

• Meet the Author •

Myra Wolfe

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

Grades
K-2



Myra Wolfe is the author of the picture book *Charlotte Jane Battles Bedtime* and is an experienced bedtime battler herself. By day, she writes stories and plays with her kids. By night, she bakes treats at the family coffee shop. She doesn't like to ride in boats and she isn't very daring, but she admires pirates and their gusto. Instead of sailing the high seas or swashbuckling with rogues, Myra likes cozy activities like reading, baking cookies, and knitting sweaters for her kids. She is a fan of squooshy chairs, the sound of rain on the roof, wood stoves, and staying up late.

Where did the germ of this story come from? Was it something you heard, saw, or read that inspired you, or did the idea come to you fully formed?

MW: Sometimes a first line comes to me, seemingly out of nowhere, and really clicks with me. Then I can't help but write it down, and the rest of the story often comes easily. That's for a first draft! This story needed a lot of revision, but that's how it started. I was probably thinking of my daughter, who was born with the sunrise, just like Charlotte Jane.

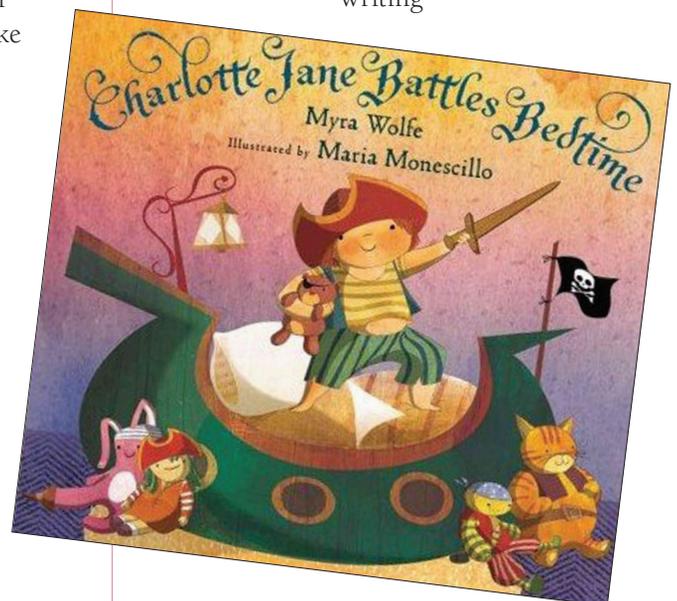
One can't help but ask, were you a pirate when you were a girl? If so, are you still a pirate? Or, since you have children, are you a pirate mom?

MW: I've always been more of a landlubber, although I obviously think there's a lot to love about pirates, especially their fashion sense and fancy way of talking. My kids have been

known to get piratey from time to time, especially during the Portland Pirate Festival.

Charlotte Jane is your first book. How long have you been writing for children? Do you have a Cinderella story about breaking into the children's publishing market?

MW: I first started learning about writing children's books eleven years ago! I used the Internet to learn all I could about how to improve my writing



and about the business end of things too. I wrote a lot of terrible picture book manuscripts, joined an online critique group, and started filling up a folder with rejection letters. I wrote the first draft of *Charlotte Jane* in 2002. Three publishers turned it down before my delightful editor at Harcourt sent me a letter asking me if I'd consider revising. With her patient help, I did, several times, and finally in January 2007—on the day of my tenth wedding anniversary!—I got the amazing, spectacular news that Harcourt wanted to publish the book. I'm one of those people who cries when very happy, and I remember I absolutely sobbed after hanging up the phone.

As with every wonderful picture book, the illustrations in *Charlotte Jane* are a perfect accompaniment to your hilarious text. Did you provide many illustration notes in your text? Which are your favorite illustrations in the text, and why?

MW: I did provide one or two illustration notes, but not many, because of course I knew the illustrator would do his or her own thing—which I couldn't wait to see. I wouldn't want to have dictated the illustrations even if I could have! Maria Monescillo's work absolutely blows me away.

It seems impossible to choose a favorite illustration, but I guess if I have to, I'll

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go with the first one I saw. My editor was kind enough to send me the sample Maria did when she was considering the text, and I will never forget the feeling I got when I opened that file. I swear I nearly passed out. It turned out to be a double-page spread in the book, and it's on the back cover, too. In it, Charlotte Jane is sitting on the edge of her dream-ship, her cutlass upraised. The sky behind her is all glowy and rosy-gold, and the water looks alive. Charlotte Jane's expression is happy and triumphant, and her adorable, fat little legs are swinging, the way a busy and energetic kid's legs do. I can't explain the awesomeness of that spread. It's just pure happiness.

What ideas are you working on right now? Are they all picture books? Are there any other stories bubbling on the back burner and not quite ready to make it to the page yet?

MW: Lots of stories! I'm working on a couple of picture books right now, and I have a draft of a chapter book that needs some revision. Back when I wrote *Charlotte Jane*, my kids were in school, and I didn't work outside the home. Now I have a toddler and a job, so writing time is harder to come by. But there are always stories bubbling.

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Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is both an author and a career library media specialist. Her credits include eighteen picture books, most recently But I Read It on the Internet (UpstartBooks, 2013) and Stay Close to Mama (Hyperion, 2012), as well as many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail Toni at tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.