiction books about adoption-Asian adoptions. What led you to this focus?

Carrie: My daughters are both adopted from China. So while I have to say I have a personal China bias, my books are really a bit broader than just Asian adoptions. I feel that parents can use the books as tools to really talk about feelings. And what we've found is that, based on feedback from parents who are purchasing these titles and from therapists and educators, these are feelings that every adoptee has regardless of where they are from. My oldest daughter has come to understanding and questioning about adoption early, and with that, I needed to scramble as a parent to find tools to help her understand and cope. When I couldn't find the tools to help her, I created them for her.

I have spent a great deal of time talking to adult adoptees and listening to the things that were missing from their upbringing. The books I have written and have published have addressed some unmet needs in the adoption market. Specifically, the books are positioned from the viewpoint of the child, not the parent. It's all about how the child feels, not the parent. A lot of these "adoption" discussions are really hard for parents...sort of like the "sex" talk. But our children live this every day. And the feelings are there, inside, waiting to find a sounding board and a sympathetic ear.

I have had children come up to me at book signings and say "How did you know exactly how I feel?" This was about Jean MacLeod's book *At Home in This World* and it happens at every book signing I do. My first book, *We See the Moon*, has been tucked under pillows of some children to give them happy dreams. It has created a whole new generation of moon watchers. I have seen parents gasp reading some of the questions while children just nod their heads knowingly.

Cheryl: What concerns are unique to Asian adoptees?

Carrie: Children who have been adopted from other cultures and countries have some important losses early in their lives. They have lost birthparents whom they may never be able to find and meet. They have lost their first culture. They have also lost a piece of their identity since most often, these children are adopted into families who are of a different race than they are. The people surrounding them look different on the outside. Couple that with time in an institution and changes in caregivers and these children need parents who understand that they won't be parenting by the standard baby care book.

Cheryl: How do you address these concerns in your books?

Carrie: Our books address the concerns in several ways. First, we have created a wonderful set of parent resources. These are free downloads on our site (<http://www.emkpress.com> click on the guides/resources tab) and we cover issues like race, birthmother loss, lifetime adoption issues, and attachment. Getting the people who make an impact in the child's life on the same page is the first step.

Second, the books are very factual, truthful and open ended. What is important is to let the feelings come out and to be able to do that in the best way for each child. With my second book, *I Don't Have Your Eyes*, we have discovered that it is a wonderful tool for parent and child to bond with each other. For the parent who looks different from their child, and for the child who looks different from their parent, this book offers commonality on the important things that we all share on the inside.

Cheryl: How you would recommend using your books with a child, to help him or her?

Carrie: These books are intended to be read by parent and child together. Empathy, understanding and validating feelings are the important parts of what our books do for families. These are the stepping stones to dialog, which is critical when an adoptive child is forming their identity and figuring out where they belong, both in the family and in their world. One thing that many late elementary children have mentioned is that they would like their teachers to have access to these books, not to read aloud in the classroom, but rather to help them understand the feelings their students might have inside. *I Don't Have Your Eyes* is a great multicultural resource since the families depicted are of all different colors and can be used as a terrific stepping stone to discuss racial differences and commonality between different children. We are currently putting together resources for teachers in the classroom that will be like our parent guides. I have created a multicultural unit that works around this book.

Do you have comments? Questions? Send them to cherylcoon@lutrapress.com and we will respond in our next newsletter.

* * *

NEXT MONTH'S SPECIAL FOCUS: We talk with Cynthia Leitich Smith, award-winning author of *Jingle Dancer* (Morrow, 2000), *Rain Is Not My Indian Name* (Harper, 2001), and *Indian Shoes* (Harper, 2002). She was a 2001 Writer of the Year in Children's Prose from Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers and Storytellers and a featured author at the Second National Book Festival. Her Web site, Children's Literature Resources at www.cynthialeitichsmith.com, was named one of the top ten writer sites on the Internet by Writer's Digest. She is a tribal member of the Muscogee (Creek) Nation and lives in Austin, Texas with her husband, children's author Greg Leitich Smith.

If you have received this newsletter in error or do not wish to continue to receive it, please let me know at cherylcoon@lutrapress.com.