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Gooney Bird Greene

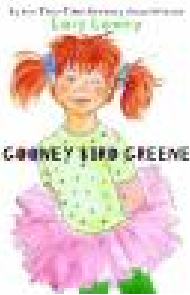
by Lois Lowry

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Summary



Gooney Bird Greene arrives at Watertown Elementary School a month after school has started – wearing her pj’s and cowboy boots. That pretty much says it all. She arrives on her own, no parent or teacher to escort her into the room, a dictionary in hand and a claim that she is from China. Her first request is a seat in the middle of the room because, she says, “I like to be right smack in the middle of everything.

Gooney is a good student who also happens to be mysterious and interesting. Her classmates are intrigued by her so when their class work focuses on storytelling, they request stories about Gooney. She loves being the center of attention and is happy to oblige. Throughout the book, Gooney tells stories filled with twists and turns, words with double meanings and clever tricks to keep the listener interested. She explains how her parents’ picked her name (another option was gazpacho banana), how she arrived from China by car (there is more than one china on the map) and how her pet, Catman, is consumed by a cow (as it turns out, not eaten by, but in love with the cow). Gooney Bird just may inspire her readers to start writing too!

Source:

<http://www.sweetonbooks.com/component/content/article/41-reviews/156-gooney-bird-greene.html>



About the Author

I've always felt that I was fortunate to have been born the middle child of three. My older sister, Helen, was very much like our mother: gentle, family-oriented, eager to please. Little brother Jon was the only boy and had interests that he shared with Dad; together they were always working on electric trains and erector sets; and later, when Jon was older, they always seemed to have their heads under the raised hood of a car. That left me in-between, and exactly where I wanted most to be: on my own. I was a solitary child who lived in the world of books and my own vivid imagination.



Because my father was a career military officer - an Army dentist - I lived all over the world. I was born in Hawaii, moved from there to New York, spent the years of World War II in my mother's hometown: Carlisle, Pennsylvania, and from there went to Tokyo when I was eleven. High school was back in New York City, but by the time I went to college (Brown University in Rhode Island); my family was living in Washington, D.C.

I married young. I had just turned nineteen - just finished my sophomore year in college - when I married a Naval officer and continued the odyssey that military life requires. California. Connecticut (a daughter born there). Florida (a son). South Carolina. Finally Cambridge, Massachusetts, when my husband left the service and entered Harvard Law School (another daughter; another son) and then to Maine - by now with four children under the age of five in tow.

My children grew up in Maine. So did I. I returned to college at the University of Southern Maine, got my degree, went to graduate school, and finally began to write professionally, the thing I had dreamed of doing since those childhood years when I had endlessly scribbled stories and poems in notebooks.

After my marriage ended in 1977, when I was forty, I settled into the life I have lived ever since. Today I am back in Cambridge, Massachusetts, living and writing in a house dominated by a very shaggy Tibetan terrier named Bandit. For a change of scenery Martin and I spend time in Maine, where we have an old (it was built in 1768!) farmhouse on top of a hill. In Maine I garden, feed birds, entertain friends, and read.

My books have varied in content and style. Yet it seems that all of them deal, essentially, with the same general theme: the importance of human connections. *A Summer to Die*, my first book, was a highly fictionalized retelling of the early death of my sister, and of the effect of such a loss on a family. *Number the Stars*, set in a different culture and era, tells the same story: that of the role that we humans play in the lives of our fellow beings.

The Giver - and *Gathering Blue*, and the newest in the trilogy: *Messenger* - take place against the background of very different cultures and times. Though all three are broader in scope than my earlier books, they nonetheless speak to the same concern: the vital need of people to be aware of their interdependence, not only with each other, but with the world and its environment.

My older son was a fighter pilot in the United States Air Force. His death in the cockpit of a warplane tore away a piece of my world. But it left me, too, with a wish to honor him by joining the many others trying to find a way to end conflict on this very fragile earth.

I am a grandmother now. For my own grandchildren - and for all those of their generation - I try, through writing, to convey my passionate awareness that we live intertwined on this planet and that our future depends upon our caring more, and doing more, for one another.

Source: <http://www.loislowry.com/bio.html>



Book Review

From Publishers Weekly

Two-time Newbery Medalist Lowry (*The Giver*; *Number the Stars*) introduces a feisty, friendly heroine in this light novel. Readers know immediately that red-haired, freckle-face Gooney Bird Greene is as unorthodox as her name: wearing pajamas and cowboy boots, she arrives at the door of her new second-grade classroom all alone, "without even a mother to introduce her." She announces she has just moved from China (which turns out to be the name of a town, not the country) and demands "a desk right smack in the middle of the room, because I like to be right smack in the middle of everything." Dressed each day in another eccentric outfit, she relays to the class a series of stories that are "absolutely true" even though they initially seem anything but. Stretching the facts creatively through some wily wordplay, Gooney Bird explains how she spent time in jail (while playing Monopoly), acquired diamond earrings at a palace (they came from a gumball machine in an ice cream shop called The Palace) and directed a symphony orchestra (she directed the lost driver of the bus transporting musicians to the auditorium). Interruptions from curious classmates heighten the fun. Never mind the dubious likelihood that a second-grader would possess such command of language and pithy delivery; youngsters will likely hope that Gooney Bird has enough tales stored in her fertile imagination to fill another volume.

From School Library Journal

Second-grader Gooney Bird Greene is new to Watertower Elementary School. She tells fantastic stories, which are "always absolutely true." Her clothes are always unusual, ranging from pajamas with cowboy boots to a pink tutu over green stretch pants. In seven chapters, she captivates her classmates with her wild tales about "How Gooney Bird Came from China on a Flying Carpet" and "The Prince, the Palace, and the Diamond Earrings." She assumes the role of the teacher as she fields the class's questions about storytelling. The students learn that stories have main characters and secondary characters, and that using the word "suddenly" gets people's attention. In the last chapter, she takes off her props, an orange fur jacket and a cowhide purse, which she used to tell how her cat fell in love with a cow, and assures her peers that everyone has all sorts of stories to tell. While the "voice" of Gooney Bird is supposed to be that of a second grader, it sounds more like an adult talking through her. Most of the time, she sounds just like the teacher. The cleverly titled stories could spark children's interest in writing their own stories.



Discussion Questions

Warning! Some of the questions contain key elements of the plot. Do not read if you don't want to know what happens!

1. How would you describe Gooney Bird Greene?
2. How did Gooney get her name? How did you get your name?
3. Take two minutes and come up with as many names using the initials G and B that you can.
4. What was your favorite Gooney story?
5. What are some of Gooney Bird's tips for creating a good story?
6. Does anyone want to share a story about a time they were late to school, a time they saved their money up to buy something really special, lost a pet, or anything else?

Source : <http://k8talksbooks.blogspot.com/2007/12/gooney-bird-greene-by-lois-lowry.html>



Author Interview

If you are thinking about writing Lois Lowry a letter or an e-mail, read this first and maybe you will find that your questions are already answered!

How do you get your ideas?

It makes me sigh in exhaustion when I am asked that question because it is simply one for which there isn't any answer. And yet everyone asks it! Ideas come from your imagination. What triggers your imagination? Things that you read, see, overhear, dream, or wonder about. Anything that makes you think "What if...?" is the start of a story.

Yes, but how did you get the idea for *The Giver*?

If you read the acceptance speech for the Newbery Medal (available on my website under "Speeches"), it tries to answer that question.

Will you come visit my school?

I'm sorry. Sometimes I wish I could clone myself. But I simply don't have time to visit schools any more.

Will you autograph my book if I send it to you?

Yes, if you send it with return postage. E-mail me if you have a book to send and I will tell you how to go about it.

My school is having a fund-raising auction. Will you send a donation for it?

I used to do that. But I have run out of stuff to send. (Do you know that authors have to buy their own books? We don't have stacks of them sitting around). So I am not able to send donations; I get too many requests...maybe ten a week. Just can't do it!

What advice do you have for people who want to be writers?

Reading is the best way to learn to write well. Read as much as you can. Think about what you read: how the author made it interesting, or funny, or suspenseful. And write as much as you can, too. Keep a journal. Get together with friends who enjoy writing, and read things aloud to each other and talk about them.

I've written a story. Will you read it and give your opinion?

No, sorry. I can't do that. I'm not a teacher and I don't teach writing. And I have very little time. I get a zillion emails every day, and answering them briefly is all I can manage.

I've written lots of stories. How can I get them published?

There are a few magazines that publish things by kids (look in a book called "Writer's Markets" to find them, and also for instructions on how to submit things). But my personal opinion is that you should not worry about "being published." You should enjoy writing, and writing more and more, so that you become better at it. I always sort of cringe when I hear, "I want to be a published writer" from a kid. I'd rather hear, "I love to write."

But I want to be rich and famous

Very, very few writers become rich and famous. Stephen King and J.K. Rowling. They are very unusual. Most writers don't even make a living by writing. If you want to become rich, then you should invent something like EBay; or maybe be an orthodontist. But writing won't do it.

Do you have a pet?

I have a Tibetan terrier named Alfie. He is a puppy, and at this very moment I discovered him chewing a button off a coat I had left over the back of a chair! On my website there is a picture of another dog, another Tibetan terrier, whose name was Bandit. He died in May 2006, at the age of thirteen and a half.

Are any of your children writers?

They all write very well. But each of them chose another profession. Maybe they saw, from watching me, how hard it is to make a living as a writer!

Do you know other writers?

Yes, I have a lot of friends who are writers both for kids and adults. We all choose our friends because we have interests in common, so it is not surprising that many of my friends are also writers. I suppose professional basketball players hang out with other professional basketball players. And doctors probably sit and schmooze with other doctors.

What did you read when you were a kid?

I read everything. I was lucky that I grew up in a family that valued books. I went to the library all the time starting at about age 5 or 6. My mom read to me. I read to myself. I loved an author named Lois Lenski, and now I laugh because sometimes kids write to me and say, "I loved your book *Strawberry girl* and I have to tell them it was by Lois Lenski.

I am writing a paper about The Giver or Number the Stars or.....whatever. Please tell me....

I can't do school assignments for kids. The reason a teacher gives an assignment...sometimes a HARD one...is to make you think, because by thinking you learn. If I do your thinking for you, you won't learn anything.

A parent from my school wants to ban The Giver. What do you think about that?

I think banning books is a very, very dangerous thing. It takes away an important freedom. Any time there is an attempt to ban a book; you should fight it as hard as you can. It's okay for a parent to say, "I don't want my child to read this book." But it is not okay for anyone to try to make that decision for other people. The world portrayed in *The Giver* is a world where choice has been taken away. It is a frightening world. Let's work hard to keep it from truly happening.

Do kids ever send you rude emails?

Oh, yes. I think when people can be anonymous, by not signing their name; they like to use it as a way of being hateful. I just delete those emails. But I feel kind of sorry for those kids, because they missed out on an opportunity to have a conversation with an author.

If a kid writes me and says simply, "Your book sucks" I delete the email and don't reply and I never think about it again. But if they say, "I didn't much like your book for the following reasons..." then I read it with interest; maybe I learn from it; and I will answer it.

You know the emails I most hate, though? Even if a kid loves a book? Ones that look like this:

dear lois I had to read yr book the giver in school and I tht I wld hate it but it turned out to be okay cuz I liked that guy jonas he was like cool why don't you wrote more about him I would proly read those boks if u wrot them okay?

Are you writing a new book?

Yes. And I'm going back to it right now.

Source: <http://www.loislowry.com/faq.html>



Further Reading

If you liked *GOONEY BIRD GREENE* by Lois Lowry you might like to read the following books, too!

IVY AND BEAN by Annie Barrows

OTHERWISE KNOWN AS SHEILA THE GREAT by Judy Blume

MY LAST BEST FRIEND by Julie Bowe

UTTERLY ME, CLARICE BEAN by Lauren Child

ELLEN TEBBITS by Beverly Cleary

PUPPY POWER by Judy Cox

AMBER BROWN IS NOT A CRAYON by Paula Danziger

IDA B: -- AND HER PLANS TO MAXIMIZE FUN, AVOID DISASTER AND (POSSIBLY) SAVE THE WORLD by Katherine Hannigan

JUST GRACE by Charise Harper

BABYMOUSE QUEEN OF THE WORLD! by Jennifer Holm

BUSYBODY NORA by Johanna Hurwitz

TEACHER'S PET by Johanna Hurwitz

LUCY ROSE, HERE'S THE THING ABOUT ME by Katy Kelly

PIPPY LONGSTOCKING by Astrid Lindgren

JUDY MOODY by Megan McDonald

PERMANENT ROSE by Hilary McKay

CLEMENTINE by Sara Pennypacker

EACH LITTLE BIRD THAT SINGS by Deborah Wiles