

• Meet the Author •

Kay Winters



Kay Winters was a classroom teacher, reading specialist, and elementary supervisor before becoming a full-time writer. She served as a Language Arts Consultant for the American International Schools in Egypt, India, Nepal, Italy, Jordan, Israel, and Greece, giving workshops for teachers and children. She loves adventure! She flew over the Himalayas in a small plane, had lunch with a Buddhist lama in Nepal, and went on an elephant trek in Thailand. She writes picture books and chapter books. Several have been translated into multiple languages: Spanish, French, Arabic, and Korean. Eleven of her twelve published books have been reprinted by books clubs. She loves to read, write, do school visits, speak at conferences, eat chocolate, and read fan mail.

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

Please share some of your inspiration for the *Teeny Tiny Ghost* and how it evolved from story to story.

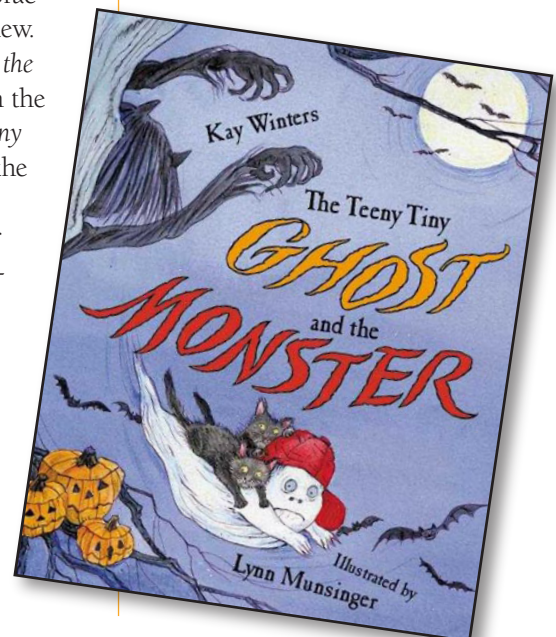
KW: It was almost Halloween. I was rushing down our stairway when suddenly I noticed our dollhouse which sits in the windowsill, half way down the stairs. The furniture was topsy-turvy. Forks and knives were scattered on the floor. A chair was overturned. The Christmas tree was upside down. What's this? I wondered. Maybe a teeny tiny ghost lives in my dollhouse and is playing tricks. And hence the teeny tiny ghost came to life. In each book, the little ghost becomes a teeny tiny bit braver...

"Being brave just takes practice," he thought as he flew. (From *Whooo's Haunting the Teeny Tiny Ghost*) And in the third book, *The Teeny Tiny Ghost and the Monster*, the two black cats help him make a friendly monster and outwit the class bullies—Buster and Wilma.

Even though your characters here are ghosts, they are very childlike and very real. What do you think is the advantage of ghosts, animals, and other creatures standing in for children in children's books?

KW: I think that using ghosts, animals, and other creatures is a little like using puppets in the classroom. Even a shy child will speak up with a puppet. It is somehow easier to identify with someone other than a person. It frees the child.

***The Teeny Tiny Ghost and the Monster* rings with the authenticity of elementary school. I know that you were a teacher for many years. How did**



those career years influence your writing of the *Teeny Tiny Ghost* stories?

KW: From being a teacher and a parent, I knew that young children are often afraid of ghosts and spooky creatures at Halloween. I think there are far too few books, movies, and TV shows that feature a character trying to overcome daily fears. I wanted to write about a character who was learning to be brave.

Buster and Wilma are both bullies, but they operate in very different ways. What do you have to say to children and to teachers about how children should handle bullies? What does *The Teeny Tiny Ghost and the Monster* have to teach children about this challenge?

KW: I am always in favor of finding a peaceful way to outwit bullies. If you respond in kind, you sink to the level of the bully, and no one learns anything. In the contest situation, the teeny tiny ghost won by being creative and thinking outside the box. He did not stoop to revenge.

These stories are written for young children in a way that makes them a treat to read aloud, with frequent rhyme and a perky meter. What attracts you to writing for these young readers and what are the challenges?

KW: I love to play with words. I love to go in and out of rhyme—to avoid monotony or forced rhyme. The challenge of picture

books is that every word counts. I write and rewrite, write and rewrite.

You have written many kinds of books over the years. Tell us about some of the other types of books you've written in addition to the *Teeny Tiny Ghost* stories and how they might be different.

KW: My first book was *Did You See What I Saw? Poems About School*. Those poems came right out of my experience as a student and as a classroom teacher. Many of my books come from my personal experience. I love humor. *My Teacher for President* came from my experiences working in schools. I also wrote that book because I wanted to honor teachers. I have also moved into the area of history. *Abe Lincoln the Boy who Loved Books* was my first biography. Two others are under contract. *Voices of Colonial America* will be out in 2008, and takes place on the day of the

Boston Tea Party. I love being a children's book author because it's such a rich reason to learn. I love to learn!

How can readers learn more about you and your books?

KW: I have a website which tells about my background, my family and my books. It is: www.kaywinters.com.

❖ ❖ ❖

Toni Buzzeo, MA, MLIS, is an author as well as a career library media specialist and member of the Maine Association of School Libraries Executive Board. She is the author of five picture books, most recently Fire Up With Reading! (UpstartBooks, 2007) and Our Librarian Won't Tell Us ANYTHING! A Mrs. Skorupski Story (UpstartBooks, 2006) and many professional books and articles. Visit www.tonibuzzeo.com or e-mail Toni at tonibuzzeo@tonibuzzeo.com.

Books by Kay Winters

- ***Abe Lincoln, The Boy Who Loved Books*. Simon & Schuster, 2003.**
- ***But Mom, Everybody Else Does!* Dutton, 2002.**
- ***Did You See What I Saw? Poems About School*. Viking Penguin, 1996.**
- ***How Will the Easter Bunny Know?* Delacorte Press, 1999.**
- ***My Teacher for President*. Dutton, 2004.**
- ***The Teeny Tiny Ghost and the Monster*. HarperCollins, 2004.**
- ***The Teeny Tiny Ghost*. HarperCollins, 1997.**
- ***Tiger Trail*. Simon & Schuster, 2000.**
- ***Voices of Ancient Egypt*. National Geographic, 2003.**
- ***Whoo's Haunting the Teeny Tiny Ghost*. HarperCollins, 1999.**
- ***Wolf Watch*. Simon & Schuster, 1997.**