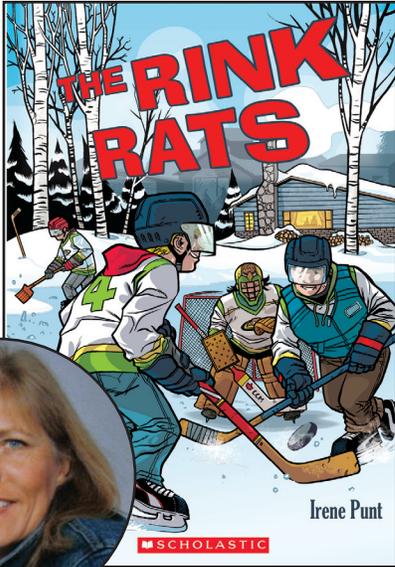


Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



Irene Punt The Rink Rats

Q What inspires you to write?

A When I observe or get into a situation which makes me laugh, cry, think, dance or scream, I want to capture it by placing the event into a story. Once I have something to write about, I love the challenge of figuring out how to weave the characters, plot and theme together. It is an enormous feeling of accomplishment to hold a finished manuscript in my hands. When readers tell me they like my work, I am inspired to write more!

Q What advice do you have for young writers?

A My first piece of advice is to take your hand and pat yourself on the back because you have found a job you like/love to do! Now, put your passion to work: write, read, daydream, write, research, write, reread, write, review, write, think, tweek, write, read, stop, look, listen, write, polish, edit, ponder, proofread, write, write and write until you love the story you are working on. Most importantly, keep a positive attitude, stay away from negative people and FINISH your projects! The feeling of accomplishment is amazing!

Q What was your favourite book when you were growing up?

A I really didn't have one favourite book when I was growing up, rather I had favourite characters. As a young child, my mom took my brothers and me to the library. We hauled home the *Clifford*, *Curious George*, and *The Small Family* series. I used to trace the illustrations and write my own adventures for the characters. Then I discovered *Nancy Drew*. I was hooked on figuring out the answer to the mystery, and then writing a "different" ending.

Q What do you like to do when you're not writing?

A I like hanging out with my family and going on our own adventures. We ski, snowboard, wakeboard, golf, hike, bike, play badminton, travel, play card games and tell each other stories. Something exciting or funny always happens, which leads me back to writing! [See question #1.]

Q What has been the biggest achievement of your career so far?

A Selling over fifty thousand copies of my first picture book, *The Bop!* was a dream come true. Now, over twenty years later, my original readers are reading the book to their children. I love hearing how one of my stories has brought happiness to another family. However, my biggest achievement was creating the hockey series about the Glenlake Hawks, starring Tom, Harty, Mark, Stuart and Jordan. I worked long, hard, and never gave up, writing over thirty different stories before I came up with the idea to write a junior novel containing humour, friendship, action, irony and HOCKEY. I am so proud to have *The Funny Faceoff* be nominated for the Shining Willow Award.

Q Many of your books have hockey themes. Where does your love of the sport come from?

A My two sons, Harty and Tom started playing hockey when they were five years old, making me a hockey mom for over fifteen years, and my husband, a coach. My days revolved around driving to arenas, tying skates, cheering in the stands, buying slush drinks, drinking hot chocolate, chatting with hockey parents, celebrating wins and consoling losses. The hockey action on and off the ice gave me lots to think about. Many of the story details are taken from the pages of my life!