

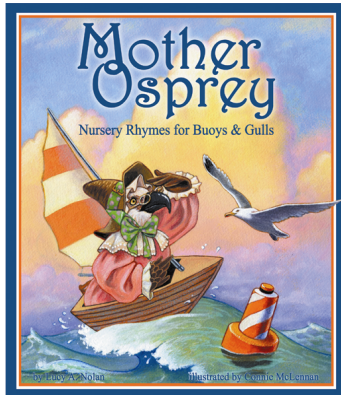
A Conversation with Lucy Nolan, author of Mother Osprey



What was your inspiration for writing *Mother Osprey*?

I'm a native South Carolinian and have been vacationing at Pawleys Island since I was a baby. This book actually started out as some doodlings about one of my favorite places in the world — the South Carolina coast. I wanted to celebrate the salt marshes, the sandy beaches, and the wildlife. But like the ebb and flow of the tide, the book just kept changing. New poems were added, and old ones were retired — including many of the original ones. By the time the book was finished, it was vastly different than when it began. Instead of a book about a small corner of my world, *Mother Osprey* became a tribute to all of America — from sea to shining sea.

What was most challenging about writing *Mother Osprey*?



Some people translate "challenges" into "problems," but I think of them as games. In writing *Mother Osprey*, I actually set up challenges for myself — on purpose. First of all, each poem had to feature a coastal theme. Secondly, I tried not to rhyme the same two distinct words in more than one poem. Thirdly, I wanted it to be apparent which Mother Goose rhyme the poem was based on — whether through subject matter, rhythm or actual lifted lines. (As the collection grew, I drew upon some of the less well-known nursery rhymes. But here's a challenge to *you*. Find a collection of Mother Goose rhymes and see if you can tell which rhyme each *Mother Osprey* poem is based on.) And finally, here's the most important challenge — I wanted to make sure each poem was interesting in its own right, whether the reader recognized the underlying nursery rhyme or not. Setting these challenges for

myself not only kept me entertained, but I also think they made the book stronger.

What is the most frequently asked question you encounter as an author?

I am most often asked where I get my ideas. They come from lots of places, but I have found that many of them come from odd little twists or misunderstandings. Just as *Mother Osprey* is a twist on familiar nursery rhymes, many of my other projects were inspired by misheard words or misread phrases. These little misunderstandings are enough to make me stop and look at familiar things in a new light.

When are you most creative?

The two things that make me most creative sound like opposites — taking walks and doing nothing. Taking long walks lets me mull over ideas and get my creative juices flowing. On the other hand, I've found that letting ideas simmer for awhile helps my subconscious mind make interesting connections between them.

When did you become interested in writing?

When I was four years old, I stapled some paper together, sat on my mother's lap and dictated a story to her about my dolls. Voila! My first book. I've been writing ever since.

What advice can you give young authors?

Write, write, write. Write poems, write stories, write plays. Write thank-you notes and comic strips. Everything you write is great practice. And if you go somewhere interesting, keep a travel journal. It's fun to look back and remember the details of a great trip. You'll also surprise yourself with how much you've already forgotten! Just a few sentences written down 15 years ago can help me remember the thrill of seeing wild horses cross the road in front of me on the Outer Banks. And a conversation hastily jotted down in England can help me remember the chill of a brisk wind near the North Sea. ("Around here, we call this a lazy wind," a villager said. "It's too lazy to go around you, so it goes right through you.")

What's the most interesting seafood you've ever eaten?

In Spain, I ate baby squid cooked in its own ink. It was a lot grayer than you would think.

Want to continue this conversation? Schedule an interview!

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