



Boston Authors Club

April 2019 Newsletter

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In This Issue

- *Chasing Augustus* by Kimberly Newton Fusco
- BAC May 14 Program Preview
- Author! Author! BAC Member News
- Yesteryear at the BAC: Julia Seeking a Book Blurb

Featured Author: Kimberly Newton Fusco



Kimberly Newton Fusco is the author of *Tending to Grace* (Laurel Leaf), *Beholding Bee* (Yearling), *The Daring Escape of Beatrice and Peabody* (Faber & Faber), and *The Wonder of Charlie Anne* (Yearling). Her most recent novel, *Chasing Augustus* (Knopf Books for Young Readers) was honored as a Julia Ward Howe Finalist. *Chasing Augustus* is the story of Rosie, a girl whose world was just turned upside down, and her adventure to find her lost dog.

In this interview, Kimberly reflects on her writing experience over the years, including how her love of reading turned into a passion for writing, her method for creating compelling characters, and a small glimpse into her upcoming work.

Q: On your website, you mention that you've known you wanted to be a writer since you were in sixth grade. Looking back, was there any advice you got along the way that kept you on track or inspired you and that you would want other young, aspiring writers to know?

A: I was a young person who stuttered, and speaking

was very difficult for me and I tried to make myself invisible. I was teased and some people didn't expect much of me, and I pretended it didn't matter. The miracle I found was books! I found characters who could survive, no matter what hurdles stood in the way, and I started wondering if I could be strong like that.

When you read as much as I did, sometimes you want to write. And the amazing thing I discovered in sixth grade was that when I let my pen do the talking for me, I was filled with joy. For the first time, I had a voice, and there was no stopping me. I wrote constantly and teachers encouraged me and showed me that stuttering didn't have to determine my destiny. I could choose my future, and I chose writing.

And that's what I share with students today: That we all have great potential and it's up to us to reach for the life we want.



Q: Have you integrated your work as an education writer and editor, focusing on children who face adversity, into your children's books? And are there any other parts of your life that you see reflected in your work?

A: As an education writer for the Worcester Telegram, I wrote about the powerless (children living in poverty), and the powerful (the adults who made the decisions that ruled these kids' lives.) As a student at Columbia University's Graduate School of Journalism, we were taught that one of the jobs of journalists is to shine light on the afflicted and marginalized. I am still writing about kids like that: young people who face mountains of adversity and need just a little help to become all they can be.

Q: Chasing Augustus features compelling and complex characters. Could you describe how you go about creating your characters and bringing them to life on the page?

A: I build my characters in layers and when I'm starting out it's almost as if I see them down a country road, but they keep slipping away around the next corner. I write pages of stream-of-consciousness "voice" for each character, and then lots of poetry to dig into their deepest emotions. I write many drafts, often throwing out four chapters for each one I keep. As my characters come into focus, I put myself into their shoes and become them as much as I can. It's a long process. Chasing Augustus took four years to write.

Q: Every book leaves an impression upon each child that reads it. Are there particular ideas regarding family, friends, or the readers themselves that you hope readers will take away from Chasing Augustus?

A: Rosie's lived a charmed life up to the age of eleven. Her mom may have left for a new life when she was a baby, but her dad has been everything. But then things turn upside down: her dad has a stroke and her mom gives her dog away and she has to move in with her grandpa. And so – with the help of some new (and sometimes annoying friends) Rosie begins her quest to find her dog, Augustus. What I'd like children to see is that families can be formed in all sorts of ways – and that despite everything that's happened Rosie has the power to decide if she's going to press on.

Q: How would you say your writing has grown from your first novel, Tending to Grace, to this current one? Has anything become easier? More difficult?

A: I am now writing about characters who are completely unlike the child I was at that age. Tending to Grace, which received the American Library Association's Schneider Family Book Award, was about a young girl who stutters. Chasing Augustus is about a bold and prickly and unstoppable girl who isn't afraid to show the world how smart she is and to fight for what she loves most – her dog, Augustus.

Now that my four children are in college or beyond, I have more writing time. And I try and remember the late poet Jane Kenyon who advises: "Be a good steward of your gifts. Protect your time. Feed your inner life. Avoid too much noise. Read good books, have good sentences in your ears. Be by yourself as often as you can. Walk. Take the phone off the hook. Work regular hours."

Q: Like your young readers, we're all very eager to see what comes next! Could you share whether there are any new book ideas underway?

A: My next novel for Knopf is due on my editor's desk June 1. I can't say too much, but my goal (as it is with all my books) is to write a book that children love so much that when they finish, they immediately turn back to page one and start all over again. That's what I would do when I fell head-over-heels in love with a great book!

Interview by Sara Stanton

So You Want to Write a Children's Book? BAC's May 14 Program Is for You!

Join bookstore owner, host, and author/illustrator Peter Reyonolds and Boston Authors Club authors Nancy Tupper Ling, Padma Venkatraman, Susan Lynn Meyer at The Blue Bunny Bookstore in Dedham on Tuesday, May 14 for a lively and informative discussion.

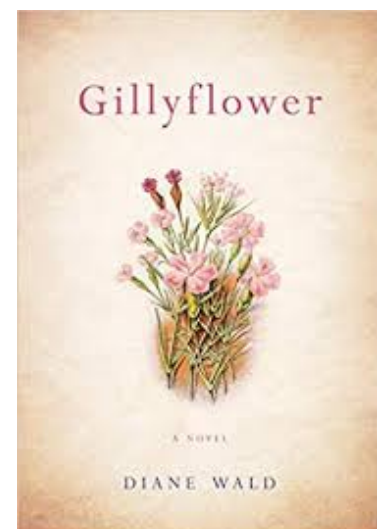
authors!
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News About BAC Authors

Gillyflower, Diane Wald's New Novel Will Debut on April 16

There will be a book launch/reading in Boston at the Trident Books Cafe on April 27 – all are invited! For more information visit:

➤ <https://www.tridentbookscafe.com/event/diane-wald-author-gillyflower->



The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month. Please send news about your activities, speaking, and new books (along with related pictures) to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by April 26 for publication in the May 2019 newsletter.

Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery Julia Ward Howe Seeking a Book Blurb

While browsing the Daniel Coit Gilman archive at Johns Hopkins I ran across a letter from Julia Ward Howe to Gilman. The letter is dated "Oct. 21.03" and was written from "241 Beacon St. Boston, Mass." At the time, Gilman was the President of Johns Hopkins University.

Howe's letter seeks Gilman's endorsement for a book "...prepared by two of my daughters Mrs. Florence Howe Hall and Mrs. Maud Howe Elliot." The title of the book is *Laura Bridgman, Dr. Howe's famous pupil, and what he taught her*. It was published in Boston by Little Brown & Co. in 1903. According to WorldCat there are copies at Boston College, Harvard's Countway Library, Simmons College, and the Boston Athenaeum.

Dr. Howe is Samuel Gridley Howe, Julia's husband. Samuel Howe was a founder of the Perkins School along with Thomas Handasyd Perkins and Dr. John Dix Fisher and was also its first director, serving from the opening of the school in 1832 until his death in 1876. Laura Bridgman is, in Julia's words, "...the first blind deaf mute who ever attained the use of language." There is a page on the Perkins School website devoted to Bridgman: <https://www.perkins.org/history/people/laura-bridgman>.



The book is 394 pages long. In the scan I downloaded from the Internet Archive there is no endorsement by Gilman but in the Appendix there is an Introductory Note by G. Stanley Hall, a professor of psychology and pedagogics at Johns Hopkins so perhaps Gilman passed the Julia's request on to him. In his note, Hall writes that he had intended to write a book about Howe and Bridgman based on Howe's reports but only finished the introductory chapter (strangely titled "Aspects of German Culture") before passing the work on to one of his graduate students, Edmund C. Sanford, who did indeed co-author a pamphlet with Hall, *The Writings of Laura Bridgman*, published in 1887.

Digital Commonwealth contains an significant amount of addition information (including photographs, prints, and digitized scrapbooks) about Bridgman as well as details of Howe's successful treatment regimen. <https://www.digitalcommonwealth.org/collections/commonwealth:xd07m448t>

One More 2019 Membership Reminder!

Full membership dues are \$50 annually and Associate memberships are \$25 annually for the calendar year. If you renew or join any time during 2019, you will be a paid up member through December 2019. You can join and renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:

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