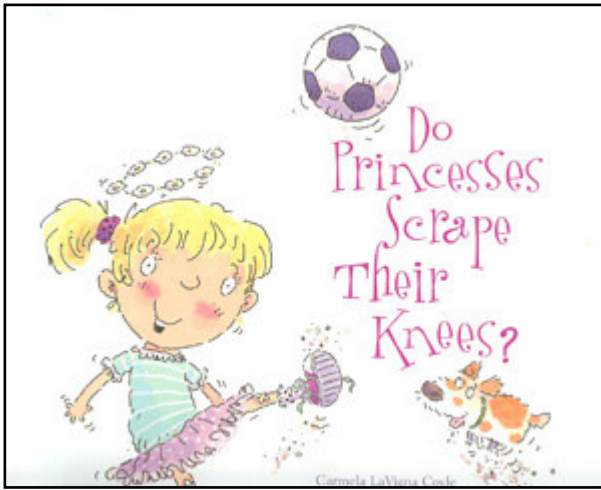


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- December 2006



Have I ever mentioned how much I love picture books? Perhaps I should rephrase that to say, how I love books in general: bookstores, the feel of a book in my hands, and that special fragrance that wafts up to your nose when you open a brand new book for the first time. Guess I'm in the right

business.

The last couple of years I've used my December column to talk about kid's books so that makes this now a tradition. I just spent an hour in a children's section of a major bookstore to see what trends I noticed. Children's books are more age-defined than ever plus reading-level specific. There are more celebrities than ever writing children's books. *Hmm, did they really write them*, my suspicion radar bleeps at me? Many classics have been reprinted, and for different reading levels, so if you have favorites from when you were a kid, they just might be back on the shelves. The numbers of series has proliferated.

On to specific books to suggest to you. I love the Princess series, ie *Do Princesses Kiss Frogs?* and *Do Princesses Scrape their Knees?* plus the most recent, *Do Princesses wear Walking Boots?* These are read-to-me picture books that might just lead to

discussions with your young princess about life in general and being a girl. The author is Carmela LaVigna and the illustrator Mike Gordon.

Another favorite author and illustrator is Jan Brett. Her earlier books, *The Hat*, *The Mitten*, and others had a definite Scandinavian flavor, but the last couple of years she has visited Africa. I bought two of her fairly new releases, *Noah's Ark* and *Honey...Honey...Lion!* I love her stories but also the delightful little surprises in her illustrations. Her books, like the Princess books, cry out to be read aloud. I crack myself up sometimes reading picture books aloud. Chewy, my Basset hound, loves to be read to.

At the bookstore, there were lots of Christmas classics available and a few new ones, but none that I just had to pick up and take home with me. One of my favorite themes is love and especially the love between parents and children. Lisa Tawn Bergren has a *How Much Do You Love Me?* series, as does an Alaskan author/illustrator. The one I picked up today is *Guess How Much I Love You* by Sam McBratney. I'd seen it before. It's a story about a bunny and a hare. Not a new book and I hope I don't already have it on my shelf.

I wish I'd had the abundance of I-can-read books for every level when I was younger instead of the old-style, Dick and Jane characters I had to read about when I was first learning how to read. The new series now available are much more entertaining and make it easy for parents and grandparents to buy books for their kids.

My traditional plea for both readers and writers: read aloud to your families. An older woman told me how she reads to her husband because now his eyesight is failing.

Another read to her grandmother who was bedridden. Reading aloud is great for kids learning to read, so this gift covers all ages.

I remember my mother reading *Tawny* as we drove from Minnesota to Washington State when I was ten. My family says some of my first words were “read to me.” I can still recite *The A Book*, as we called the alphabet book by Dr. Seuss. I read it so many times to my kids. “Aunt Annie’s alligator, A, A, A.”

Ah, the love of books and words, of thoughts and dreams. Think back on your favorite books and share them with those you love. You’ll never regret it and neither will they.

May your Christmas be blessed as you read and perhaps even write a story of your own to share with your families!

Wishing you blessings and Christmas joy, and until next time,

Happy Readin’ and Writin’ from Lauraine.