

An Interview with Eve Bunting

Author Eve Bunting (EB, below) talks with the editors of Sleeping Bear Press (SBP) about her experience writing The Pirate Captain's Daughter.

SBP: What made you decide to write a book about pirates?

EB: I've been interested in pirates ever since I was a little girl in Ireland and my father read *Treasure Island* to me. Sitting by a turf fire in our kitchen, rain falling outside, it was wonderful to picture the Caribbean, the sunshine, the trade winds . . . and the pirates.

I have always read books about pirates. I cherish my copy of *Treasure Island* with wonderful art by N.C. Wyeth. To me it not only evokes the days of the pirates but the days I spent listening to it and to my father's voice.

SBP: What research did you do for the book?

EB: When the thought came to me to write my very own pirate book I didn't have to look far past my imagination for facts. I have a library built up over the years by my family, who know of my fascination with Blackbeard and Captain Kidd and of course Grace O'Malley, the Irish pirate queen.

SBP: What inspired you to write this particular story?

EB: Perhaps it was Grace O'Malley who really inspired my story, since she set sail with her seafaring father when she was just a young girl and her bravery and skill are renowned. She even at one time went to call on Queen Elizabeth I and was well received.

There were other women who became pirates by the same ruse. Anne Bonny and Mary Reade were two of them. They dressed, fought, and swore like men. Once they even served, well disguised, on the same pirate ship. When they were captured they were sentenced together in Port Royal, Jamaica, and were both reprieved.

SBP: How did you create the character of Catherine?

EB: Because I write books for young people, my protagonist came full-blown as a teenager who "had always wanted to be a pirate." Catherine chopped off her hair, wore men's clothing and managed for quite a while to disguise her true sex so she could be part of her father's crew.

I had to do supplementary research of course when I began the book, so I haunted the Pasadena [California] public libraries. They know me well there and if I'm checking out a lot of pirate books they'll politely inquire, "Doing a pirate book next, Mrs. Bunting?" They are my friends and will gather books for me from all the branch libraries in town and beyond. I use the

Internet also but I do not entirely trust what I read and I find it helpful only when it puts me on track of some fact I may have already missed.

SBP: Can you tell your readers more about the pirate language?

EB: I had fun with the pirate dialogue which, on close examination, probably has a lot of the Irish in it. Many of the pirates were Irish, or English, so I think it all fit together. When I reread my final manuscript I smiled to recognize that some of the words coming out of the pirates' mouths had come out of my father's, "back in the day." If my father filled a glass of water too full and it sloshed on the tablecloth he'd mutter "It was lippin' laggin'," meaning full to the top. Then he might conclude with a hearty "Dogblast!" He certainly would have been surprised if he'd heard a pirate on the *Reprisal* speaking the way he did.

SBP: Are there modern-day pirates?

EB: Unfortunately there are still pirates today plying their trade. They troll the sea and plunder ships, usually cargo vessels and tankers carrying oil. Most of the "hot spots" are off the coast of Somalia in the Indian Ocean. Instead of cannons or cutlasses they carry machine guns and automatic rifles. Instead of sails they use motorboats or fishing craft fitted with power-

ful engines. There is not much gold or many jewels being carried in today's cargo vessels but the pirates will steal whatever they can find—computers, laptops, cell phones, iPods, clothing. In 2005 two heavily armed pirate boats even attacked a cruise ship and tried unsuccessfully to board it. AARG!

“Bad cess to them!” my father would have said.

SBP: Did you enjoy writing *The Pirate Captain's Daughter*?

EB: I so much enjoyed writing this novel. I loved Catherine and William and did not want to let go of them. But all good things must come to an end.

When I do write another pirate story I will have a new book to aid me in my research.

I will have *The Pirate Captain's Daughter*.

A Note to Readers

If you participate in a reading group or book club and want to discuss The Pirate Captain's Daughter, here are some questions to get you started:

1. *The Pirate Captain's Daughter* is a historical novel. Are there any clues in the book that give you an indication of when it took place? [Hint: One clue has to do with a book!]

2. Would you want to have lived during the period in history that *The Pirate Captain's Daughter* takes place? What would you like about it? What would you miss from the present day?

3. If you lived during the time the book took place, do you think you could be a pirate? Could you live under the conditions that Catherine lived?

4. In the book, William finds out Catherine's secret. "I'll not be telling," he says to Catherine, and she trusts him. Are there people in your life who you would trust with a big secret? Are you good at keeping secrets?

5. *The Pirate Captain's Daughter* is a historical novel, a mystery, an adventure story, and a romance. Which are your favorite aspects of the story? What kind of story would *you* want to write?

These are just a few of the many questions that you can think of and try to answer yourself or in discussion with a group of your friends or classmates.