



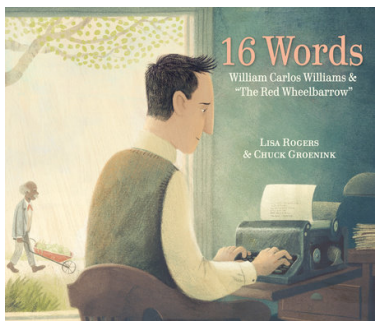
*Boston Authors Club*

## February 2021 Newsletter

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### Featured Interview: Lisa Rogers



***16 Words: William Carlos Williams and "The Red Wheelbarrow" by Lisa Rogers won the Julia Ward Howe Young Readers Award in 2020. In this interview, Lisa talks about her path to becoming a children's book author, shares the inside story of the research and publication that led to 16 Words, her outreach to young readers during COVID, and her latest work.***

***Q: Your success as a children's author is the most recent milestone in a career path that includes being a journalist, a librarian, and a teacher. Was writing for children one of your goals from the start?***

During my career as an elementary school librarian and teacher, I became enthralled with the beauty and complexity of children's books, especially picture book biographies. As a child, I soaked in folktales, fairytales and poetry. I did not ever think about the creators behind the stories I read and the illustrations I savored. I wrote a few early poems. Louise Fitzhugh's *Harriet the Spy* inspired me to write more. I found a notebook and wrote my observations in all capital letters, just like Harriet.

As a teen, my first job was to shelve books in a library. I envisioned having a book on the shelves with my name on it. Our tiny library's fiction section consisted mostly of books by male authors, just one or two of them with Italian last names like mine. I couldn't see how I could ever fit into that canon, and put my dream away. When it reemerged, I knew I wanted to write for children.

***Q: Do you recall any early career experiences that contributed to your inspiration for children's book writing?***

The school where I was librarian hosted authors like Ashley Bryan and Patricia Polacco. My local independent bookstore, Wellesley Books, offers authors to schools, and when they were good fits for our students, I jumped at the opportunity.

I didn't expect that in addition to benefiting my students, I would learn so much — from authors like Jerry Spinelli, Rebecca Stead, Sharon Creech, Lauren Wolk, and Gregory Maguire. Informed and inspired by those personal interactions, combined with reading and appreciating thousands of children's books, I decided to try to write a children's book.

**Q: An early working title for *16 Words: William Carlos Williams and "The Red Wheelbarrow"* was *Mr. Marshall's Red Wheelbarrow*. Could you tell us how long you worked on this book and how the framing evolved from start to the final version?**

When I learned in July 2015 of the wheelbarrow's owner, I immediately knew the heart of the story I must write, but didn't dare begin. I wanted to honor Thaddeus Marshall with beautiful words. Research revealed the striking intersections in Marshall's and Williams' lives. I began to write a parallel story, by hand, in my little notebook., I researched thoroughly and added just a bit more. With that structure and the barest of words, I sent the manuscript to an agent. She asked me to say more about the two men without affecting the spareness of the piece. I wasn't sure how, but did my best. Just before this manuscript won the Susan P. Bloom Discovery Award in March 2016, I accepted the agent's offer of representation; she sent out the manuscript that month. I was incredibly fortunate that it was picked up right away. My wonderful editor, Anne Schwartz, gently helped me tell even more of the story and suggested adding the poem at the end. The structure, though, did not change. In April 2018, my editor and I consulted on the title. I had wondered whether my selection was the right one. I think her carefully-considered choice was brilliant. It's intriguing, makes a connection to the poem and poet, and emphasizes how just a few words can be meaningful. Chuck Groenink's illustrations captured the tone and created something beautiful. I am proud to honor Thaddeus Marshall with this book.

**Q: Shifting gears to 2021 and beyond, are you continuing to give book talks and promote your work online in the midst of COVID?**

Sharing literature with children brings me joy, whatever the venue. I hope to inspire them to think of themselves as creators. My latest book, *Hound Won't Go*, inspired by my stubborn pup, came out just when everything shut down, so I'm practiced at online presentations. This month, I looked forward to spending **World Read Aloud Day** with five classrooms from Maine to Indiana and loved every minute.

**Q: Do you have a new work in progress, or near completion? If so, could you tell us more about those?**

I have two poems in a forthcoming children's anthology and many manuscripts I'd love to share with the world. Several are about to go out on submission, and I hope to be able to share some good news soon!

*Interview by Mary Cronin*

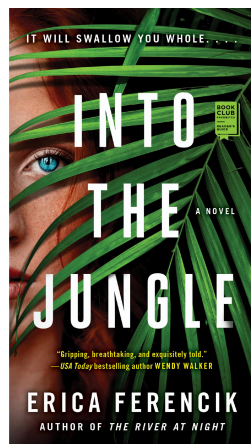
## Kate Farrell Joins the BAC Board

**Welcome** to Kate Farrell, a new BAC Board member. Kate is currently a, M.A. student at Tufts University's Eliot-Pearson Department of Child Study and Human Development as well as the the director of Marketing and Public Relations at Familius. She got her start in the industry when she spent seven years diving deep into book-to-film communities as co-administrator of a *Hunger Games* fansite. Kate also worked for the 24th Annual Screen Actors Guild Awards®



authors!  
AUTHORS!

## News from BAC Members



Tracy Geary is happy to report that her collection *The*

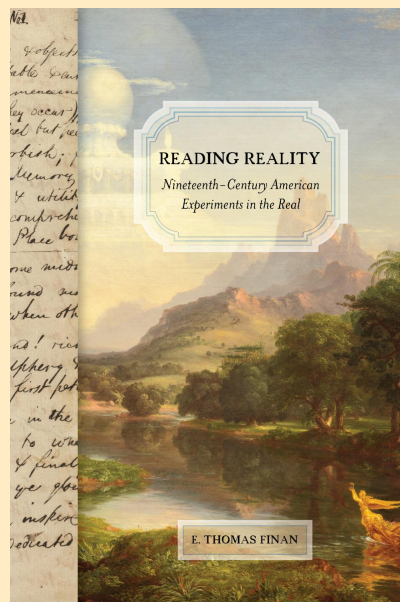
The Pocket Books edition of Erica Ferencik's *Into the Jungle* was released in January 2021. Erica welcomes us all to "**Pick it up, read it, just try to survive it!**"

*Language of Bees* was selected as a semi-finalist from over 900 entries in the Black Lawrence Press **Black River Chapbook Competition.**



Thomas Finan's new book, *Reading Reality: Nineteenth-Century American Experiments in the Real*, is published by University of Virginia Press. It reflects on the experience of reading through analysis of the works of Ralph Waldo Emerson, Walt Whitman, Emily Dickinson, and others.

: <https://www.upress.virginia.edu/title/5281>



## President's Note

*I've been spending a lot of time looking at and thinking about old books lately.*

Elaine Goodale Eastman, and Ohiyesa (Charles Alexander Eastman), the subjects of my next book, wrote a lot of books, themselves. Between them, they published nineteen. Elaine's books included early volumes of poetry (she and one of her sisters achieved fame as children as "the poetic geniuses of Sky Farm,") books of Native American folktales, novels which she self-deprecatingly referred to as "pot-boilers" written for money, an autobiographical account, and a serious biography of Indian education reformer Richard Henry Pratt. Charles' books included several books of re-told Indian folktales, a book on scouting, two autobiographical works and a book on Indian policy. Charles is still considered one of the best-known Native American writers; Elaine's works have been all but forgotten.



As biographers, we try to utilize whatever sources we can. Diaries, journals, and letters are fantastic primary sources but we don't always have them. And in the case of the Eastmans, Elaine significantly curated the documents she left behind and Charles left very few, at all. So part of what I've needed to do to try to get inside the heads of my long-dead subjects as best as I can is to read what they published.

So that's where the old books come into play. Some of their books are still in print, but many are not. This has led me on internet journeys to find the few books of theirs that have been digitized (thankfully I have access to a good university library!), and to sellers of old books to try to find what's not online.

There's a lot to be learned not only from reading these books, but also just from holding them. Elaine's second to last book, *The Voice at Eve*, published in 1930, had a run of just 225 copies of the first edition. I have one of them. On one of the first pages, I found that the book was "printed on India Utopian paper." Even 91 years later, the paper hasn't crumbled; it's yellowed but you can tell that the quality was excellent. Elaine knew that this was likely to be one of her final books and she clearly went to great lengths to make sure that it would last.

My copy of Charles' *The Soul of the Indian*, published in 1911, has a photo of Charles on the frontispiece. It's an artistic shot of him from the chest up. He's not wearing a shirt; he is wearing a feathered



headdress. As a Sioux educated at Dartmouth and BU Medical School, Charles lived a life between cultures, and the photos of him similarly crossed cultures – sometimes he's wearing a Victorian coat and tie, sometimes a headdress and fringed buckskin. This book, an exploration of some tribal philosophies and practices, was clearly an effort to "translate" Native American life for Euro-Americans. The artsy photo in this book goes along with the effort.

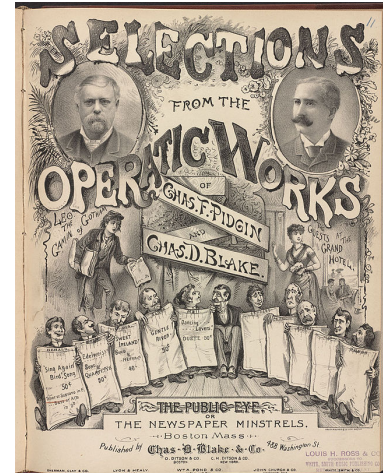
So, my fellow book lovers, in these days when so many of us read or listen to our books, I urge you to not completely forego the pleasures of holding a book in your hands. Books' presence and being can tell us a lot, sometimes even things that their content does not.

Julie Dobrow  
BAC President

## Yesteryear at the BAC by Scott Guthery A Most Inventive Author

***The electro-mechanical computer was invented by a member of the Boston Authors Club. This little-remembered author and inventor, Charles Felton Pidgin lived from 1844 to 1923.***

***Pidgin's biography --- literary and computational --- is found in Chapter XV of Helen Winslow's Literary Boston Today. He is listed in the BAC membership list at the end of the second volume of Boston Authors Now and Then. According to the history of computing website ([history-of-computing.com](http://history-of-computing.com)) Pidgin's machine "was probably the first patented electro-mechanical calculating machine in the world."***



Pidgin worked in the Massachusetts Bureau of Statistics. Winslow writes "The State census of 1885 was the first in which punched cards were ever used." Herman Hollerith tested the punched card machine for which he became famous two years later in a Baltimore census. Hollerith went on to found the company that became IBM. Pidgin went on to write sixteen novels, two comic operas (one based on *Peck's Bad Boy*—see illustration above), many poems, the libretto of a cantata, popular songs, and the go-to book on statistics of the day, *Practical Statistics: A Handbook for the Use of the Statistician at Work*. There's a career lesson here but I'm not sure what it is.

Pidgin had over ten patents, only a few of which were about his computing machines. Adding dialog to movies was a pressing technical challenge in the early twentieth century and Pidgin was granted two patents (US 1,240,774 and US 1,317,725) that addressed this challenge. Both of them described ways to display the words that the actors were saying as overlays on the motion picture. Needless to say, the film industry went in another direction.

There is an old shaggy-dog story about an uncle who was forever close but never quite hooked the golden ring. Among other ill-fated ventures, this mythical family member wrote a book titled *Catch-21* and invented a soft drink called Six-Up. Charles Felton Pidgin must have been like that. So was another Boston inventor, Charles T. Jackson. Jackson became bitter about not achieving the fame he thought he was due. Reflecting on the breadth of his accomplishments, I like to think that Charles Pidgin just went happily about doing whatever he liked to do and didn't fret about chasing either fame or fortune.

## Authors and Readings Online in February and March at An Unlikely Story

Don't let the winter weather get between you and a great literary evening! Thanks to An Unlikely Story Bookstore for sharing this treasure trove of free upcoming presentations. Just click on the links below to register.

**Amanda Lovelace in conversation with Parker Lee  
Live on Crowdcast on Tuesday, January 26<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

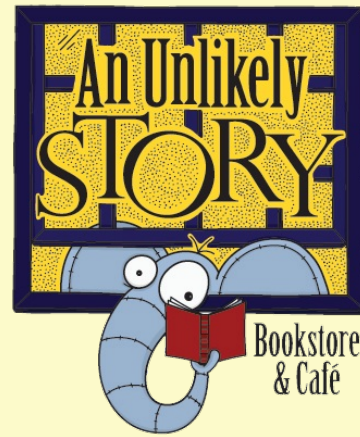
Amanda Lovelace, the bestselling and award-winning author of the *Women Are Some Kind of Magic* series, launches the second installment in her new feminist poetry series *You Are Your Own Fairy Tale*, called *Shine Your Icy Crown*. In a virtual event moderated by her partner and pro-wrestler-turned-poet Parker Lee, Amanda will

read from her new poetry collection, share what inspires her, and answer audience questions. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lovelace](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lovelace)

**Alan Gratz**

**Live on Crowdcast on Thursday, February 5<sup>th</sup> at 10am**

An Unlikely Story Bookstore welcomes Alan Gratz, master storyteller and New York Times bestselling author, for his sole tour stop in Massachusetts to introduce his eagerly-anticipated new middle grade novel, *Ground Zero!* Alan has written another pulse-pounding and unforgettable take on history and hope, revenge and fear -- and the stunning links between the past and present in time for the twentieth anniversary of 9/11. Alan's breathtaking presentation is perfect for parents, educators, and students ages 9-12. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/alan-gratz](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/alan-gratz)



**Judd Winick in conversation with Jeff Kinney**

**Live on Crowdcast on Friday, February 12<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Judd Winick, creator of the award-winning *Hilo* series, joins Jeff Kinney to introduce his latest book in the series, *Hilo 7: Gina, The Girl Who Broke the World*. *Hilo* is a smash hit, and in this newest entry in the series, Hilo and DJ's best friend and reader favorite Gina is discovering her own magical powers! Judd and Jeff will talk about all things *Hilo*, creating graphic novels, and answer fans questions. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/judd-winick](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/judd-winick)

**Jen Petro-Roy in conversation with Katherine Applegate**

**Live on Crowdcast on Tuesday, February 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Join Massachusetts author Jen Petro-Roy in a virtual event where she launches her new middle grade novel, *Life In The Balance*, about a young girl who struggles to balance her hobbies, family, and social life in a beautifully written, heartfelt, relatable novel. Joining Jen is Newbery Medal-winning author Katherine Applegate (*The One and Only Ivan*). Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/petro-roy](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/petro-roy)

**Velvia D. Norman and Geovanni Livingston**

**Live on Crowdcast on Wednesday, February 17<sup>th</sup> at 1pm**

While you're home resting over February vacation, tune in to a live storytime presentation of picture book *Yes, I Can See* with the author Velvia D. Norman and illustrator Geovanni Livingston. *Yes, I Can See* is the first book of a series of five picture books that features vivid, A through Z illustrations of the five senses, and will inspire children on their journey to literacy. During the event Velvia will read her book, followed by a drawing demonstration from Geovanni. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/velvia-geovanni](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/velvia-geovanni)

**Lisi Harrison**

**Live on Crowdcast on Monday, February 22<sup>nd</sup> at 7pm**

Lisi Harrison, bestselling author of *The Clique* series, joins An Unlikely Story Bookstore for a virtual event to introduce her funny and heartfelt, middle grade book, *Girl Stuff*, about three seventh graders tackling new experiences, crushes, and the bonds of friendship. Tweens will adore this fun, coming-of-age story. During the event, Lisi will share a special *Girl Stuff* presentation, answer questions, and host an interactive *Girl Stuff* quiz. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lisi-harrison](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lisi-harrison)

**Rio Cortez and Lauren Semmer**

**Live on Crowdcast on Sunday, February 21<sup>st</sup> at 4pm**

An Unlikely Story Bookstore welcomes Rio Cortez and Lauren Semmer to celebrate their picture book, *THE ABCs OF BLACK HISTORY*, a beautiful representation of the ideas and personalities that embody a wide range of Black people, experiences, and ideas in lively verse matched with vivid imagery. Rio and Lauren will talk about their book, take audience questions, and Lauren will conduct a drawing demonstration. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/cortez-semmer](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/cortez-semmer)

**Megan Wagner Lloyd and Michelle Mee Nutter in conversation with Jeff Kinney**

**Live on Crowdcast on Thursday, March 4<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

In a virtual event all pet lovers will enjoy, author Megan Wagner Lloyd and illustrator Michelle Mee Nutter join An Unlikely Story Bookstore to share their new middle grade graphic novel, *Allergic*, a coming-of-age story about a girl with severe allergies trying to find the perfect pet. *Allergic* is a heartfelt story of family, friendship, and finding a place to belong. Megan and Michelle will be in conversation with [Diary of a Wimpy Kid](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lloyd-nutter) author Jeff Kinney. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lloyd-nutter](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/lloyd-nutter)

**Marie Bostwick**

**Live on Crowdcast on Monday, March 8<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

Beloved author Marie Bostwick, bestselling author of *Second Sister*, which became a 2018 Hallmark Hall of Fame movie called *Christmas Everlasting*, is joining us to share her new feel-good and witty novel, *The Restoration Of Celia Fairchild*, about a fired advice columnist who discovers lost and found family members while renovating her late, estranged aunts house in Charlestown. During the virtual event Marie will discuss her new book and answer audience questions. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/marie-bostwick](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/marie-bostwick)

**Kirsti Call and Brandon Scott James**

**Live on Crowdcast on Tuesday, March 16<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

What does the cow say? Local author Kirsti Call and award-winning illustrator Brandon James Scott will tell you in a hilarious virtual storytime event to celebrate the launch of their new peep-and-see book, *Cow Says Meow*. With bold graphic art, funny wordplay, and unique cover cut-outs, *Cow Says Meow* will make readers laugh-out-loud. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/cowsaysmeow](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/cowsaysmeow)

**Constance Sayers**

**Live on Crowdcast on Thursday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at 7pm**

From Pushcart Prize nominee, Constance Sayers, comes a magical new story spanning from the Jazz Age of Paris to modern-day America. *The Ladies of the Secret Circus* follows a young woman whose fiancé has mysteriously disappeared on their wedding day. Her desperate search for answers leads her to her great grandmother's journal and a story of a dark circus and a curse that's been claiming payment from the women in her family for generations. During the virtual event Constance will discuss the inspiration of her new historical, supernatural novel and answer audience questions. Sign up for free at [www.anunlikelystory.com/event/constance-sayers](http://www.anunlikelystory.com/event/constance-sayers)

THANKS TO AN UNLIKELY STORY FOR SHARING THEIR EVENT CALENDAR. THE BAC WELCOMES EVENT LISTINGS FROM LOCAL INDEPENDENT BOOKSTORES

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