



Boston Authors Club

January 2024 News

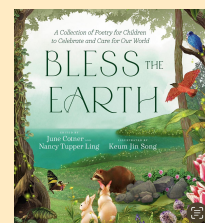
Author Spotlight Issue

**Publications, News, and Events from BAC Authors
PLUS**

**President's Note: Thoughts for a New Year
Yesteryear: Kate Wiggin Beyond Sunnybrook Farm**

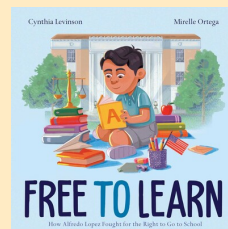
***Bless the Earth* by Nancy Ling**

Nancy Tupper Ling, BAC Board Member, poet, and award-winning children's author, is excited to share the cover art for *Bless the Earth: A Children's Book of Prayers and Poems Honoring the Earth* (Penguin/Convergent), her forthcoming anthology co-authored with June Cotner and illustrated by Keum Jin Song. Publication is scheduled for early April 2024.



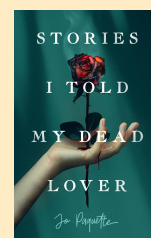
***Free to Learn* by Cynthia Levinson**

BAC Board member **Cynthia Levinson** shares that her latest historical nonfiction picture book, *Free to Learn: How Alfredo Lopez Fought for The Right To Go To School*, is coming out in April from Atheneum/Simon & Schuster. It's about the Supreme Court case that ruled that public schools have to educate undocumented kids.



***Stories I Told My Dead Lover* by Ammi-Joan Paquette**

Ammi-Joan Paquette is celebrating the forthcoming publication of her debut book for adults, a dark short story collection from Blackstone Publishing entitled *Stories I Told My Dead Lover*. The scheduled publication date is June 11, 2024. Stay tuned for information about June launch events in future BAC newsletters this spring. For book details, and more about Ammi-Joan, click [here](#).



Like a Mother Bear by Mary E. Cronin

Poet and educator **Mary E. Cronin**, an honoree in BAC's 2020 children's book Discovery Award contest, is excited to let everyone know that her contest entry, *Like a Mother Bear*, will be published by Atheneum/Simon & Schuster. Publication of Mary's debut picture book, with illustrations by J Yang, is scheduled for spring 2027; Lori Steel at Red Fox Literary represented the author.



In sharing her good news, Mary gives a special thanks to Heather Lang, one of the Discovery Award judges back in 2020 who provided "wonderful feedback and advice" on her contest manuscript. *(In adding my own congratulations to Mary E., I'll note that your newsletter editor is Mary J. Cronin – and we are not related except by way of our BAC membership!)*

Pizza for Pia by Betsy Groban

Betsy Groban, a new BAC member who looks forward to meeting her BAC colleagues in 2024, is celebrating the planned publication of her first book for kids, *Pizza for Pia*, by Simon & Schuster, on May 7, 2024.



Betsy notes that she was the publisher of books for young readers at the company formerly known as HMH for many years so that authoring her own children's book is particularly meaningful. And she shares the fun fact that while *Pizza for Pia* is an early reader work of fiction, her oldest grandchild is called Pia.

Wombat and The Family Tree by Marietta Apollonio

Marietta Apollonio, author and illustrator, is excited to announce that her picture book, *Wombat and The Family Tree* (Tommy Nelson/HarperCollins), will be coming out on March 26th. A launch party and storytime event will be held at The Silver Unicorn in Acton on Saturday March 30 at 11am. Visit [Marietta's website](#) for all the details.



Fund Raiser for Read Your World

Mia Wenjen shares more news about activities related to Read Your World's celebration of the 11th Multicultural Children's Book Day on January 25, 2024. The group is hosting an online fundraiser to donate diverse children's books to interested teachers.

The Read **Your World** Teacher Celebration Kit consists of 3 diverse children's books, book swag for their students, and a teacher's guide for one of the books so that they can celebrate in their classrooms. For more details and to make a donation, click [here](#).



Authors Talks at Needham Library

The [Library Foundation of Needham](#) has teamed up with Matt Robinson, host of the cable TV series [The Writer's Block](#), for a series of author talks with book signings in 2024. Upcoming author programs at the Needham Free Public Library are as follows:

Tuesday, January 30, 7:30 PM Bruce Cohen, PhD -*Excusercise: Inexcusable excuses*



NEEDHAM
FREE PUBLIC

for not exercising

Tuesday, February 27, 7:30 PM Rachel Silber Devlin –*Snapshots of My Father, John Silber*

Tuesday, March 26, 7:30 PM Dr. Sanjiv Chopra and Gina Vild –*The Two Most Important Days: How to find your purpose and live a happier, healthier life*

Book Signing at Natick Barnes & Noble

BARNES & NOBLE

SHERWOOD PLAZA, NATICK, MA

BOOK SIGNING

SATURDAY, JANUARY 27 @ 2:00 PM



LOCAL INDIE-AUTHOR
LORENZO PETRUZZIELLO



Local indie-author **Lorenzo Petruzziello** will be in store at Barnes & Noble in Natick at 2 PM on Saturday, January 27, to sign copies of his noir-inspired story *A Mistake Incomplete* and his romantic-comedy-inspired *The Love Fool*.

Lorenzo would love to meet BAC members at this event! He is also celebrating the spring publication of his forthcoming novel, *The Taste of Datura*, which will be released on April 2, 2024. Copies are available to pre-order in-store.

President's Note: Thoughts for a New Year



In the week between December 25 and January 1, every day feels like Sunday. It doesn't feel like a full week, really. I usually allow myself the indulgences of thinking about summer plans, catching up on some movies I didn't get to see, and, of course, working on that pile of books that's been stacked up next to my bed.

I completed Heather Clark's epic biography of Sylvia Plath – a brilliant piece of biography writing about a brilliant woman. But it was so distressing to read about the ways in which mental health challenges were (or mostly weren't) dealt with in the 1950s, especially for women. And the tragedy upon tragedy in that family felt so sad.

I needed to read a novel after that, so next I disappeared into Lauren Groff's new book, *The Vaster Wilds*. The story of an escaped servant from some nameless colonial settlement, who must try to keep alive by finding creatures and plants she can eat in the wilderness, and escape from danger at every turn, is gripping. It's also graphic, and, I have to say, not exactly the upbeat escapist experience I wanted after reading about Sylvia's life.

So I turned to the next book on my pile, George Saunders' short story collection, *Liberation Day*. I wouldn't say that most of these stories were upbeat, either – some are positively dystopian – but they are the embodiment of what I learned from reading his earlier book, *A Swim in the Pond in the Rain*. In that book, (basically a written version of the course on short story writing Saunders has taught), the author has us read some of what he considers to be the best short stories written by the great Russian writers, deconstructs them, and in so doing, teaches us why they're so good. I could see many of the ways that Saunders practices what he's preached in *Liberation Day*.

I'm going to try to read one more book for my 2023 list in the day and a half that's left of this year, but I think it's got to be one that will make me smile. Fortunately, there's a growing pile of books, starting to take over one room of my house, as the entries for the 2023 Julia Ward Howe prizes arrive. There's certain to be something wonderful there! Probably many wonderful somethings.

Just a reminder to all reading this newsletter: if you've not yet renewed your BAC membership, please do so, since our membership year also begins January 1.

Wishing you all a happy, healthy new year, with lots of family, good cheer, and good books!

Julie Dobrow
BAC President

Yesteryear: Kate Wiggin Beyond Sunnybrook Farm

When Kate Douglas Wiggin (1856-1923) joined the Boston Authors Club in 1907, she was already well-known as both a best-selling children's book author and a staunch advocate for kindergartens. In fact, Wiggin's commitment to supporting the kindergarten education movement and her need to earn money inspired her to start writing.

The first two decades of Kate Wiggin's life were marked by multiple relocations and family tragedies. Her father died when she was only three years old, leaving her mother, Helen Smith, struggling to raise Kate and her newborn sister, Nora. Widow Smith moved her family to Maine, where she met and married a country doctor in 1863. Unfortunately, the doctor's health declined, and despite a family moving to southern California in search of a warmer climate, he died in 1877. Kate and Nora had to earn their own living or face poverty.

Wiggin completed a training program for kindergarten teachers and became a leader in this emerging field. She was appointed director of the Silver Street kindergarten in San Francisco, a free school dedicated to serving poor and immigrant children. She co-founded the California Kindergarten Training School in 1880 with her sister Nora. In the next decade, Wiggin's writing career and personal life blossomed. She authored multiple children's books and married Samuel Bradley Wiggin, a New York-based lawyer and childhood friend. Samuel Wiggin shared his wife's interest in early childhood education, and they co-authored several works on this topic. After Samuel's death in 1889, Wiggin moved back to Maine and focused once again on children's fiction, publishing popular books, including her marquee, *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm*. With her second marriage in 1895 to a wealthy New York businessman, Wiggin moved back to New York, and for the rest of her life, she divided her time between the city, a summer house in Maine, and travels in Europe.

A number of Wiggin's books were turned into motion pictures, the most famous of which is probably the film version of *Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm* starring Randolph Scott and Shirley Temple. It is said that Wiggin was unhappy with changes made to the storyline of the 1917 film version without her permission.

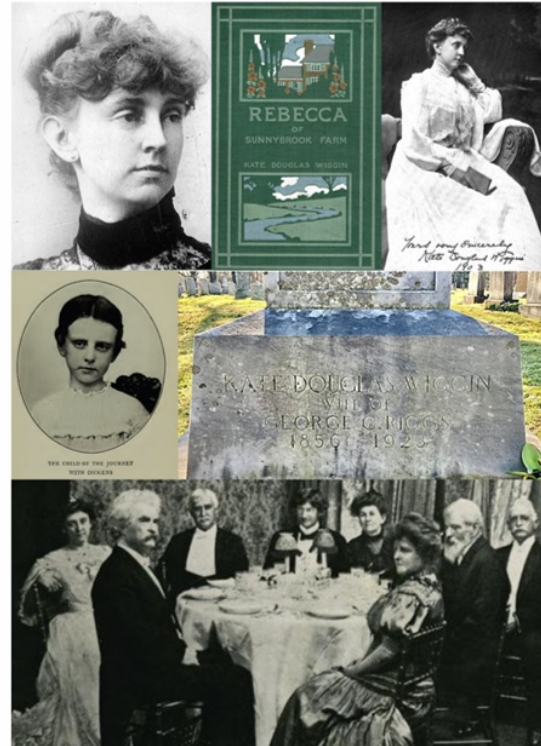
Rebecca of Sunnybrook Farm was also rendered as a stage production which premiered in Boston at the Court Square Theater on November 16, 1909. According to a trailer in the *Springfield Sunday Republican*, the play "contain(s) all the popular elements of such time-worn successes as 'Old Homestead' and 'Little Lord Fauntleroy,' and the mysticism of 'Peter Pan.'"

Wiggin's name is not found in the member lists in the 1913 Year Book of the Boston Authors Club, nor is there any mention of her living in Boston in either her autobiography or her sister's biography. She did share the platform with Julia Ward Howe at a meeting at the Concord School of Philosophy, and it was a woman from Boston, Caroline ("Mother of Women's Clubs") Severance, who ignited Wiggin's interest in preschool education, but that was in San Francisco where Severance had established the country's first kindergarten. As a side note, Severance and Howe organized the New England Women's Club.

In addition to writing children's books and building kindergartens, throughout her life, Kate Wiggin had a knack for attracting the attention and admiration of famous authors of the day, including Charles Dickens, Mark Twain, and Jack London. It seems that she often managed to be in the right spot at the right time to strike up a conversation (not unlike *Rebecca* and *Misters Cobb and Adam*).

Take, for example, her encounter with Charles Dickens when she was eleven years old, as described in Chapter V of her autobiography. On a train trip from Hollis to Charlestown with her mother, Wiggin noticed ("There on the platform stood my Adored One!") Charles Dickens board the train in North Berwick. She slipped away from her mother and found a seat in Dickens's car. ("...I thought if Dickens should happen to rest his eye upon me, that he could hardly fail to be pleased with the effect of the blue ribbon that went under my collar and held a very small squirrel muff in place.") When the gentleman sitting next to Dickens left for the smoking car, Wiggin just went up and sat down next to Dickens and struck up a conversation, which included telling Dickens which parts of his books she found dull and skipped. ("...he took out a notebook and pencil from his pocket and proceeded to give me an exhausting and exhaustive examination on this subject.")

Thirty-eight years later, Wiggin was among the guests at Mark Twain's famous 70th birthday celebration held at Delmonico's in New York on December 23, 1905. The picture above shows Wiggin sitting to the



immediate left of and just behind Twain. Sharp-eyed readers may recognize this picture; it appeared in the August 2023 Yesteryear column about Mary E. Wilkins Freeman, who is sitting to the immediate right of Twain, three Boston Authors Club members right in a row.

Wiggin was often confused with Alice Hagan, another guest at Twain's birthday celebration, due to Hagan's authorship of Mrs. Wiggs of the Cabbage Patch. After learning of one of these confusions, Wiggin wrote, "Unless I have my tombstone carved during my lifetime, they will put an 's' on Wiggin and a double 's' on Douglas. If there is room at the bottom, they will probably add: 'Here lies the author of Mrs. Wiggs!'". Wiggin's tombstone is in the South Buxton Cemetary in Buxton, Maine. I cajoled a friend who lives nearby, Thomas Pascarella, to drop by and take a picture. (Thanks, Tom!) Evidently, the tombstone was carved during her lifetime.

The University of New England and San Jose State are among the many libraries that house Wiggin archives and special collections.

Scott B. Guthery

authors!
AUTHORS!

The BAC newsletter is published the first week of every month except for the summer months. Please send news about your upcoming events, awards, and new books to bostonauthorsclub@gmail.com by January 27 for publication in the February edition.

Members are reminded that a place has been reserved for them in the [Boston Authors Club Gallery](#). This is an opportunity to promote your books and refer visitors to your website and your social media presence.

Happy New Year! **Your BAC Membership for 2024**

BAC membership dues are \$50 for the calendar year. You can join or renew online by [clicking here](#). If you would rather pay by check, please make your check out to the Boston Authors Club and mail it to the following address:

**Nancy Tupper Ling
Boston Authors Club
1600 Providence Highway #247
Walpole MA 02081**

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