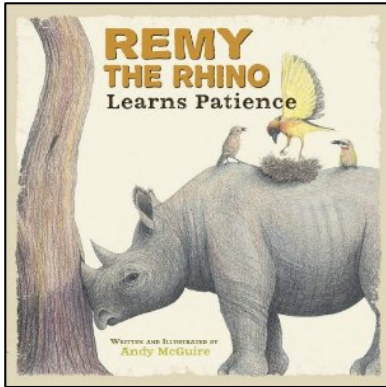


## Readin' & Writin' with Lauraine- December 2010



Since I always review kid's books for December, I start looking for candidates early on so I can get them read, but sometimes books just show up. Or are recommended by someone else. Such is the case for my picture book choice this year.

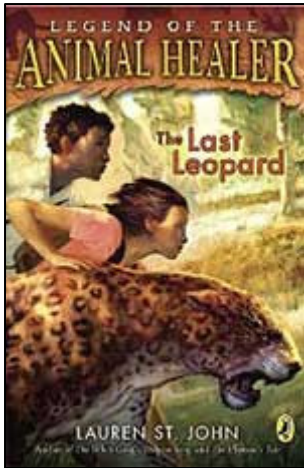
I LOVE picture books. I think I've probably mentioned that in years past.

A friend recommended and reminded me of Andy McGuire's new picture book, titled *Remy the Rhino Learns Patience*. Andy creates both the illustrations and the story for his books, and they are keepers for sure.

The cover says it all. I just had to read it again and again so I could chuckle and delight in his colored pencil drawings. Andy has one of those creative minds that never quits.

We've all heard that patience is a virtue, but often like this young rhino, we don't do much about learning it until we are forced to. Not that patience is over abundant in this day and age, so maybe more than parents and children could benefit from reading this little book.

I enjoyed the first two books in Lauren St. John's *Legend of the Animal Healer* series so much that I had to pick up *The Last Leopard*. I had to know what happens next to this young girl, who seems to have healing powers for animals. The fourth one, *The Elephant's Tale*, is out in hardback, but I resisted.



In *The Last Leopard*, Martine hears rumors that the leopards are fast disappearing thanks to poachers in Africa and there is only one left. But is he myth or reality? Will she find out when she goes with her grandmother to help a long time friend? Suspense and adventure, a great combination for middle readers that can be enjoyed by all ages.

Hmmm. Is there a pattern here? All ages?

My final recommendation was written by a friend of mine of many years ago, the mother of the little five-year old whom I played with and who has now graduated with a Ph.D. It is so easy to lose track of time, but I don't want to lose track of friends from earlier in my life. See how cleverly I finagled around not calling them old friends?

Anyway, Susan Fletcher attended a marketing class for writers with me back in 1980, when we were both beginning our writing careers. She writes for middle reader kids like I used to and will be soon again, but instead of writing about horses, she wrote *The Dragon Chronicles*.



I thought the series was finished after the first three books, but during my November visit to a bookstore in Truckee, CA, I found she had a fourth one out. It was hardback, but I bought it anyway, which just goes to show that if one wants something bad enough, one will pay the extra price. I was not disappointed.

*Ancient, Strange and Lovely* is a contemporary tale about a young girl, who is out to save a newly hatched dragon or dracling, as Susan calls them. What happens when a leathery skinned egg the size of a basketball shows up with a bunch of fossils sent by her mother, a scientist who has disappeared? When her father leaves to search for his wife, what is Bryn, who has the gift of kenning with birds, going to do? And how do you find dragon's milk for a baby dracling? By the way, *Dragon's Milk* is the name of the first book in the series. Start there. I am not a sci-fi fan but I love Susan's dragons and her adventure tales.

I hope this whet's your appetite for these great children's books, to read to your kids or to be read by your kids. One of the greatest gifts you can give your children is a love of reading.

I wish you a Merry Christmas and a most blessed New Year---with lots of new books.

Until next time,

*Happy readin' & writin' from Lauraine*