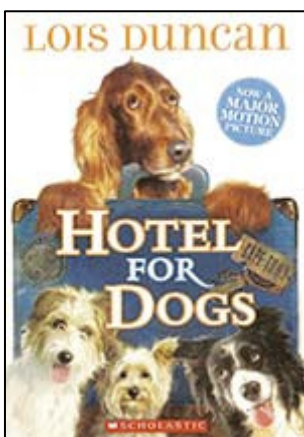
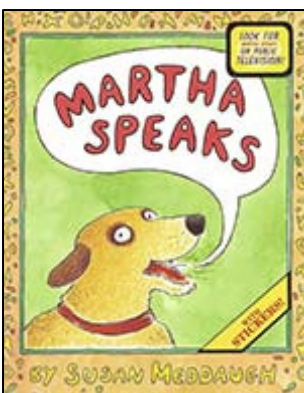


Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- December 2008



Here I am, writing a December column from the big island of Hawaii.

I am not in the Christmas mood yet, even though the calendar tells me Christmas is only weeks away. In keeping with a tradition I started a few years ago, this column is about children's books. I encourage everyone to give children books for Christmas and as long as you are in a bookstore, remember adults also like books as gifts.



To write this edition of Readin' & Writin', I started in the picture book section. As I sorted through them, I chuckled, grinned, and sometimes even laughed out loud. But since I was in the

children's section, no one looked at me funny.

I LOVE picture books, and this time *The Dark, Dark Night* by M. Christina Butler and Jane Chapman jumped out at me. There was a frog on the cover so yes, the pun is intended☺ The book itself was about being scared at night. Now I know all about that. I can still scare myself silly in the dark, and I should be beyond that stage. This is one of those picture books every child, including me, would ask to have read to them again and again. Some say being scared is delicious. I'd rather get my delicious from fudge.

Then I found the Martha series, about a dog that eats alphabet soup and incredibly begins to talk. What adventures! Kids love series and so do adults. *Martha Speaks* by

Susan Meddaugh begins the series, and pits Martha and her family against some nasty robbers. Another keeper for my home library.

On to chapter books. I chose one that is coming out as a movie soon. Kids and animals are an unbeatable combination as you will see in *Hotel for Dogs* by Lois Duncan. While this is not a new book, it has been reprinted again due to the movie's release. What happens when three kids start hiding dogs in a deserted house? There's the requisite villain, a bully, and families with problems. What a great read. Lois Duncan has been around for a long time and written top notch books, several of which have also been turned into screenplays.

And my final choice was authored by Kate DiCamillo who wrote *Because of Winn Dixie*, one of my favorite books. She is better known for creating *Despereaux*, a small timid mouse with a big heart, a needle for a sword, thread to save him from the rats in the dungeon and a love for the princess that transcends the fact that she is human and he a mouse. *Despereaux*, the movie, will be out soon and it will be interesting to see how the screen writers deal with the narrator of the story, whose voice is written in the style of much earlier times.

I am of the opinion that we all should read children's books. Some of the best writing happens there, and while sometimes the stories bring tears, more often they bring laughter. If you have a child to read to, that's even better, especially if you snuggle together to read. Some of my favorite memories are of my mother reading to my sister, brother, and me on long car trips. Talk about a great way to entertain children and stop the arguments before they begin. You can always volunteer to read at a library or school

and give the gift of story to other children. I know adults who read my books to each other, they tell me so at book signings.

When writing, I read what I have written aloud. That's my writing tip for this month. Read aloud. Not to belabor the point, but READ your work ALOUD. This will help you spot problems in flow and story rhythm you won't find any other way.

May you take time this Christmas season to enjoy reading both aloud and to yourself and to share the books you love with others. Books need to be read by more than one person.

Until the New Year,

Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine