



Public  
Libraries

# Granny Torelli Makes Soup

BY

Sharon Creech

---

|                           |    |
|---------------------------|----|
| Summary.....              | 2  |
| About the Author.....     | 3  |
| Book Reviews.....         | 5  |
| Discussion Questions..... | 7  |
| Author Interview.....     | 8  |
| Further Reading.....      | 11 |





## SUMMARY

---

This is the story of Granny Torrelli, her twelve-year-old granddaughter, Rosie, and Bailey, the boy next door. The friendship of Rosie and Bailey has its ups and downs. Rosie can change from good friend to sassy girl to ice queen in an instant, as Bailey bounces through his reactions to Rosie and plows through his own challenges. Granny Torrelli regularly breezes into Rosie's house, and in a flurry of making zuppa (soup) and "some superior pasta," Granny's wit and experience help Rosie and Bailey smooth out the kinks in their friendship.

From SharonCreech.com  
<http://www.sharoncreech.com/novels/12.asp>  
(Accessed 8/04/05)



## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

---

### Sharon Creech's Biography



I was born in South Euclid, Ohio, a suburb of Cleveland, and grew up there with my noisy and rowdy family: my parents (Ann and Arvel), my sister (Sandy), and my three brothers (Dennis, Doug and Tom).

For a fictional view of what it was like growing up in my family, see *Absolutely Normal Chaos*. (In that book, the brothers even have the same names as my own brothers.)

Our house was not only full of us Creeches, but also full of friends and visiting relatives.

In the summer, we usually took a trip, all of us piled in a car and heading out to Wisconsin or Michigan or, once, to Idaho. We must have been a very noisy bunch, and I'm not sure how our parents put up with being cooped up with us in the car for those trips. The five-day trip out to Idaho when I was twelve had a powerful effect on me: what a huge and amazing country! I had no idea then that thirty-some years later, I would recreate that trip in a book called *Walk Two Moons*.

One other place we often visited was Quincy, Kentucky, where my cousins lived (and still live) on a beautiful farm, with hills and trees and swimming hole and barn and hayloft. We were outside running in those hills all day long, and at night we'd gather on the porch where more stories would be told. I loved Quincy so much that it has found its way into many of my books--transformed into Bybanks, Kentucky. Bybanks appears in *Walk Two Moons* and *Chasing Redbird* and *Bloomability*. Bybanks also makes a brief appearance (by reference,

but not by name) in *The Wanderer*.

When I was young, I wanted to be many things when I grew up: a painter, an ice skater, a singer, a teacher, and a reporter. It soon became apparent that I had little drawing talent, very limited tolerance for falling on ice, and absolutely no ability to stay on key while singing. I also soon learned that I would make a terrible reporter because when I didn't like the facts, I changed them. It was in college, when I took literature and writing courses, that I became intrigued by story-telling. Later, I was a teacher (high school English and writing) in England and in Switzerland. While teaching great literature, I learned so much about writing: about what makes a story interesting and about techniques of plot and characterization and point of view. I started out writing novels for adults: *The Recital* and *Nickel Malley* were both written and published while I was living in England (these books were published in England only and are now out of print.) But the next book was *Absolutely Normal Chaos*, and ever since that book I have written mainly about young people. *Walk Two Moons* was the first of my books to be published in America. When it received the Newbery Medal, no one was more surprised than I was. I'm still a little bit in shock.

After *Walk Two Moons* came *Chasing Redbird*, *Pleasing the Ghost*, *Bloomability*, *The Wanderer*, and *Fishing in the Air*. I hope to be writing stories for a long, long time.

I am married to Lyle Rigg, who is the headmaster of The Pennington School in Pennington, New Jersey, and have two grown children, Rob and Karin. Being with my family is what I enjoy most. The next-best thing is writing stories.

From SharonCreech.com  
<http://www.sharoncreech.com/meet/bio.asp>  
(Accessed 8/4/05)



# BOOK REVIEW

---

## Editorial Reviews

Amazon.com

In this endearing story by Newberry Medal-winner Sharon Creech, a wise old Italian granny skillfully imparts life advice (and cooking lessons) to her winning but sometimes obstinate 12-year-old granddaughter.

Best known for *Walk Two Moons* and *The Wanderer*, Creech makes good use of another inventive format: Rosie's story unfolds first, over making and eating *zuppa*, and then Granny Torrelli tells parallel stories from her own childhood to help Rosie with her current predicament.

Granny Torrelli's tales are laced with endearing, fun-to-say Italian: "I didn't like it, not one piccolino bit," as is her attempt to help Rosie mend her rift with her best friend Bailey ("That Bailey boy!"), for whom she's starting to feel more-than-friendship feelings.

The details of both Rosie's and Granny Torrelli's respective stories are often quite funny (from Braille jealousy to secret guide-dog training for the legally blind Bailey). But, as usual, what Creech does best is slyly proffer small, nourishing morsels of wisdom--not unlike the *cavatelli*, the "little dough canoes," that Rosie, Granny Torrelli, and that Bailey boy labor over in the book's sweet second half. Just be warned that you might find yourself starving by the end of the story. (Ages 9 to 12) --Paul Hughes

From School Library Journal

Grade 4-7-Tastes and smells emerge along with wisdom and insight as a grandmother and grandchild reveal experiences past and present in the warmth of the kitchen. Rosie and Bailey are neighbors, born only a week apart. They are like sister and brother, only better "because I chose him and he chose me." She has always been his helper as he was born visually impaired. But now they have had a falling out. As Rosie tells Granny, Bailey is acting spiteful, all because she tried to be just like him. To be just like Bailey-her buddy, her pal-Rosie secretly learned to read Braille and unknowingly took away the special thing

only he could do. When the two of them come together with Granny Torrelli in the kitchen and make cavatelli, the rift between them heals. Stories and wisdom continue as sauce and meatballs are made, helping to clarify feelings. As family and friends raise a glass of water to toast the cooks, Rosie realizes that her world is indeed bigger as is Bailey's; that tutto va bene-all is well! Twelve-year-old Rosie's narration seamlessly integrates Granny Torrelli's stories and fleeting conversations in short chapters. Her authentic voice gradually reveals what has happened and the accompanying emotions ranging from anger and angst to happiness and contentment. The integration of the Italian kitchen and Granny's family stories from the old country add flavor just like the ingredients in her recipes. This is a meal that should not be missed.

*Maria B. Salvadore, formerly at District of Columbia Public Library*  
Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc.

#### From **Booklist**

Gr. 4-6. This story of a friendship, told around food and delivered in small, digestible bites, is a tasty treat. As 12-year-old Rosie makes *zuppa* with her grandmother, she struggles with her feelings about her best friend, Bailey. Moving adroitly from the past to the present, Rosie tells about her lifelong friendship with Bailey, and how, when it became clear that he was blind, she did everything in her power to help him--sometimes suffocating him with her good intentions. As she makes the soup, she talks to Granny, who has her own story, about a dear friend from the old country, Pardo, which echoes Rosie and Bailey's relationship. Another story unfolds as Rosie, Bailey, and Granny make pasta: a new girl, moves into the neighborhood, and suddenly Rosie has a rival for Bailey's affection. Not surprisingly, something similar happened to Granny and Pardo. This gets high marks for its unique voice (make that voices) and for the way the subtleties that are woven into the story. Each character adds flavor, but the story's strength comes mostly from Rosie--bossy, loving, and willing to see both the error of her ways and the possibilities for the future. Chris Raschka contributes a colorful jacket painting and a few inside sketches to brighten things up even more. *Ilene Cooper*  
Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved

From Amazon.com

[http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/product-description/0060292903/ref=dp\\_proddesc\\_0/103-4903051-3031011?%5Fencoding=UTF8&n=283155](http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/product-description/0060292903/ref=dp_proddesc_0/103-4903051-3031011?%5Fencoding=UTF8&n=283155)

(Accessed 8/54/05)



## DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

---

1. Would you enjoy a grandmother like Granny? What do you like about her? What's fun about her? Is she wise? Examples of wise sayings (pages 5, 3, 83).
2. What is this book about? (friendship) – Does Granny teach Rosie anything about friendship – some of the things? What is so good about the way she teaches?
3. Why does Bailey get so angry when they do the play?
4. What emotion or feeling do the words "ice queen" and later (for Bailey) "ice king" represent?
5. Did any part of the book make you laugh? Feel sad? Feel very happy?
6. Do you think Rosie ever made soup or pasta with Mom and Pop? Why or Why not?
7. Why is the "Baby incident" so important to the story? What did Granny learn from this incident? Does Rosie learn something about life by hearing it?
8. Why do you think Ms. Creech chooses to tell the story from Rosie's point of view?
9. Draw a picture of the Pasta Party. What does the statement on page 129 "It is good that we are crowded together..." mean?

Questions submitted by Phyllis Parker  
5/5/05



## AUTHOR INTERVIEW

---

An Interview with Sharon Creech

***Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, one of your latest novels, is about an Italian grandmother and her granddaughter. What was the inspiration for this story?**

This is a hard question to answer because a book contains not one, but hundreds, maybe thousands, of little ideas. Often it seems as if the main character and the place just arrive in my head one day, but later I can see that perhaps they arrived there because I'd been thinking about my family or someone I'd seen at a bus stop. I wrote most of *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup* while my daughter was expecting her first child, and while I was anticipating becoming a grandmother. It was a chance to remember my own Italian grandmother, and to speculate about having my own grandchild. Just about the time I finished the first draft of this book, my grandchild was born: a little girl named Pearl!

**Now that you are a grandmother, what life lessons do you hope to pass on to your own granddaughter?**

Perhaps I am hoping to emulate Annie's grandfather (in *Heartbeat*) and Granny Torrelli: to be able to listen, to commiserate, and to laugh with my granddaughter. Maybe the lessons I can pass on are similar: appreciate one's friends, take time for family and simple pleasures, be able to laugh at oneself, and be able to step outside oneself to see the larger world. I also hope to pass on my love of reading to her! I've been reading to Pearl since she was born, and she has become, already, at two, a little bookworm. When we walked into a bookstore last week, she said, "Books, books, books! Let's read books!"

**Your new novel, *Heartbeat*, like *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, is another story of relationships: between Annie and her grandfather; between Annie and her friend Max; and between Annie and her about-to-be-born sibling. Why do you find these kinds of relationships so important to write about?**

Relationships with parents, grandparents, friends, and siblings were important to me when I was young and have remained so throughout my life. Our relationships with other people both shape and reflect who we are. These relationships are infinitely fascinating to explore!

**In *Heartbeat*, Annie asks, “Why are we here on this earth?” What would you tell your granddaughter if she asked you the same question?**

I hope it’s many years before I’m asked that question so that I have time to come up with a good answer! If I had to answer now, I’d probably say this: Each child brings so much joy and hope into the world, and that is reason enough for being here. As you grow older, you will contribute something else to this world, and only you can discover what that is.

**What were some of your favorite books when you were growing up?**

At home, we five siblings were usually urged to “go outside and play!” This was fine with me. The only books I remember being in our house were a set of the Great Books. These included the works of Sophocles, Plato, etc. — not exactly light reading. I remember pulling one of the volumes out one day, determined to read Plato, and as I did so, a centipede scurried across the cover and onto my leg. I didn’t go anywhere near those Great Books for a long, long time. The only book I have a distinct fond memory of is *The Timbertoes*, probably my first chapter book, which I read at school. I was hypnotized by it and by the colorful illustrations which accompanied it. I think this was my first sense of being immersed in a story that I could read by myself.

**What’s your recipe for success as a writer?**

Read a lot, live your life, and listen and watch, so that your mind fills up with millions of images. Shake it. See what floats to the top. Transfer floating images to page, word by word. Repeat. When it is all done, remove clunky bits. Sounds simple, yes? And it is, if you stay loose and open, and if you have the patience to transfer those images, word by word, from your mind to the paper.

**What other great stories are you working on now?**

When I finished *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, and my granddaughter was a visible miracle in my arms, I wrote *Heartbeat*. Although grandparents have appeared in most of my stories, I seemed to need to write these two books now, from this new perspective of actually being a grandparent. I've also finished a picture book of new baby songs, poems from the perspective of a new baby. These were written shortly after my granddaughter was born. The book I am currently working on is called (tentatively) *Replay*, and is about a boy in a big Italian family, full of absolutely normal chaos.

From HarperCollins.com

[http://www.harpercollins.com/global\\_scripts/product\\_catalog/author\\_xml.asp?author\\_id=11974&interviewID=169344&tc=ai](http://www.harpercollins.com/global_scripts/product_catalog/author_xml.asp?author_id=11974&interviewID=169344&tc=ai)  
(Accessed 8/4/05)



If You Like...

*Granny Torelli*

by Sharon Creech,

*you might like the following books, too!!*

*My Louisiana Sky* by Kimberly Willis Holt

*And Maggie Makes Three* by Joan Lowery Nixon

*A Year Down Yonder* by Richard Peck

*I Should Have Listened to Moon* by Elisabeth Dyjak

*Good-bye, Hello* by Barbara Dugan

*The Great Green Notebook of Katie Roberts: Who Just Turned 12 on*

*Monday* by Amy Hest

*When the Frost is Gone* by Miriam Bat-Ami

*Becoming Gershona* by Nava Semel

*Olive's Ocean* by Kevin Henkes