

• Meet the Author •

Carole Boston Weatherford

Interview conducted by Toni Buzzeo, career media specialist and author (visit www.tonibuzzeo.com).

Grades
K-2



Carole Boston Weatherford was born and raised in Baltimore. Since her literary debut with *Juneteenth Jamboree* in 1995, Carole has published more than three dozen books, many of which have received literary honors, including *Moses: When Harriet Tubman Led Her People to Freedom* (2006), illustrated by Kadir Nelson, which won a Caldecott Honor, the Coretta Scott King Award for Illustration, and an NAACP Image Award. *Becoming Billie Holiday* (2008), illustrated by Floyd Cooper, and *Before John Was a Jazz Giant* (2008), illustrated by Sean Qualls, won Coretta

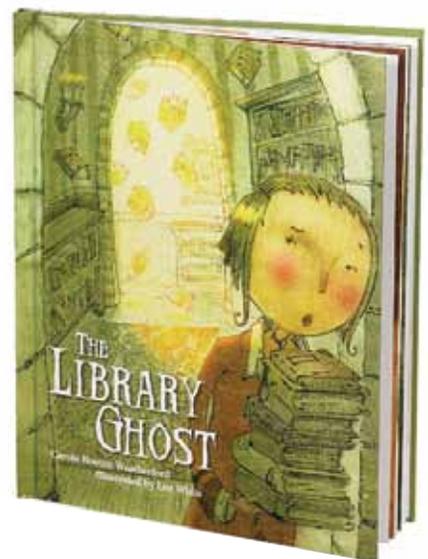
Scott King Honors. In 2007, Carole received the Ragan-Rubin Award from the North Carolina English Teachers Association, and in 2010, she received the North Carolina Award for Literature, the state's highest civilian honor. Carole earned a master of arts in publications design from the University of Baltimore and a master of fine arts from the University of North Carolina-Greensboro. She teaches at Fayetteville State University and lives in Fayetteville, North Carolina.

As I read the dedication in *The Library Ghost*, "To Gloria Johnston, the school librarian who believed in me," I couldn't help but wonder how Gloria Johnston encouraged you. Please tell us about her and your relationship with her.

CBW: She was one of several people who nurtured me at Edgewood Elementary School in Baltimore. First of all, she

was a fashion plate and had a mellifluous storytelling voice that whet my appetite for books. Her library was warm and welcoming, too. With my teachers, she made me feel special because I wrote poetry, played piano, created art and got good grades. She helped me flourish.

What led you to write a picture book about a library ghost? Did it have anything to do with your grandfather, to whom the book is also dedicated,



who believed in ghosts? Do YOU believe in ghosts? Tell us more, please.

CBW: I wanted to write a ghost story, and I wanted to write a book set in a library. So, *The Library Ghost* marries those two ideas. My grandfather claimed that once when he was driving through the mountains, a ghost was in the passenger's seat. I believe in spirits. I'm not sure that I believe in ghosts, but I would not walk through a cemetery at night. I don't like horror films either.

Your author blurb on the dust jacket of *The Library Ghost* tells us that as a child you wanted to be a librarian and even used to catalog your own book collection! Tell us more about this and your young self.

CBW: I did want to be a librarian, probably because I loved books and adored Mrs. Johnston. But I also wanted to be a fashion designer. And for a brief moment, right after college, I did design clothing. Remember, my school librarian had style. I must have been a bit odd as a child. Who catalogs their own books? Well, I cut #10 envelopes in half and glued those pockets in the backs of my books. For each book, I wrote the title and author on a file card that I slid into the pocket. I may have even had a rubber stamp that I used to check out books. Printing was another of my unusual interests. My father was a printing teacher and I

grew up around presses. So printing and publishing were in my blood.

You have published so many different kinds of books in your career, from picture books to poetry to nonfiction. Which do you prefer to write and why?

CBW: I consider poetry to be my first literary language because, as a young writer, poetry was my first mode of creative expression. So whether I'm writing a picture book or a biography, my first inclination is to tell the story in verse. Sometimes, the message overrides that, though. And I end up writing prose because that best expresses the subject matter.

I know you are an oft-published poet and this may have informed your decision to write *The Library Ghost* in rhymed verse. Did you ever consider writing the story in prose? Talk more about that decision, the challenges of rhymed verse, and your books of poetry as well.

CBW: I never even considered writing *The Library Ghost* in prose. I wanted the story to be light and humorous, despite the dark title. The rhyme adds to the fun, I think. Of course, children love rhyme. Many young writers are drawn to rhyme as well. But it's harder to write than they think. Novices end up letting rhyme dictate word choice rather than

the sense of the poem. The challenge is to not let the tail wag the dog.

How can readers learn more about you and your other books?

CBW: Readers can visit me online at <http://cbweatherford.com>. They can also look me up in *Something About the Author* and view my interview on the Reading Rockets site at www.readingrockets.org/books/interviews/weatherford.

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Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is both an author and a career library media specialist. Her credits include the 2013 Caldecott Honor-winning *One Cool Friend among nineteen picture books*, which include *But I Read It on the Internet!* (Upstart, 2013) and *Just Like My Papa* (Hyperion, 2013). She has also authored many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.

