

Author Spotlight with Kathleen Benner Duble



How do you come up with ideas for your stories?

I guess you could say that I am a modern-day pirate of sorts, as most of my stories I have stolen from my family. *Pilot Mom* is about my sister who is a tanker pilot up in Maine. Her unit is called the MAINEiacs because they love to pursue anything that has to do with speed – the faster, the better! They are quite crazy!

What was your sister's reaction to *Pilot Mom*?

Lauren reviewed the book and helped with its accuracy. In the original manuscript, there was a mention of dirty windows on a plane. Lauren informed me that this would never happen in her unit, the MAINEiacs. It was changed.

All of the instances in the book are true. There is a lucky silver dollar that my father gave to my sister. My sister took her pilot's test and got her wings. She wanted to fly fighter jets, but back then, women were not allowed in combat, so she became a tanker pilot. But, in essence, they were in combat. It's a dangerous job. My sister once said to me, "If you had your choice whether you were going to shoot down fighter jets or the tanker that keeps refueling those jets, which would you choose?" Today, women can fly fighter jets.

The story about Major Strom [the mom in *Pilot Mom*] getting no response for landing coordinates from the tower while flying in Saudi Arabia actually happened to my sister. When I showed this book to schoolchildren I asked them if they knew why the tower didn't answer Major Strom. They had a lot of good answers like, "They ran away," "The tower got bombed," and "They don't speak English," but none of them guessed it's because Major Strom is a woman. Even boys catch their breath and can't believe it. I think this shows there's less of a wall here now in the U.S. for women.

Did you ever consider becoming a pilot like your sister?

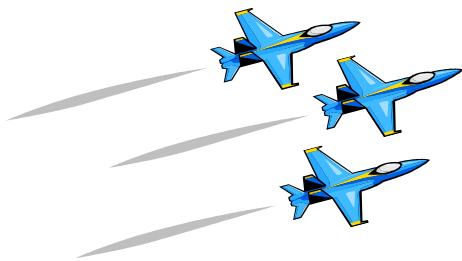
My father and my sister are the techies. I was always more creative. I had sixteen fender benders before I was twenty. My father couldn't believe it.

My mother quit college to marry, but went back later. I was very proud of her. She instilled in us the importance of education and learning. At Miami University I was a creative writing major as well as an international business major. I also had a minor in French. This is what I want to pass on to my own girls: that learning is a privilege.

You see a lot of Iraqi kids being interviewed on TV, and reporters ask them what they want after the war. They say, "to be able to go back to school."

Pilot Mom has a strong message about equality for women. Did you intend for the book to have this effect? What do you hope readers will get out of it?

In every book I have written, there is always a strong woman protagonist. My mother was a labor negotiator for the steel industry, and from a very early age she taught my two sisters and me that we could do anything we wanted if we worked hard enough at it. I hope my readers will understand the strength of women and their ability to do anything they pursue with determination.



What made you want to be a children’s book author? What age range do you enjoy writing for the most?

I always loved writing, but when I had children of my own, I discovered a passion for books for young readers. My favorite ages to write for is five to fourteen. The days when my girls were that age were some of the very best times of my life.

Do you ever feel like you’ve run out of ideas for your stories? Do you have any tips for aspiring writers to overcome the dreaded “writer’s block”?

I have never run out of ideas. My problem tends to be finding the time to do all the stories I’d like to. However, I often get stuck in the middle of a manuscript, and the work slows to a crawl. When that happens, I make myself write at least a page a day – whether it’s good or not. And I keep at that each day until eventually I have a breakthrough, and the work starts flowing easily again.

If you weren’t a writer, what would you be?

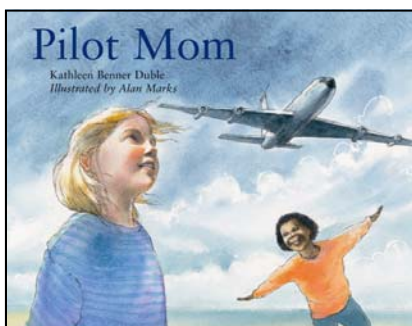
I’d either be a world-class violinist or a rock star. But it’s a good thing that I’m a writer, as I have no real talent for becoming a musician! I have been taking violin lessons for seven years, and I still sound just terrible!

You keep your schedule filled with school visits. What is the funniest thing a student has ever said to you?

Before I was published, I went in to talk to my daughter’s class about writing. One of my daughter’s classmates came up to me after my talk, leaned in, and whispered in my ear, “Keep on trying, Mrs. Duble. I am sure you will be an author one day.” It was funny to get encouragement from a fourth grader. But you know what? He was right!

To learn more about Kathleen Benner Duble, visit her online at www.kathleenduble.com.

Books by Kathleen Benner Duble

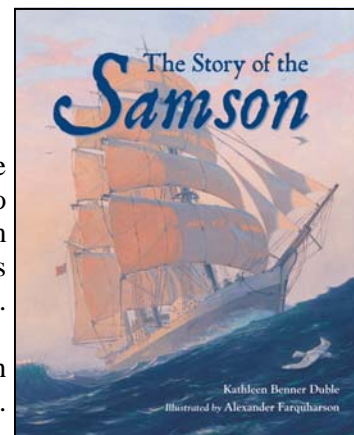


978-1-57091-555-0 HC \$15.95

Pilot Mom tells the story of young Jenny whose mother is a tanker pilot in the Air Force. Major Strom is preparing for a two-week training mission in Europe. Jenny is proud of her mom, but worries about her and wonders if her mom likes flying better than being her mom.

Sam and his grandpa relive the *Samson's* adventures on the high seas. Kathleen Benner Duble uses actual events to weave a tale about the *Samson* and its many voyages, from witnessing the *Titanic's* demise to the rescue of Shackelton's men, to an appearance at the 1933 Chicago World's Fair.

A mix of sepia tones and lush watercolors places readers on the high seas at the helm of adventure.



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