



**Sharon M. Draper**

**TeachingBooks Original Movie Transcript**

Sharon M. Draper, interviewed in her home in Cincinnati, Ohio, June 19, 2007.

This is a transcript of the movie available on TeachingBooks.net. It is offered here to give you a quick assessment of the program topics, as well as to enable people with auditory disabilities access to the words.

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I was not dreaming of becoming a writer. As a writing teacher, I would pass out papers and pass out assignments, and I had this young man who gave me a contest application. And he actually challenged me. He said, "You're always making us write stuff. Why don't you write something sometime." So I went back, typed up the story, sent it in. Several months later I was informed I had won first prize. It was published in Ebony magazine in December of 1990—a long time ago.

### **On Writing**

I'm an English teacher. I think as a teacher first and a writer second. So, I purposefully put symbolism and figurative language and metaphor, and all of the things that I would ask a student—as a teacher—to find in a book. I knew what appealed to teenagers. I knew what kinds of books turn teenagers off. And I wanted to write something that would grab them and would get them, so I decided to write a book in a multi-genre format. If you don't like letters you can read essays, if you don't like essays, you can read poems. There's nothing to get bored with.

### **On Hazelwood High**

The "Hazelwood High" books deal with real life issues that young people have to deal with, that sometimes their parents don't want to admit that they have to deal with. So, I write about a fictional character that has a problem. My books are character based, and the issues develop because of the problems of the characters. For example, in *Tears of a Tiger* I deal with drinking and driving. I deal with teen suicide. *Forged by Fire* is about child abuse. *Darkness Before Dawn* deals with teenagers who think that nothing bad can happen to them, that they can handle any kind of situation, that think they're grown even though they know they're not, and get into situations that they say, "Oh my goodness. I didn't realize that could happen." Characters drive the story and the issues evolve from the characters.

### **On Ziggy**

Ziggy Man... Ziggy is a wonderful creation. Ziggy is 10-years-old. He is effervescent. He's Jamaican. They solve local neighborhood mysteries, always with a sense of fun and a sense of adventure and a sense of—oh just *joie de vivre*. I mean Ziggy's just fun.

## On Copper Sun

*Copper Sun* came from a different place. I'd never been to Africa, and when I got there, I felt like I belonged, I felt comfortable there. But when I went to this slave prison, as I went through and crawled through that Door of No Return, the stones had been rubbed smooth by all the thousands of bodies that had been pushed through there. And I knew I couldn't tell the story of all of them, so I decided to tell the story of one. And I chose a girl and I said, "What would it have been like to be 15 and go through this?" Amari's strength and Amari's courage, and how Amari finds herself and develops as a character, is something that I think a lot of people can gain something from.

I'm very proud of my heritage, of the women who came before me, who paved the way so I could be who I am today.

## Books by SHARON M. DRAPER

- FIRE FROM THE ROCK, Dutton Children's Books / an imprint Penguin Young Readers Group, 2007
- NOVEMBER BLUES, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2007
- STARS AND SPARKS ON STAGE (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 6), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2007
- BACKYARD ANIMAL SHOW, THE (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 5), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2006
- COPPER SUN, Atheneum Books for Young Readers (an imprint of Simon & Schuster), 2006
- SPACE MISSION ADVENTURE, THE (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 4), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2006
- WE BEAT THE STREET: HOW A FRIENDSHIP PACT LED TO SUCCESS, (written with The Three Doctors [Sampson Davis, George Jenkins, and Rameck Hunt]), Dutton Children's Books / an imprint Penguin Young Readers Group, 2005
- BATTLE OF JERICHO, THE, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2003
- DOUBLE DUTCH, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2002
- DARKNESS BEFORE DAWN, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 2001
- NOT QUITE BURNED OUT BUT CRISPY AROUND THE EDGES: INSPIRATION, LAUGHTER, AND ENCOURAGEMENT FOR TEACHERS, Heinemann, 2001
- TEACHING FROM THE HEART: REFLECTIONS, ENCOURAGEMENT, AND INSPIRATION, Heinemann, 2000
- JAZZIMAGINATION: A JOURNAL TO READ AND WRITE, Scholastic Press, 1999
- ROMIETTE AND JULIO, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1999
- FORGED BY FIRE, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1997
- SHADOWS OF CAESAR'S CREEK (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 3), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Just Us Books, 1997
- LOST IN THE TUNNEL OF TIME (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 2), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Just Us Books, 1996
- BURIED BONES MYSTERY, THE (ZIGGY AND THE BLACK DINOSAURS BOOK 1), (illustrated by Jesse Joshua Watson), Just Us Books, 1994

- TEARS OF A TIGER, Atheneum Books for Young Readers / an imprint of Simon & Schuster Children's Publishing, 1994

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