

# Author Spotlight



# Caroline Arnold



## Did you enjoy reading as a child?

I always loved to read and to have stories read to me. The books I loved were usually set in other times or far-off places. My favorite book was *Family Sabbatical* (Viking) by Carol Ryrie Brink. I dreamed that one day I might travel to Paris, learn to speak French, and climb the Eiffel Tower. Today I often travel to do research for my books, and that's one of the things I like best about being a writer.

## How did you become an author?

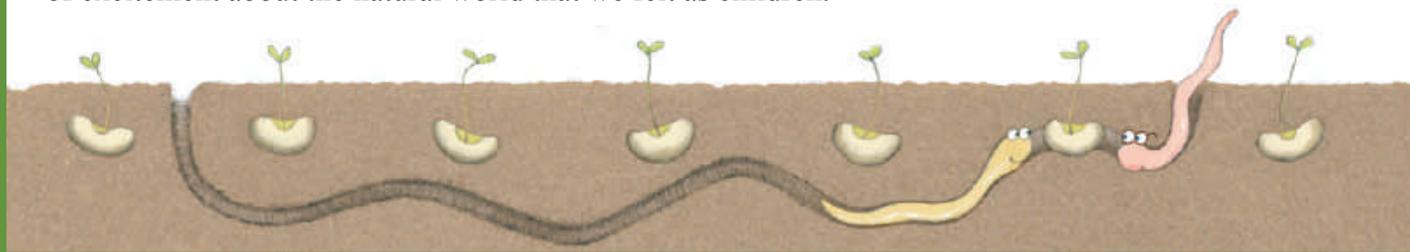
It never occurred to me that I could write books as a career. I studied art in college and worked as an artist and art teacher. I began to write books when my children were young. I was looking for a way to use my art training that allowed me to work at home. I got out my art supplies and sat down to start my first book. I realized immediately that I couldn't do any pictures until I had a story, so I started to write. That's when I discovered that the story always comes first. No matter how wonderful the art may be in a book, it needs to support the story. Although I illustrated a few of my early books, I soon abandoned art to devote all my energies to my writing. I recently began to illustrate my books again and I enjoy the challenge of coordinating the text with the pictures.

## How has your background as an artist influenced you as a writer?

Artists and writers must develop a keen sense of observation. The best writers, whether they write fiction or nonfiction, are those who have developed this skill. They notice details about the way things look, feel, sound, and smell. They learn how to use words to paint a picture of a scene. My goal in each of my books is to provide a close-up view of my subject, and I do that by focusing on details.

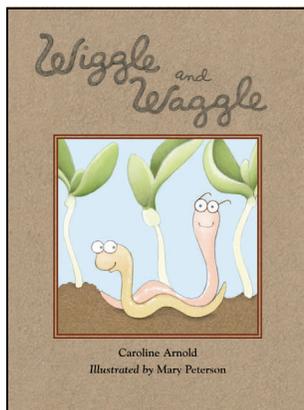
## Many of your books are about the natural world and the creatures that inhabit it. When did you discover your love for nature?

As a child, I spent many summers with my family at a small camp in northern Wisconsin. There I learned the thrill of spotting birds, deer, porcupines, and other wild animals in the forest. Today as I write about how birds fly, worms in the garden, or mammals of the sea, I try to convey the same sense of excitement about the natural world that we felt as children.



## Why do you write nonfiction books?

It is easy to overlook the fact that nonfiction books can be just as fun and creative as fiction books. These are the books filled with facts about real people, real places and real events. Ask any librarian, and you will be told that children actually prefer to read these books because they love to find out things. So do I. That's why I keep writing nonfiction. I'm the sort of person who goes to museums and reads all the labels, who likes to take guided tours, and who loves to ask questions. I learn new things with every book, and I hope to share this excitement with my readers.



978-1-58089-306-0 HC

## What was the inspiration for *Wiggle and Waggle*?

One of the very first stories I wrote was about two worms in a garden—an idea that came out of my experience growing vegetables behind our country house in upstate New York. I envisioned *Wiggle and Waggle* as a collection of short stories, although the original five stories were longer and had different themes. It was not until I started to work on the stories in an early reader format and to focus on the themes of friendship and the value of hard work that the stories finally came together as a book.

I hope children will learn the value of friendship and a job well done after reading these stories. And perhaps, children will also gain a new appreciation of worms and be motivated to learn more about them.

## You are the author of over a hundred books for children and the 2005 recipient of Washington Post-Children's Book Guild Nonfiction Award. How has your writing career evolved throughout the years?

When my first book was published, I was thrilled to see my name in print. I never imagined I would have more than a hundred books. In many ways, my writing career has come full circle. I started out writing easy-to-read books for young children. Perhaps that's because at that time my children were young. As they grew, the level of my books grew older as well. My children have now grown up and have children of their own. Perhaps not surprisingly, my new projects are for younger readers again.

## Any advice for aspiring writers and illustrators?

The secret to becoming a good writer is practice. Writing letters or keeping a journal are two ways of practicing writing. Writing is something like baseball—you are not likely to hit a home run the first time you step up to the plate. Your first stories will not be perfect the first time around, but with practice they will get better and better, and soon you will be hitting the ball out of the park.

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### Books by Caroline Arnold

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*Birds: Nature's Magnificent Flying Machines*

*Did You Hear That? Animals with Super Hearing*

*Shockers of the Sea and Other Electric Animals*

*Super Swimmers: Whales, Dolphins, and Other Mammals of the Sea*

*Who Has More? Who Has Fewer?*

*Who Is Bigger? Who Is Smaller?*

*Wiggle and Waggle*

