

A CONVERSATION WITH LAURA PURDIE SALAS

What inspired you to write *BookSpeak!*?

I was invited to submit poems about books for an anthology. I became totally consumed with the topic, since books and poems are two of my favorite things! When none of my poems were accepted for the anthology, my agent submitted them to Clarion Books, who decided to publish them. I went from devastated to elated!

I stink at love poems. But I think this book turned out to be a pretty good love poem to books. Writing these poems made me reflect deeply about what books have meant in my life.

What interesting challenges did you encounter in writing your award-winning book?

Because the topic was narrow, I wanted to include many moods in the poems. Books are versatile, and I wanted the poems to reflect that versatility, that variety. So...rhymed poems and free verse poems, happy poems and melancholy poems, chirpy poems and sarcastic poems. I hope the joy of books comes through in every poem.

What do you hope your readers take away from *BookSpeak!*?

I want them to look at books with new eyes, to wonder what their own books' covers would say, what part of a book they like best, or what part of a book they are most like. I just hope it makes them love books even more!

What do you like most about the book?

I stink at love poems. But I think this book turned out to be a pretty good love poem to books. Writing these poems made me reflect deeply about what books have meant in my life. I also adore the whimsical art by Josée Bisailon!

What was your journey to becoming a published author?

I didn't discover writing as a career option until college. Then I spent a number of years as an editor and a freelance writer. But after teaching 8th grade English for two years and starting my own family, I realized that I wanted to write for kids. I began publishing in children's magazines and with educational publishers. I submitted picture book manuscripts for many years before Clarion published my first poetry collection (*Stampede! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School*).

How does being a Minnesotan inform your writing?

The writing and book-loving community in Minnesota is so active! Readings, classes, conferences, conventions—there are constant opportunities to talk with writers, editors, teachers, publishers, and librarians. The contact always fills me with energy. I have never felt isolated as a writer here in Minnesota! The other impact is that Minnesota's beauty, particularly the North Shore and northern Minnesota, is a constant inspiration. And I love to write up there whenever I get the chance.

Minnesota Book Award Categories:

Children's Literature
General Nonfiction
Genre Fiction
Memoir & Creative Nonfiction
Minnesota
Novel & Short Story
Poetry
Young People's Literature


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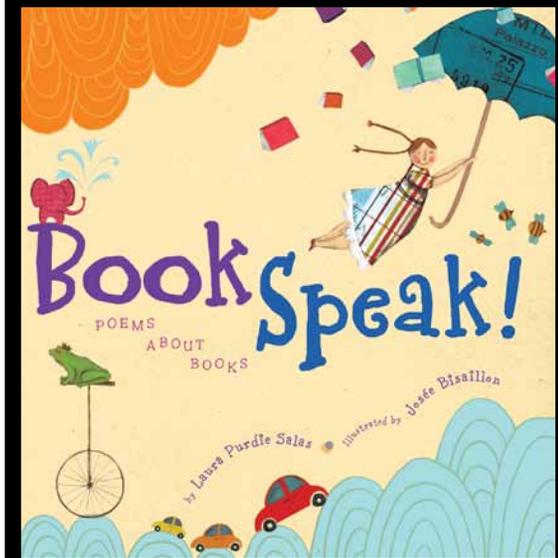
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24TH ANNUAL

MINNESOTA BOOK AWARDS

Children's Literature Winner

Category sponsored by Books For Africa

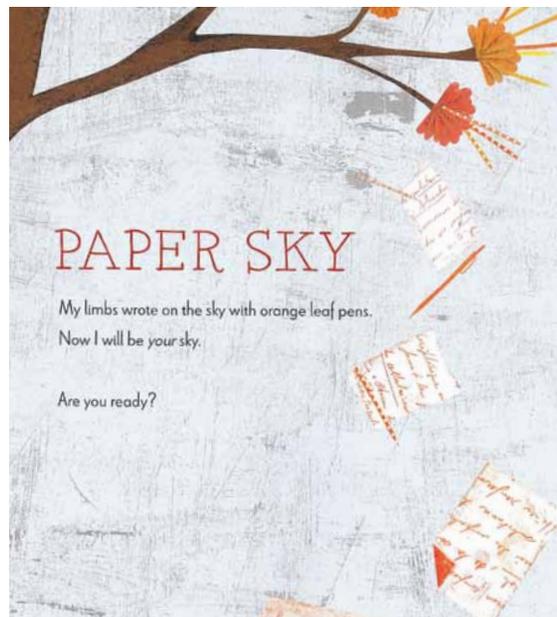


BookSpeak! Poems About Books

by Laura Purdie Salas
Illustrated by Josée Bisailon

CLARION BOOKS/HOUGHTON MIFFLIN
HARCOURT PUBLISHING COMPANY

BookSpeak!



SUMMARY

This book is a collection of wild and weird, wacky and winsome poems about all the magic to be found on a bookshelf. Each book gives voice to those who seldom get heard – the books themselves. Characters plead for sequels, book jackets strut, and readers get a sneak peek at the raucous parties in the aisles when all the lights go out at the bookstore!

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. If you could be any part of a book, what part would you be? Why?
2. If you were the cover of your favorite book, what would you say to a person walking by?
3. What is your favorite book, and why?
4. Why does the index think he's so cool? What can he do that no other part of the book does?
5. If the stories on your shelves could tiptoe out of the house, where do you think they would go? What kinds of adventures would they have?
6. The book in "Hydrophobic" says its biggest fear is water. What other things might a book be afraid of?
7. In "The Middle's Lament," the three parts of the book have different personalities. Which part do you think you're most like? Why?
8. Did you know that so many different people are involved in getting a book to the shelf? And "This Is the Book" doesn't even include all of them! What is something you do that a lot of other people actually help with?
9. The author wrote the book in a style that's called poetry. What is poetry?
10. If you wrote a book, what would it be about?



ABOUT LAURA PURDIE SALAS



Laura Purdie Salas writes poetry and nonfiction books for children. Her first poetry book, Stamped! Poems to Celebrate the Wild Side of School, was a Minnesota Book Award finalist. Laura would like to say she is fluent in many languages, but she isn't. She can order twisty pasta in Italian, can name one fabulous illustrator in French – Josée Bisaillon, and can read street signs in Spanish. Laura lives with her family in Minneapolis.

Learn more about the author and her work at www.laurasalas.com



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24TH ANNUAL MINNESOTA BOOK AWARDS