

Author's Spotlight



CAROLYN MARSDEN

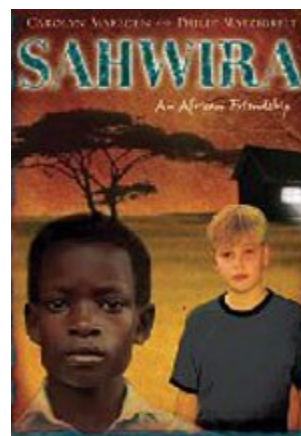
by Grace Nall

Writing takes you on a journey to faraway places. Multicultural children's book author and SCBWI member Carolyn Marsden captivates readers with her stories of the unique cultural struggles facing children in America and abroad. Open any of her books and you will find yourself learning about Italy, Asia, Africa, Mexico or a Mayan jungle through the eyes of her characters. She enlightens readers on the inner conflicts, struggles, and celebrations embedded in various cultures.

Marsden's journey to writing multicultural middle-grade fiction sprang from her own background. "I write about these children from faraway places partly because I was born in Mexico City and partly because I have a Thai husband and our two daughters are half Thai," she reports. Along with Gretchen Woelfle, author and SBWI member, Marsden recently journeyed to West Africa (Burkina Faso, Mali, and Senegal) to do school visits.

It is not easy writing multicultural books, especially if you are not of that culture. Marsden suggests conducting research in a variety of ways. "If you don't have an interesting multicultural background of your own, get together with someone who does," she said. "Here in Southern California, we have such a rich diversity of people. Most of us have access to an interesting person who has had a fascinating childhood in another country. You can either interview the person or collaborate with them in writing a book."

Sahwira: An African Friendship by Carolyn Marsden and Philip Matzigkeit, Candlewick Press, 2009.



Author's Tips

1. For writing multiple books or genres at a time: "Give it a try—you'll be surprised at the variety that your brain can handle. I have also finished a draft of *The Trumpet Flower Tree*, a YA novel set in 16th century Thailand."
2. Further advice for all writers: "Read huge amounts of books, take writing classes, join SCBWI, and get your stories out of your head and down on paper."

Carolyn Marsden has more than 14 children's books published. She teaches "Writing for Children II" at UCSD on Saturday, Jan. 22, 29; Feb. 5, 19, 26; and March 5, 2011 from 10 a.m.-1 p.m. (No class on day of SCBWI's February 12th Conference). Visit her website at <http://www.carolynmarsden.com>