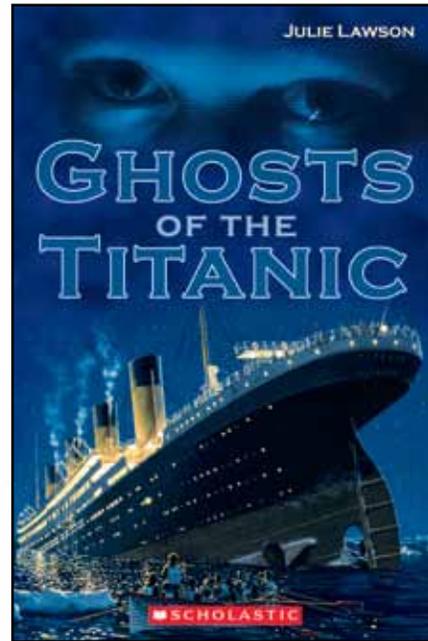


# Book Fair Author Spotlight On...



## Julie Lawson

### Ghosts of the Titanic



**Q** What inspires you to write?

**A** I've always loved to make up stories. This got me into trouble when I was little, because people (like friends, teachers and parents) would misunderstand and say I was telling lies. I do the same thing now, only in books, and nobody seems to mind. What inspires me is the idea of creating something that wasn't there before. I take an actual event or experience and tell the story through the eyes of someone else — an imaginary person that never existed but *could have!* The most exciting part, and the part that keeps me writing, is that the characters become real. The deeper I get into the story, the more drafts I do (and I do a lot!), the more alive that characters become. Before long, they have minds of their own, and take the story into new and surprising directions.

**Q** What advice do you have for young writers?

**A** Read, read, read, read, read! Anything and everything.

Collect ideas and store them in a notebook.

Write bits and pieces of anything — stories or parts of stories, tongue twisters, intriguing conversations, character sketches, opening paragraphs — whatever you like. Play with words. Enjoy the process. Don't worry about writing whole stories. If you get stuck

in the middle, write something else. Or read another book!

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

**A** *Anne of Green Gables*. I lived in the pages of that book. When Matthew died, I was as grief-stricken as Anne. I cried for days. It was the first book that touched me on an emotional level and I thought, "Wow! If this is what books can do, give me more!" (Confession: when kids write and tell me that one of my books made them cry, I'm kind of pleased.)

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

**A** Read! Mysteries, historical fiction, travel guides and fiction are my favourites, as well as books about writing. I love reading about the writing process of other authors.

Travel! By freighter, canoe, train, plane or by foot. I always take a notebook for jotting down experiences and possible story ideas.

I love to explore museums and used bookstores, wander through the shops in Victoria, practice yoga, work out at the gym, go for long walks and spend time with family and friends.

I also love to cook (especially desserts).

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

**A** To me, my biggest achievement is not measured in dollars or in award nominations (although they're very nice), but in the personal satisfaction I get from seeing an idea evolve into a book that ends up in the hands of thousands of readers. Best of all is meeting those readers or receiving their letters and hearing that they enjoyed my book. Nothing is more rewarding than that.

**Q** What inspired you to write from the perspective of a contemporary teenager uncovering a secret from such a well-known historical event?

**A** After writing four books for the *Our Canadian Girl* series and three books for the *Dear Canada* series — all historical fiction from the perspective of young girls — it was time for a change. It was also time for a challenge — to write a book from a contemporary teenage boy's point of view. The story of the *Titanic* has been told many times and in many different ways. What isn't so well-known is the role that Halifax played in the aftermath of the disaster. The idea of a ship being sent to the disaster site to find and retrieve victims' bodies and personal effects was intriguing. I imagined the effect such a grim task would have on the crew, particularly on a young seaman. What if his actions had consequences that extended far beyond April, 1912 and into the present day? This was the question that triggered *Ghosts of the Titanic*, and gave rise to one of my favourite characters, Kevin Messenger.

