

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT WITH KAREN JO SHAPIRO



HOW DID YOU BECOME A WRITER?

I have been writing since I was in second grade when I wrote my first poem: “Mittens, mittens/ don’t fit the kittens/ and I don’t know how/ they’ll fit the cow.”

WHAT WAS THE FIRST BOOK YOU WROTE?

My first published book was *Because I Could Not Stop My Bike and Other Poems*. However, I have been making books since I was in the fourth grade. I even illustrated them, although I do not illustrate my own books now. One of my homemade books was put in my elementary school’s library and could be checked out just like the published ones.

WERE YOU EXCITED TO HAVE YOUR BOOK IN THE LIBRARY?

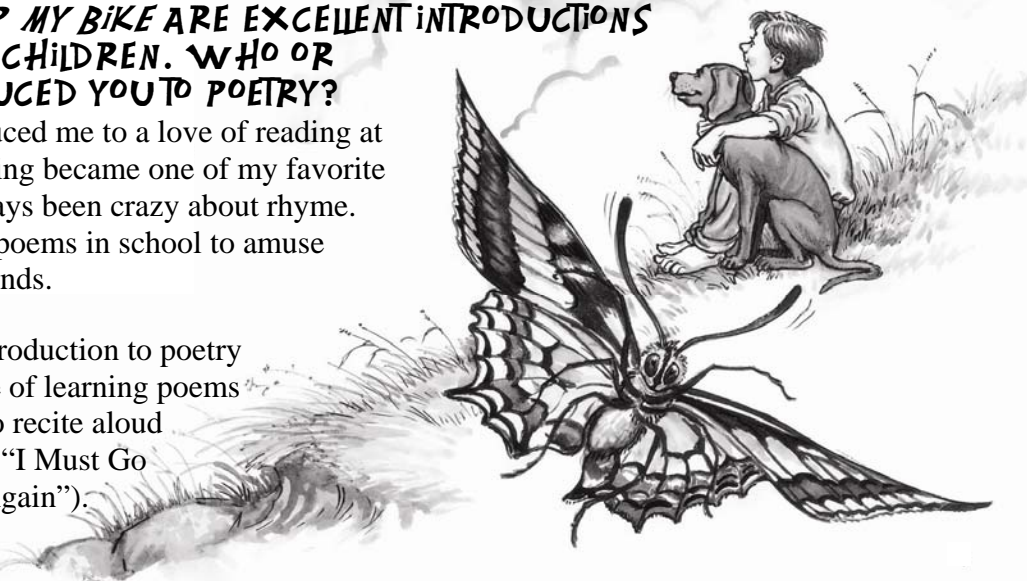
It made me feel special and proud to have my homemade book filed in a real library. It helped me believe in myself as someone who could become a published author. I am grateful to have had such encouraging teachers and a supportive principal. Educators should never doubt the power their heartfelt, encouraging words can have.

I MUST GO DOWN TO THE BEACH AGAIN AND BECAUSE I COULD NOT STOP MY BIKE ARE EXCELLENT INTRODUCTIONS TO POETRY FOR CHILDREN. WHO OR WHAT INTRODUCED YOU TO POETRY?

My parents introduced me to a love of reading at an early age. Reading became one of my favorite pastimes. I’ve always been crazy about rhyme. I often wrote silly poems in school to amuse myself and my friends.

My first formal introduction to poetry was the experience of learning poems in the fifth grade to recite aloud (one of which was “I Must Go Down to the Sea Again”).

I never forgot the poems we learned.



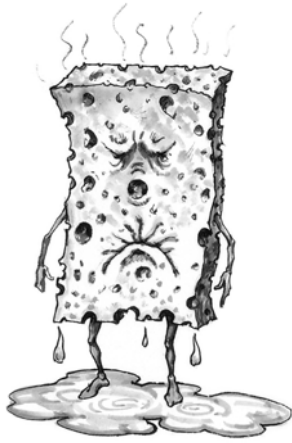
WHY IS IT IMPORTANT FOR CHILDREN TO LEARN ABOUT POETRY?

Writing poems teaches you how to play with words and to have fun with words. When you can do both, you can communicate with others and yourself much better. Some poems are so funny you laugh out loud, and some poems make great drama. Reading and writing poems can also be ways to express difficult and serious feelings.



DO POEMS COME EASILY TO YOU?

In a certain way, writing poems do come easily to me. I usually think up poems much better when I am moving around than when I am sitting at a computer. On the other hand, no matter how easily that first rough draft poem comes out, there's always work involved in polishing it up, editing it, and making it better. Rewriting is often hard work.



WHAT ARE YOUR FAVORITE BOOKS FOR KIDS?

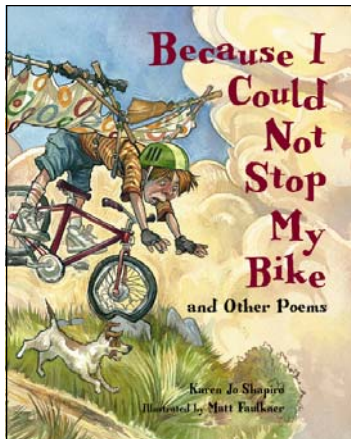
I love *I Had Trouble in Getting to Solla Sollew* by Dr. Seuss—the rhythm, rhyme, and message are awesome! Our family really enjoys reading the *Poppleton* series by Cynthia Rylant. One of my favorite young adult picks is the *Barthimaeus* series by Jonathan Stroud.

DO YOU HAVE ANY ADVICE FOR YOUNG WRITERS?

Spend time with your imagination. You might be surprised the kinds of things you dream up! Ideas can come in all sorts of places. Some writers get their best ideas in the shower. Fall in love with notebooks and paper and keep them around so you can jot down all those wonderful ideas that are coming into your head.

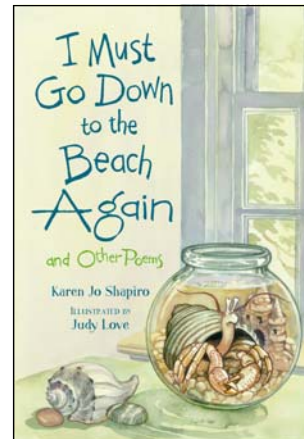
Visit Karen Jo online at www.kjshapiro.com.

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978-1-58089-035-5 HC \$16.95

BOOKS BY KAREN JO SHAPIRO



978-1-58089-144-8 PB \$5.95
978-1-58089-143-1 HC \$14.95

“The book is a gold mine for teachers wanting to illustrate command of certain poetic elements, and Shapiro’s endnotes on her choice of poets and poems are most thoughtful... A book to read again and again, hopefully with copies of the classic versions close by.

—from *School Library Journal*’s review of *I Must Go Down to the Beach Again*