



Inside
THE UPSIDE OF
ORDINARY
An interview with
debut novelist
SUSAN LUBNER

Q: *What was the inspiration behind the book?*

A: I am fascinated by reality TV and society's obsession with watching it, but even more so by the people who are so open and willing to participate! I am amazed that so many people seem obsessed with being famous, to the point that they are willing to sacrifice their privacy and, in some cases, their dignity.

Q: *What makes this book special to you? What important message do you feel it brings to young readers?*

A: One of the things that makes *The Upside of Ordinary* special to me is that it is my first middle grade novel. But I love Jermaine's resolve mixed with her naïveté. The message I hope Jermaine leaves with readers is that we can sometimes get distracted looking for ways to attain bigger and better. We need to be careful that we don't overlook what's really simple and special about our own everyday lives.

Q: *What was your favorite book growing up?*

A: I loved anything Nancy Drew! Before that my favorite was Robert McCloskey's *Blueberries for Sal*. I also loved *Richard Scarry's Best Word Book Ever*, Russell Hoban's *Bread and Jam for Frances*, and Marie Hall Ets's *Automobiles for Mice*, which had a pretty gruesome ending for a picture book!

Q: *What is your favorite memory from childhood?*

A: Spending weekends at my grandparent's home in Rockland, Maine, is a favorite memory. My grandmother always baked a yummy chocolate cake, and my grandfather loved to drive us around in

his enormous car. We'd go for ice cream or hang out in his clothing store, where he'd let me play with the adding machine on the counter and pretend I owned the place! Sometimes he would take us to the shore and down to "the docks" to meet fishermen who would sell us lobsters and clams.

Q: *Did you have any pets when you were young? If so, which one was your favorite?*

A: I always had pets growing up. We had fish, turtles, gerbils, hamsters, lots and lots of cats (though not all at once), and a black Lab named Molly. Today I have two cats, Buzz and Woody, and a dog, a standard poodle named Bailey. They are all my favorites! We have had hamsters too; in fact, the scene in the book in which Jermaine talks about bringing home a hamster and ending up with seven a few days late . . . that really happened to me . . . twice!



Q: *What inspired you to write and when did you know you would become an author?*

A: I have always enjoyed writing even as a young girl. I wrote (and illustrated) my first picture book in second grade. When I was in college, one of my professors encouraged me to submit my work to a local collegiate magazine called *Sidelines*. I did, and my story won first place in a writing contest! That gave me a boost of confidence and made me take my writing a little more seriously. After college I continued to take writing courses from time to time; and one day, while at a bookstore, I saw an ad for a workshop on writing for children. At the time my oldest daughter was about two, and I was reading and enjoying a lot of children's books already. So I took the course and the rest, as they say . . . well . . . you know!

Q: *If there is one thing you could tell your readers about life, what would you say?*

A: One of my favorite sayings (because I find it to be so true) is that the only thing constant in life is change. You will meet many people; some will come and go; you may move, change schools, change jobs . . . sometimes change can be exciting but also scary. That's why I would tell my readers that it is so important to find a passion in your life. Something you can call your own, whether it's a love of writing, painting, volunteering, running races, cooking—whatever it is that you can turn to that will bring you joy no matter what else is going on in your world.

THE UPSIDE OF ORDINARY

by Susan Lubner

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