

The Pen & Pencil

An Interactive Monthly Newsletter About Books & More
For Readers and Writers Ages 6 - 11

October 2010



Author Spotlight on Helen Stringer



HELEN STRINGER grew up in Liverpool, England, and currently lives in Los Angeles. *Spellbinder* is her first novel. In an interview with Macmillan publishers, here is what Helen has to say about her writing.

What inspired you to write/illustrate your first book?

“I came across a story I had written years ago in a box of junk and thought that perhaps I should write some more stories about the people in the same town. The first thing that I thought of was a girl with lank

black hair sitting on a tomb in an overgrown graveyard and she sort of took over from there.”

What one or two words of advice would you give for young authors?

“Just write. It doesn’t matter if you finish things or not. Just write and one day you will.”

What inspired some of the historical/mythological aspects of *Spellbinder*?

“When I was younger I really enjoyed reading books that then led me to other books or completely different fields of enquiry, which is one of the reasons that I have tried to make the history in *Spellbinder* as accurate as possible, so if anyone reading it wants to look anything up they will find that it is correct.”

How would you inspire a child to be interested in writing?

“When my nephew was 4 my sister and her husband started him on piano lessons. She said it was not because they wanted him to be a pianist, but because they want him to understand that music is something you can do, not just something you listen to. Well, he’s now 8 and in November I read him some of *Spellbinder* and after I left his Mum and Dad finished reading it to him. When it was finished he started to write his own book, something that had never occurred to him before. Now he understands that writing is also something that you can do. And that is really what it is all about, isn’t it?”

Last Summer

In the midst of October's chilly weather, summer is now a warm memory. Here are some Writing Challenge entries from this summer.

I went to Mesa Verde. It was hot. I played soccer. My team is the blue team. I learned swimming. My teacher is Jessica. I went to parties. There were many people. I went rafting in the Animas River. There were cold and big waves. I had fun!

—Ritwik Bhattacharjee, age 6

This summer I went to Mesa Verde where the Anasazi, a Native-American tribe, used to live. They made many pueblos (houses) in Colorado. Some of their pueblos were Sun Temple, Spruce Tree House, Balcony House, and Cliff Palace. You had to go with a tour guide to see some of the pueblos up close. We went on the Cliff Palace tour because it was the biggest pueblo. It was really exciting climbing all the big boulders.



I also went white water rafting. The waves were big and cold. My dad thought my brother would not like going in the big waves but it turned out my dad did not know how brave my brother was. My dad was a fraidy cat.

I recently got a new bike! It was a two wheel bike. This was my first bike. It felt refreshing to feel the wind in my face. My brother just learned how to ride a bike with two wheels. He is getting really good.

I am also having swimming lessons. I do backstroke, front stroke, and dolphin kick really good, but I need more work in breaststroke and butterfly. My eyes are always red after swimming and they sting too. Another sport I'm learning is soccer. It's the first time I'm on a team. It's exciting but confusing because I don't know why my coach is always substituting me and making me play defense. We started off by winning the first game but now we are losing all the others!



I love music so my mom thought I should start piano. The musical alphabet is like you have to learn your alphabet all over again! But my teacher is nice

and teaches me a lot so it is getting easier. I am squeezing in reading time too. I just finished *The Traitor King*, an excellent secretive book.

One of the most exciting and last things I would like to tell you is about my new house. A company called Toll Brothers is building my new house. I get to choose lots of stuff for my room. We got a balcony connected to my parents' room. They and my brother get to see the golf course from their rooms, but I get to see the mountains from mine! We are going to move in on August 13th! So far they have finished almost everything. I can't wait to move in.

I'm going back to school on August 17th but I'll be waiting until next summer when I will do soccer, swimming, piano, tennis, and maybe even golf. My dream thing is to go to Hawaii next summer, so I'm saving up some money. It will be fun to surf, learn to hula, and go to a luau. I want to try some Hawaiian foods and see tourist attractions. I heard there are many beautiful plants and flowers which I would like to see. It will be fun to go on a cruise ship that goes all around the Hawaiian Islands. I want to see Mauna Loa, a famous volcano, which is still active. I also met some neighbors by the house I'm currently living in and would like to visit them even after I move. I can't wait until *next* summer.

–Portia Bhattacharjee, age 9

What I like about summer is that the weather changes, and I can read a book, and go biking on the Big Dry Creek Trail, and go swimming at the bay, and especially that I have no school! This year I read five series. I almost finished the Big Dry Creek Trail. I went swimming for one month in a row!

–Spoorthy Peddy, age 8



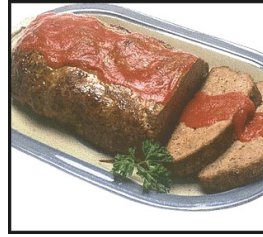
Orchard of Apples (a haiku)

Red apples in trees.
The workers loading barrels.
Rows of apple trees.

--Lauren Wagner, age 6

Rain drops are falling on my head.
It feels like someone is tapping on my head.
My shoes get wet.
Leaves are blowing.
It is very cold.
It is fall and I am happy.

–Lauren Wagner



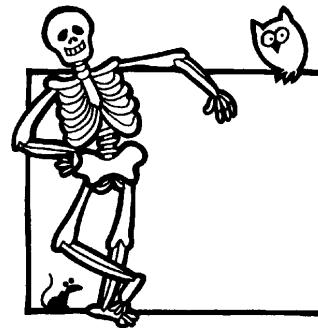
School Lunches

“My mom makes the worst meatloaf but she makes the best lasonya!”

–Max Nowell, age 10, Homeschool

Bedtime Stories

by Lilian Moore



“Tell me a story,”
Says witch’s child.
“About the beast
So fierce and wild.
About a ghost
That shrieks and groans.
A skeleton
That rattles bones.
About a monster
Crawly—creepy.
Something nice
To make me sleepy.”

October Reading List

The Green Ghost, by Marion Dane Bauer - While Kaye and her parents are driving during a bad snowstorm to her grandmother's house on Christmas Eve, their car spins off the road and they take refuge in a house where Kaye meets a ghost in a green cloak.



The Worst Witch, by Jill Murphy - Mildred Hubble's first term at Miss Cackle's Academy for Witches starts badly when, unlike her classmates, she can't control her broom, her kitten, or her spells.

Over My Dead Body, by Kate Klise - In this story, told mostly through letters, busybody Dick Tater tries to ban Halloween and ghost stories, as well as break up the popular writing trio of I. B. Grumply, ghost Olive C. Spence, and eleven-year-old illustrator Seymour Hope.

Mysterious Howling, by Maryrose Wood - Fifteen-year-old Miss Penelope Lumley, a recent graduate of the Swanburne Academy for Poor Bright Females, is hired as governess to three young children who have been raised by wolves and must teach them to behave in a civilized manner in preparation for a Christmas ball. A howling good read in the style of Lemony Snickett!

Spellbinder, by Helen Stringer - Twelve-year-old Belladonna Johnson, who lives with the ghosts of her parents in the north of England, teams up with an always in trouble classmate to find out why all of the ghosts of the world have suddenly disappeared.

Join the Club!

If you like to fool around with words, and you are between the ages of 6 – 11, you might want to become a member of the *Pen & Pencil Club*. Come to our next meeting at College Hill Library. (The cookies are always sweet and the lemonade is not half bad.) Bring something you have written, or read a passage from your favorite book.

Next Meeting –
Saturday, October 9, 2010
2 – 3 p.m., Room L 107
Upcoming meetings: Nov 6, Dec 18



Questions? Comments? Contact Mary Wickins,
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