

INTERVIEW WITH JULIE OLSON

1. Tell us about your new book *Discover America*.

Discover America: From Sea to Shining Sea is an inspirational patriotic story set to the words of America the Beautiful. It follows a little red balloon across this great country, seen through the eyes of the children of America. And beyond the book, the educational part of the experience extends online, where people can launch their own virtual balloon and much more at DiscoverAmericaBook.com

2. What inspired you to make a career in illustration?

From age two, when I was caught doodling circles in ballpoint pen all along my mother's walls, I have always loved to draw. I wasn't always the best artist in class, but I worked hard and practiced. I also loved stories. My dad would read us kids Mark Twain's words and use all the right accents and expressions. I finally realized that expressing a story through pictures was truly my calling.

3. Are there any artists or illustrators that had a particular influence on your work?

I love the art of Hilary Knight (who illustrated *Mrs. Piggle Wiggle* and *Eloise*). I also admire David Small's expressive line work and Helen Oxenbury's sensibility. Holly Hobbie's watercolors and storytelling ability make my jaw drop. And the honesty and craft of Erin and Philip Stead's work make me want to stay true to craft.

4. What advice would you give to young artists interested in illustration?

The best advice I can give to young AND old artists alike is PRACTICE, PRACTICE, PRACTICE! I am still practicing, learn-

ing, growing, changing and hope I always will be. If you don't use your skills you lose your skills, so use them. Then develop them further and keep on developing them your whole life through. I always am hoping my next book is better than the last. I always am trying to learn and grow and make better art.

5. Any upcoming projects we should keep our eyes out for?

Well one in particular, watch for my 3 original works of art coming soon to hang in the Orem Library Children's wing. I'm excited to work on that. I've been sketching out ideas and can't wait to start. Other than that, I am currently working on a picture book that is near and dear to my heart, which I hope a publisher decides to make into a book for the shelves very soon. Cross your fingers for me. Oh and if *Discover America: From Sea to Shining Sea* does well enough, I've already got the sequel planned and ready to put into production. So if you like this first book, get the word out so we can make another patriotic adventure with another twist.

