

author *at a glance*



ELISSA HADEN GUEST

I've always associated storytelling with closeness and comfort. One of my earliest memories is of my father telling stories. He was British and he had a beautiful speaking voice. My older brothers and I loved when he made up stories filled with hilarious and eccentric characters.

My mother often sang Cole Porter and Gershwin songs to me before I went to sleep. There is something so wonderful about being sung to in the dark. Lying close to my mother, listening to those lyrics was like being under a spell.

When I was very little my brother, Nicky, and I spent a great deal of time listening to records of fairy tales. We'd play our favorites over and over. I'm sure this early exposure to hearing stories and songs influenced the way I write, because when I'm writing I have to read everything aloud in order to hear the rhythm.

I grew up in Greenwich Village and on the Upper West Side of New York City. I had a lot of freedom as a child. My best friend, Jenny, and I ran around Riverside Park, climbing trees and sliding down rocks. We spent days on end making up stories and plays. We loved to pretend. And we lived to fool people. We'd lean out Jenny's apartment window and strike up conversations with kids who were passing by. We'd tell them we were orphans, the oldest of ten brothers and sisters, and that we had to take care of ourselves.

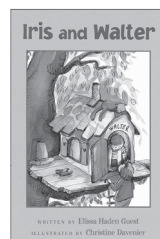
I didn't know it then, but all of this playing—and making up stories and characters—was really the beginning of my writing career!

Is it fun to be a writer? It's thrilling when the ideas come tumbling out of my head. It's lonely and miserable when I'm stuck. Fortunately, I have an insightful and gifted editor. My husband, too, is very encouraging. He's a film editor and he understands the process of piecing a story together, as well as the highs and lows that come with that process.

Where do my ideas come from? They come from my childhood experiences; they come from having worked as a nursery-school teacher; and they come from my own lovely children, who are the inspiration for Iris and Walter.

ELISSA HADEN GUEST is the award-winning author of *Iris and Walter*, a Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year, an ALA Notable Children's Book, and a Bulletin Blue Ribbon Book, as well as the other titles in the popular series. She lives with her family in San Francisco, California.

www.elissahadenguest.com



The Iris and Walter Series

Illustrated by Christine Davenier

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SCHOOL VISITS

I love visiting schools and meeting young readers.

For kindergarteners to third graders, I have a thirty-minute slide-show presentation. I read aloud my newest story and talk about the process of writing a book, where my ideas and characters come from, and how I'm a big rewriter. The children play an I Spy game and compare the artist's, Christine Davenier's, sketches with her finished artwork.

For second to fifth graders, I often extend the slide-show presentation to include a lively in-class writing project. The students and I talk about our favorite characters from books. Then we invent a character together and put that character into an exciting situation. This is a forty-five minute presentation.

BOOK-BASED PRESENTATIONS

IRIS AND WALTER: THE SCHOOL PLAY

- Act out the school play from my script.
- Make bug party place mats. Draw your favorite bugs on a piece of sturdy paper.
- Make Miss Cherry's bug cookies.

(Script and cookie recipe are available upon request.)

IRIS AND WALTER: THE SLEEPOVER

Have a pajama party!

I bring my overnight suitcase filled with a stuffed animal, a pillow, a blanket, and a favorite book. The children and I share our favorite bedtime stories, songs, and routines. The children write and illustrate a sleepover poem or story.

To schedule a school visit, please e-mail:
Susie Cohen
Rosenstone/Wender
38 E. 29th Street
New York, New York 10016
njcohen@aol.com

TEACHER/LIBRARIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

Dear Elissa,

Your books were a hit at the book fair and are now hard to keep on the library shelves! I was impressed with the instant rapport you developed with the students. It is rare that I have seen them so engrossed in a speaker. . . .

Amity Bateman, Librarian
Gideon Hausner Jewish Day School
Palo Alto, California

Dear Elissa,

I can't tell you how many teachers and students stopped by to tell me how much they enjoyed your visit. You have a gentle, caring manner that makes it easy for the students to interact with you. . . .

Your books are the perfect step for students when they transition from picture books to chapter books.

Mimi Vosper, Librarian
Glenridge Elementary
Renton, Washington
Grass Lake Elementary
Kent, Washington

Your visit to my first-grade class yesterday was a sheer delight—you have inspired budding authors!!!

Ginny Engberg, First-Grade Teacher
Monte Verdi Elementary School
San Bruno, California

OTHER AVAILABLE PROGRAMS

Elissa is available as a speaker, panelist, and writing-workshop instructor for children and adults.

She has spoken to members of the California Reading Association, the International Reading Association, and the American Library Association. She's been a children's book panelist at the San Francisco Public Library as well as at the San Francisco Writers Conference. She is frequently a faculty member at the Big Sur Children's Writing Workshop.

REVIEWS FOR BOOKS IN THE IRIS AND WALTER SERIES

★ "Splendid . . . Readers will delight in the youngsters' friendship, and bask in the reassuring love and support they receive from their families."
— *School Library Journal* (starred review)

"Iris and Walter will join Frog and Toad and Henry and Mudge in a prominent place on the easy-reading shelves."—*The Bulletin*

"Guest captures the unparalleled energy of young children as she gives voice to each child in the classroom."
—*The Horn Book*

"Iris and Walter are endearing individualists, with interesting taste in headgear. They are a refreshing addition for this age group . . . a perfect pair of friends, created by a perfectly matched team."—*School Library Journal*