



## Sharon Creech

### Author Program In-depth Interview Insights Beyond the Slide Shows

**Sharon Creech, interviewed in her studio in Pennington, New Jersey on March 24, 2004.**

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** You won the Newbery Medal for your novel, *Walk Two Moons*. What was that like for you?

**SHARON CREECH:** The Newbery came as a complete shock, and it changed my life in an instant. I knew very little about the award at the time. I was living in England, and it was a gray February day when I got this phone call saying that *Walk Two Moons* had received the Newbery Medal. I was aware that something momentous was happening, but I really wasn't quite sure what that was. I hung up the phone, and someone from the publisher called shortly thereafter. Just to show you my ignorance I said, "So how many of these medals are given out every year? One hundred? Five hundred?" And she said, "Sharon, one. One medal." And then I really felt as if I might have a heart attack, because I knew that this was something very important. I was soon to discover, indeed, how much it meant. And I cannot even begin to tell you all the amazing and wonderful things that happened because of that.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** You also won the Carnegie Medal in the United Kingdom.

**SHARON CREECH:** Winning the Carnegie was probably equally poignant (to the Newbery), because I had lived in England for 18 years and it was sort of my adopted country. And to receive that same recognition there was quite moving.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What shaped the writing of *Walk Two Moons*?

**SHARON CREECH:** When I finished *Absolutely Normal Chaos* and thought about writing another book for young people, I first continued where I had left off — just a continuation of what happened after Mary Lou Finney (from *Absolutely Normal Chaos*) turns in her summer journal at the end of the book. So, I spent about a year doing that.

Then, I decided I needed another narrator, and came up with Phoebe Winterbottom. She and her family were quite the opposite of Mary Lou Finney's family. Writing that story took about a year. At the end of that story, I realized that Phoebe was not a particularly sympathetic narrator, and I was ready to throw the whole thing in the trash.

About that time I found this discarded fortune cookie message in the bottom of my purse, which was "Don't judge a man until you've walked two moons in his moccasins," which I had received at a Chinese restaurant in England with this Native American proverb on it. After I found the fortune cookie message, I took a nap. When I woke up, I heard this voice in my head saying, "Gramps says I'm a country girl at heart." And I went straight to the

computer and started writing in that voice. There was something in that message — something about a journey and Native Americans — that sparked Salamanca Tree Hiddle and her whole story. Once she became the narrator, I knew that I had something better there. And I just pulled in the other stories of Phoebe and Mary Lou as I went along.

So, that's how *Walk Two Moons* came to be. It took about three years to write and probably 15 drafts; it was almost thrown in the trash many, many times. And that first line that came to me that day is the first line of *Walk Two Moons*.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Is there something of your own childhood in *Walk Two Moons*?

**SHARON CREECH:** When I was young, my father's family would tell stories around the dining room table, and everyone was trying to top everyone else, and there was great humor and great exaggeration. I learned there that if I wanted to talk, I had to have a story to tell and it had to be more exciting than someone else's so I wouldn't be drowned out. And I think that came back when I began *Walk Two Moons* and the voice of Salamanca Tree Hiddle.

I took a cross-country trip with my family when I was 12, and I put myself right in Sal's place. She is very much like me at that age. Going across the country on a journey seemed to somehow combine with Sal's storytelling ability to make the rhythm of her voice. As I wrote, I remembered all these myths and legends that I loved when I was about the age of 12 and I learned that one of our ancestors was Native American.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Did some of the things in *Walk Two Moons* really happen to you?

**SHARON CREECH:** No. When we took that family trip, none of those things happened to me. But I am afraid of cars on the highway and terrified of car accidents, so I think that fed into the story.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** The grandmother in *Walk Two Moons* uses a unique turn of phrase. Where did "huzza, huzza" originate?

**SHARON CREECH:** I found "huzza, huzza" when I was looking for a synonym. I thought the grandmother would say something like "wow" or "hurray," but those just seemed so mundane. I was just thumbing through my very old thesaurus and found the phrase, "huzza, huzza," and I thought, "Well, that's exactly what she would say."

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** You wrote *Absolutely Normal Chaos* before *Walk Two Moons*.

**SHARON CREECH:** Yes. I was in England at the time, having lived there for about 15 or 16 years. I was really missing my family, who were mostly back in Ohio. So, I thought I'd write about a family like my own as sort of a way to revisit my family every day while I was sitting in this little old cottage in England. I wrote about five children, just like in my family — absolutely normal chaos. A country cousin comes to visit, much like my own country cousin came to visit. But then everything that happens in the book is fictional. The characters change — they're not really my brothers and sisters, although the brothers in the book have the same names as my own real brothers.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Then after *Walk Two Moons*, you continued your threaded stories with *Chasing Redbird*.

**SHARON CREECH:** There wasn't so much a conscious effort to do that, but when I finished *Walk Two Moons*, I had really enjoyed writing about Bybanks, Kentucky, even though Bybanks doesn't come up all that much in *Walk Two Moons*. It was a place that really attracted me, and I knew that I was basing it very consciously on Quincy, Kentucky, a place that I had visited often when I was young. My cousins own a big, rambling farm there and it was beautiful for a suburban city girl to be able to go to this place where you could just run all day through the hills.

I didn't feel there was more for me to tell about Salamanca, at least not yet. So, I thought, well, maybe I'll write about someone who might have been her friend there who would have been somewhat like Sal but a little but different, and that's how Zinny Taylor in *Chasing Redbird* came into being. She is from a large family, unlike Sal who is an only child. And in a way she feels very lost in that family because there are so many children and there is so much going on. She finds great solitude and great purpose when she goes out to clear this trail that she finds in the woods. She finds out a lot about her family and herself along the way.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Your books have the common theme of a journey in them.

**SHARON CREECH:** Yes, the journey as a motif — as a literary convention — really appeals to me. The physical journey is always a metaphor for the interior journey. And perhaps because I lived so much of my life outside of my home country, I am in tune to this notion that, as you go, you are learning something not only about the world, but also about yourself in the process.

Even a book like *Love That Dog*, which doesn't appear to have a physical journey, does in fact contain a journey. It's that intense journey in the classroom from ignorance to awareness, and the way that each student changes and learns over the course of the year.

But I do think there's also some sort of epic appeal to the great geographical journey, as in *Walk Two Moons*. Similarly, in *The Wanderer*, Sophie has to make a very difficult journey across the ocean to uncover things that she knows but have been buried inside her.

The journey in *Heartbeat* is a smaller geographical space, but it's a huge arc — from birth to death. Twelve-year-old Annie is just realizing this when her mother is about to give birth and her grandfather is aging. And she just begins to see where she is on this spectrum.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Your narrators seem to be searching for something inside of themselves.

**SHARON CREECH:** I'm particularly interested in those pivotal ages from nine to 14, where a child is no longer a child and not yet an adult, and is just beginning to question, "Who am I?" "What will I be?" "What will I do?" That's pretty much the search for all my narrators.

I'm also sort of plumbing my own past — how I became who I am, and how I became aware of the world.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Can you provide some examples of that search?

**SHARON CREECH:** In *Chasing Redbird*, Zinny Taylor cannot contribute to her family until she understands a little bit more about herself and her family and what her place is in that family. By the end of the book, when she comes home from the trail and they're all sitting around the table, she's finally able to be a part of that family very comfortably. She wonders about other trails and where they might lead, and she thinks that one day she might go off and explore those. But not right now, she's with her family.

Sophie in *The Wanderer* must uncover things that have been so difficult — things about her family and the true story about the death of her real parents. She has to make this trip before she can acknowledge what has happened to her parents, what her place is in this new family. At the end of the book, she and her cousins are standing there looking around the bend in the river, wanting to explore further, wanting to find out more about themselves and their place in the world. But not right now — right now they're with their family.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Unlike your other novels, you employ two narrators in *The Wanderer*.

**SHARON CREECH:** The notion of using two narrators in *The Wanderer* came about almost as soon as I began the book, when I knew that Sophie would be the main narrator, and she would be taking a trip with all boys and men on this 45-foot sailboat across the ocean. I knew that I would be limited in telling the story if I only had her viewpoint, because she was going to hide certain things from us.

So that's when the idea of having another narrator who could give a different version of the story came into being. It seemed a nice complement to use Cody, who has a very different in personality from Sophie — he's very enthusiastic and off-the-cuff, and complemented her very quiet, introverted self.

Both Sophie and Cody tell their stories in the first person point of view. But I would have loved to have told this story from the point of view of everybody on board that boat, but then I thought the focus would be lost. I really needed to narrow it to two.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What was it like as a woman to write from a boy's point of view in your book, *The Wanderer*?

**SHARON CREECH:** It seems to come quite easily to write from the first person male point of view. That may be because I grew up with three brothers. It may be because there are lots of boys around the school for which my husband is the headmaster, and I hear them talk all the time. I learned growing up with my brothers that we're really a lot alike. There's not that much different in our thought processes, and we still worry and wonder about the same kinds of things.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Several of your books (*Walk Two Moons*, *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup* and *Heartbeat* for instance) include grandparents as pivotal characters. Can you share something about that?

**SHARON CREECH:** I stumbled upon the grandparents in *Walk Two Moons*, and I enjoyed writing about them — in part because I realized how much I had gained from my own grandparents, and I had seen other children who have strong relationships with their

grandparents. But there was something about the wisdom of age that offset and complimented the naïveté of youth.

In all the books the elderly figures learn from the children as much as the children learn from the grandparents. And they have a sense of humor that can lighten up the story.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What is *Love That Dog* about?

**SHARON CREECH:** I had this poem on my bulletin board, “Love That Boy,” by Walter Dean Myers. I had it there for many, many years. The first stanza goes like this: “Love that boy like a rabbit loves to run. I said I loved that boy like a rabbit loves to run. Love to call him in the morning, love to call him, hey there, son.” Because that’s on my bulletin board, I look at it maybe a hundred times a day, just glance at it. One day as I was looking at it, I started wondering about that much-loved boy in the poem — if he was so loved, what might he love?

Out of that I just literally sat down at the computer and heard his voice in my head. I saw him sitting at his desk and his voice and language came out as free verse. I think that’s partly because it was inspired by a poem. I could hear that voice — that voice is partly mine, it’s partly my son’s, partly my daughter’s, partly the voices of all the students I ever had who were very reluctant to study poetry.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** That was your first book in free verse. What was it like to write in that style?

**SHARON CREECH:** It was absolutely liberating because poetry forces you to pare down. You can only say the essential, and you rely more on images. And you can’t go wandering off and telling about the setting and this and that other character. It forces you to stay right on target. And because of that, I think the book has a kind of clarity that other books, longer books and prose, don’t have.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Do you often write a story without having first worked out a concept first?

**SHARON CREECH:** When I sit down to start a story, I don’t know anything. I usually just have an image of a character and a place. For instance, with *Love That Dog*, I saw this boy, he was sitting at his desk, he was looking at a poem and he did not look happy. And so I’m interested. I want to know, “Why doesn’t he look happy? Why is he looking at a poem? Who is this kid?” And in order to find out who he is, I have to find out something about his life. In this case the most important thing seemed to be this dog that he didn’t want to talk about.

And the second-most important thing seemed to be this teacher who was very much in the background, but she was encouraging Jack through offering him poems. She tries all kinds of poems. Some completely missed the mark, or seemed to. But little by little you see that he assimilates what he has heard and read, which also I think is very much like my writing process.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** It’s a bit unusual to include a real, living author in a work of fiction. What was that like for you to feature Walter Dean Myers in *Love That Dog*?

**SHARON CREECH:** Well, when I finished the first draft of *Love That Dog*, I thought, “I don’t think I can do this, have a real live author in here. This is probably not a very smart thing to do. And I’ll take it out and I’ll put a fictional author in.” But a fictional author, a poet, wouldn’t have written that poem. I didn’t want to rewrite Walter Dean Myers’ poem. It was that poem I wanted to use. It was the rhythms of the poem. And I thought it had to be a male poet because Jack in the story needs to respond to the fact that a male is doing this. So, I put the draft away.

In the meantime my editor is occasionally calling saying, “Why won’t you talk about what you’re working on?” And I said, “I think I’d better just wait until I start something else.” And so finally one day she got me to tell her about the story and why it was I thought it wouldn’t work. So I told her the story and about Walter Dean Myers. She said, “Sharon just send it to me, and let me see it.” So I sent it to her and she read it and she loved it. I mean she called the same day she got it and said, “Love that book.” And I said, “But what about Walter?” She said, “Let’s send it to him and see. If he has any objection, fine, we won’t do it. But if he’s okay with it, then you’ve got a great book here.” Fortunately, Walter was fine with it.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** *Heartbeat* is another novel in free verse.

**SHARON CREECH:** Yes, *Heartbeat* also sprung onto the page as free verse. I had the image in my mind of this young girl, Annie. I could see her running down a hill. And immediately the rhythm of her running dictated the rhythm of her speech. The rhythm was a much more lyrical thing than prose, so it arranged itself on the page. The story again came out very rapidly, very fluid. We hardly made any editorial corrections or changes to it. There is something about the verse form that comes out more freely than prose.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What has been appealing to you about writing vignettes?

**SHARON CREECH:** What I love about free verse and the little vignettes in these books is that each one is whole and complete, and yet it echoes. Each one builds on the one before and echoes far beyond the tiny little space it takes up in the book.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Where did the apple image in *Heartbeat* come from?

**SHARON CREECH:** The image of the apple just sort of fell into the book. The archetypal image of the apple is related to the core of life, going back to the Adam and Eve story, perhaps.

But, when my daughter was in high school, she had an art assignment to draw an apple 100 times. At first she thought it was just the most inane assignment. She said, “How am I going to draw this apple 100 times? I am only allowed to draw one a day. She drew the first few apples and thought she couldn’t draw. She said, “This is terrible; I’m just drawing the same apple.” But something happened along about the 10<sup>th</sup> or the 12<sup>th</sup> or the 15<sup>th</sup> apple where she began to experiment a little bit with style and with perspective. She’d look at the apple from the side or from upside down, and she began to do collage instead of pen and ink. It changed the apple, and she began to question this whole notion of the apple looking

only one way. She saw that it looked different from varying perspectives and drawn in different media. And then the apple also began to age.

I loved the parallel in *Heartbeat* — the grandfather’s aging and shrinking and diminishing along with the apple. When my daughter did her 100<sup>th</sup> apple, it was not the same as Annie’s 100<sup>th</sup> drawing in the book. But, she said that she learned more about drawing and art and perspective from that one exercise than from anything else she’d ever done.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Annie in *Heartbeat* is a pretty sensitive teenager.

**SHARON CREECH:** I love Annie’s sensibility, but I don’t really take credit for it. Once a character begins to form, he or she takes on a persona that I don’t feel I’m consciously creating. I feel that it’s there and I’m listening and unwrapping it, so to speak.

But I do love that she is very sensitive to what’s happening to her grandfather and that she feels this need to find a connection. She wants to know how she is like him. And in a way, she is wondering in the back of her mind if that will be her when she is old. I think it’s in a way a little bit of the fear we all have that, a joy and a fear, that you would like to be like your parent or your grandparent for all their admirable qualities, but you fear becoming old.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Your earlier books evoke life in Kentucky, while several of your more recent books have an Italian feel.

**SHARON CREECH:** I always think of the first six or seven books I did as being drawn from my father’s side of the family. My southern Ohio, northern Kentucky roots. Then I went into my Italian phase. It really began with *Bloomability*. My mother’s Italian and my maternal grandparents were Italian. And we were closest to those grandparents. And my mother, when she was alive, would always say, “Why do you always write about Dad’s family? Why don’t you write about my family?” And jokingly I said to her, “Oh, when you’re gone I’ll write about your family.” And I wrote *Bloomability* during one of our last years in England when I was living in England. I really wanted to capture that experience of living abroad. In *Bloomability* the girl has an Italian grandmother, and I dedicated that book to my mother and I was happily flying home with a copy of the galleys in my bag to show her, and she died that day, before I could put the book in her hands. It was so sad. But that began sort of the thinking about the Italian side of the family.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Your next book, *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*, gave homage to your mother’s side of the family.

**SHARON CREECH:** When my daughter was pregnant with her first child, I began to contemplate the role of grandparents. I was trying to remember my Kentucky grandparents and my Italian grandparents who lived in Cleveland, and the only memories that I kept coming back to were ones of them in their kitchens, cooking. There was so much centered on food and talking and laughing, and sometimes crying. I couldn’t remember their exact words, but there was a great feeling of comfort and reassurance in their presence.

I knew my Italian grandmother better, so I had more memories of her. Gradually, that image morphed into the grandmother in *Granny Torrelli Makes Soup*. The great fun of writing that book was that Granny’s Italian rhythms take over the book. In a way, I see it as sort of a prose poem. I don’t see it as verse, I don’t see it as prose, but there’s something so distinct

in both granddaughter Rosie's language and Granny's language that propels the book along and gives it a very distinctive rhythm.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What is unique about *Ruby Holler*?

**SHARON CREECH:** When I was writing *Ruby Holler*, I felt the place itself — Ruby Holler — was a character. I once heard an educator say that every child needs and deserves beauty, and I believe that profoundly. So, I had an image in my mind of this beautiful place, and I wondered whom might most need and appreciate it. Therefore, in *Ruby Holler*, the setting came first, then the characters.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** The characters in *Ruby Holler* are an odd bunch, yet they somehow fit together.

**SHARON CREECH:** There are the trouble twins, Dallas and Florida, who might really need and appreciate that beautiful place. And as counterbalance, there are Tiller and Sairy, the older couple. The adults, in their own way, are a lot like the twins in personality and in everything they do. Their love for adventure is just as strong as the young kids' love for adventure. And just as the old people have an effect on and shape the young people, the young people shape the old people. It all sort of worked in tandem.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** *Pleasing the Ghost* is a different book for you.

**SHARON CREECH:** I had this notion that I wanted to write a funny ghost story. I don't like reading scary stories, and I was a little bothered by the number of frightening, violent stories that some of our students were reading. So I thought, "Why can't there be a ghost story that's funny?" Three images contributed to the creation of the story.

At the time, I was teaching *Hamlet* in a British literature class. We were talking about the ghost of Hamlet's father in class, discussing, "Why did a ghost appear and what did Elizabethans think?" One thing that we kept coming back to was that they felt that ghosts often appeared because they had unfinished business. So that was in my mind.

A few years before this, my father had died. Six years before he died, he had a stroke, which left him unable to speak. He was only able to utter occasional short words or sounds that were usually unintelligible. Sometimes that was terribly, terribly sad, and sometimes it was very funny and even he would laugh, because out of his mouth would come these funny things.

The third thing that was in my mind was that after my father died, I was visiting my mother in the States, and she showed me a love letter that he had written to her 50 years earlier. She had just found in a file cabinet, and as I sat down and read that letter, I heard my father's voice. I felt as if he were in the room with us.

So those elements were sort of playing in my mind as I sat down to write *Pleasing the Ghost* — a story in which a ghost named Uncle Arvie (my father's name was Arvil) comes to visit a young boy and needs his help in accomplishing some unfinished business. One of the things he needs the boy's help in is delivering a lost love letter to his wife. The ghost speaks in garbled stroke-affected language, and he needs the boy's help to interpret.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** How do teachers use *Pleasing the Ghost* in school?

**SHARON CREECH:** I've heard from teachers that they use it with students with dyslexia. The students are quite able to interpret Uncle Arvie's language, because that's what all words look like to them, these kind of garbled words and sounds. These students are almost able to understand the book better than a student who is used to understanding what every word means.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** You have written two picture books as well.

**SHARON CREECH:** My first picture book, *Fishing in the Air*, has its roots back when I was 12 years old and my father went to search for his house in Antigo, Wisconsin, and he couldn't find it. It was a scene I had forgotten until I gave a speech at the Cooperative Children's Book Center (CCBC) in Madison, Wisconsin. K.T. Horning of the CCBC said to me after she heard the speech, "You know, that scene with you in the rowboat with your father would make a great picture book." The language was already there, since I had told the story before, but I guess you could say it took me 40 years to write it down because I had to process it through all that time.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What was it like to see your words illustrated?

**SHARON CREECH:** The illustrator, Chris Raschka, did something really very difficult for this book. The book is all about how we learn to imagine and how we hear words and turn them into images in our mind. And those images shape us. For instance, the way a father speaks to us shapes our view of the world and shapes our own imagination. Chris Raschka took the words of the story and recast them as abstract images to show the process of the mind assimilating these images. They illuminate the story perfectly.

**TEACINGBOOKS:** *A Fine, Fine School* is your other picture book to date.

**SHARON CREECH:** I wrote *A Fine, Fine School* after a very exhausting day at the boarding school where my husband is the headmaster. We live on campus, so we're on duty seven days a week. One day I was thinking, "Gosh, there's just too much school." And I was trying to prepare myself for an event we had to go to and I thought, "Okay, Sharon, it could be worse. There could be even more school." And out of that comment, I instantly saw this image of a principal, who is an exaggeration of my husband.

My husband is a very enthusiastic headmaster and he loves the school and he loves the students. He's like a cheerleader for the school and the students. So I exaggerated the idea of "What would happen if there was a principal who was so in love with his school that he wanted more and more and more school?" Once I had that notion, the story came out very easily.

When I first saw Harry Bliss' illustrations, I laughed so hard. He just added so many elements. The dog becomes a character in his own right in the story. Harry took the idea of the sticky notes that overtake the girl, saying things like "power nap at 2 p.m." and "gym test today" and added all these wonderful elements like the books on the shelves, things like ridiculously difficult algebra and things like that.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** You wrote two adult books early in your career. Do you think of yourself now as strictly writing for young people?

**SHARON CREECH:** *Absolutely Normal Chaos* was my first book about this young age group; it was published in England. Then *Walk Two Moons*, published in the United States, received the Newbery Medal, and it seemed to open a door to write more about that age group. I had fun doing it, and there was an audience for it, so I have been writing about that age group ever since.

I don't think of myself writing so much *for* children as *about* children. In any case, I can't think of a better audience. They're so enthusiastic — so receptive to the stories. And they seem in some ways molded by the stories. I feel honored to have a part in that.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What do you do with students when you visit schools?

**SHARON CREECH:** What I like to do with students in school is dramatize scenes from some of my books. I take dialogue scenes and type them up as scripts and they act them out with me. They have great fun. It brings the book to life, and it shows them that they can take a dialogue scene from any book and turn it into a little play.

And then I usually just let them ask me questions. When they ask for advice about writing, I tell them that if you want to write, try shorter things. Write ten descriptions of people or write ten little dialogue scenes. Or write something funny; write something serious. Write a poem or a play. Try all different kinds of things and have fun with it. That's how you learn how to do it, by doing it. Don't feel that you have to have the whole story before you begin.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What do you do when you get stuck?

**SHARON CREECH:** Sometimes, when I'm writing, I come to a halting point where the words aren't flowing smoothly or I feel something is not right with what's happening. But I just stop and I go and do something else. I often take a walk, or sometimes I take a nap, or I go have a snack, or I put in some laundry, or I do some ironing. And those mechanical processes seem to untangle whatever the snag was. And when I return to the work, I'm almost always able to pick up again and go. I think my brain just gets tired sometimes and needs a rest or a break. And if I don't try too hard to push it forward, it will automatically resume of its own accord.

I've been asked if the Newbery Award gave me writer's block or intimidated me. I had quite the opposite reaction to winning it. It was like this huge affirmation, because the hard work was already done; I'd written the book a year or so earlier. It was like someone coming along and saying, "You did what you thought you should do, you did it the best way you could do it, and that was great." So, I just trust that instinct and write what I want to write the best way I can write it. I never think about awards until I receive those wonderful phone calls because I can't, really. My head has to be in the book. And I really write for the joy of the writing.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** Describe your typical workday.

**SHARON CREECH:** A typical workday is that I get up, eat breakfast, have a shower, and am in my office by 8:30 or 9:00. And first I check my e-mail, and if something is urgent I respond to it. But I try as soon as possible to turn to the book at hand. If I'm working on a new manuscript, that is my greatest desire — to be writing on that book and finding out what's going to happen today in this next chapter. And so I'll work on that book for usually two or three hours. Then, I stop around Noon, take a break, take a walk, eat lunch and have a nap. I think naps are very important to my writing process because they do unclog everything that has become clogged. Then, I get up and I usually reread what I have written in the morning. I won't edit then; I'll just move on ahead with the next chapter. Then, I stop and make dinner. After dinner, I come back up and begin to edit what I've written that day.

**TEACHINGBOOKS:** What's next for you?

**SHARON CREECH:** I'm working on a book called *Replay*. It is about a boy in a large Italian family. Part of the story is about uncovering how the boy is like his father. He doesn't see any similarity at first, but he very much wants to find the connections.

#### **Books by Sharon Creech**

- REPLAY, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, date TBA
- WHO'S THAT BABY? New Baby Songs (illustrated by David Diaz), Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2005
- HEARTBEAT, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2004
- GRANNY TORRELLI MAKES SOUP, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2003
- RUBY HOLLER, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2002
- FINE, FINE SCHOOL, A (illustrated by Harry Bliss), Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2001
- LOVE THAT DOG, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2001
- FISHING IN THE AIR (illustrated by Chris Raschka), HarperCollins Publishers, 2000
- WANDERER, THE Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 2000
- BLOOMABILITY, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 1998
- CHASING REDBIRD, Joanna Cotler Books / HarperCollins Publishers, 1997
- PLEASING THE GHOST, HarperCollins Publishers, 1996
- ABSOLUTELY NORMAL CHAOS, HarperCollins Publishers, 1995
- WALK TWO MOONS, HarperCollins Publishers, 1994
- NICKEL MALLEY, Pan Books, 1991
- RECITAL, THE, Pan Books, 1990

#### **Short Stories by Sharon Creech**

- "The Gift," published in *Best Stories for Seven Year Olds*, Hodder, 1995
- "My Brother is a Pig," published in *Best Stories for Six Year Olds*, Hodder, 1995

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