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Barbara Cooney

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About this Person

Born: August 06, 1917 in Brooklyn, New York, United States

Died: March 10, 2000 in Portland, Maine, United States

Nationality: American

Updated: Mar. 31, 2004

PERSONAL INFORMATION:

Family: Born August 6, 1917, in Brooklyn, NY; died after a long illness on March 10, 2000, at the Maine Medical Center in Portland, Maine; cremated; daughter of Russell Schenck (a stockbroker) and Mae Evelyn (an artist; maiden name, Bossert) Cooney; married Guy Murchie (an author and war correspondent), December, 1944 (divorced, March, 1947); married Charles Talbot Porter (a physician), July 16, 1949; children: (first marriage) Gretel Goldsmith, Barnaby; (second marriage) Charles Talbot, Jr., Phoebe. Education: Smith College, B.A., 1938; also attended Art Students League, 1940. Politics: Independent.

CAREER:

Freelance author and illustrator, 1938--. *Exhibitions:* Cooney's works are held in the Kerlan Collection at the University of Minnesota; the de Grummond Collection at the University of Southern Mississippi; the Northeastern Children's Literature Collection at the University of Connecticut; in museums at Rutgers University and Bowdoin College; and in the public libraries of Gary, IN; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania; and Milwaukee, WI. Military service: Women's Army Corps, World War II, 1942-43; became second lieutenant.

AWARDS:

New York Herald Tribune's Children's Spring Book Festival Honor Book, 1943, for *Green Wagons*, and 1952, for *Too Many Pets*; American Library Association Notable Book citation, 1948, for *American Folk Songs for Children in Home, School and Nursery School*, 1958, for *Chanticleer and the Fox*, and 1974, for *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose*; Caldecott Medal from the American Library Association, 1959, for *Chanticleer and the Fox*, and 1980, for *Ox-Cart Man*; Chandler Book Talk Award of Merit, 1964; Child Study Association of America Children's Books of the Year, 1969, for both *Christmas Folk* and *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat*, 1971, for both *Hermes, Lord of Robbers* and *Book of Princesses*, 1973, for *Down to the Beach*, 1974, for *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose*, 1975, for *Lexington and Concord, 1775*, and 1986, for *The Story of Holly and Ivy, The Little Fir Tree, Christmas in the Barn*, and *Emma*; *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose* was included on *School Library Journal's* Best Books List, 1974; *New York Times* Outstanding Books of the Year, 1974, for *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose*, 1975, for *When the Sky Is Like Lace*, and 1979, for *Ox-Cart Man*; Silver Medallion from the University of Southern Mississippi, 1975, for outstanding contributions to the field of children's books; Medal from Smith College, 1976, for her body of work; *Ox-Cart Man* was selected one of *New York Times* Best Illustrated Books of the Year, 1979; Notable Children's Trade Book in the Field of Social Studies, National Council for the Social Studies and Children's Book Council, 1982, for *Tortillitas para Mama and Other Nursery Rhymes*, and 1986, for *The Story of Holly and Ivy*; National Book Award for Hardcover Picture Book from the Association of American Publishers, 1983, and *New York Times* Best Book of the Year, 1983, both for *Miss Rumphius*; Notable Children's Book, Association for Library Services to Children, American Library Association, 1984, for *Spirit Child*; *Boston Globe-Horn Book Award* honor list, 1989, for *Island Boy*; Ph.D., Fitchburg State College, 1988; Keene State College Children's Literature Festival Award, 1989; McCord Children's Literature Citation, 1990; Lupine Award, 1990, for *Hattie and the Wild Waves*; Kerlan Award, 1992, for body of work; honorary doctorates from the University of Maine at Machais, Westbrook College, and Bowdoin College, in 1994, 1995, and 1996, respectively; proclaimed an official state treasure of Maine, 1996.

WORKS:

WRITINGS BY THE AUTHOR:

FOR CHILDREN; SELF-ILLUSTRATED, EXCEPT AS NOTED

- *The King of Wreck Island*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1941.
- *The Kellyhorns*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1942.
- *Captain Pottle's House*, Farrar, 1943.
- (Adapter) Geoffrey Chaucer, *Chanticleer and the Fox*, Crowell (New York City), 1958.
- *The Little Juggler: Adapted from an Old French Legend*, Hastings House (New York City), 1961, new edition, 1982.
- (Adapter) *The Courtship, Merry Marriage, and Feast of Cock Robin and Jenny Wren: To Which Is Added the Doleful Death of Cock Robin*, Scribner (New York City), 1965.
- (Adapter) Jacob Grimm and Wilhelm Grimm, *Snow White and Rose Red*, Delacorte (New York City), 1966.
- *Christmas*, Crowell, 1967, revised edition published as *The Story of Christmas*, illustrated by Loretta Krupinski, HarperCollins (New York City), 1995.
- (Editor) *A Little Prayer*, Hastings House, 1967.
- *A Garland of Games and Other Diversions: An Alphabet Book*, Holt (New York City), 1969.
- *Miss Rumphius*, Viking (New York City), 1982.
- (Reteller) J. Grimm, *Little Brother and Little Sister*, Doubleday (New York City), 1982.
- *Island Boy*, Viking, 1988.
- *Hattie and the Wild Waves*, Viking, 1990.
- *Eleanor*, Viking, 1996.

ILLUSTRATOR

- Bertil Malmberg, *Ake and His World*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1940.
- Frances M. Frost, *Uncle Snowball*, Farrar & Rinehart, 1940.
- Oskar Seidlin and Senta Rypins, *Green Wagons*, Houghton (Boston), 1943.
- Anne Molloy, *Shooting Star Farm*, Houghton, 1946.
- Phyllis Crawford, *The Blot: Little City Cat*, Holt, 1946.
- Nancy Hartwell, *Shoestring Theater*, Holt, 1947.
- L. L. Bein, *Just Plain Maggie*, Harcourt (San Diego), 1948.
- Lee Kingman, *The Rocky Summer*, Houghton, 1948.
- Ruth Crawford Seeger, *American Folk Songs for Children in Home, School and Nursery School: A Book for Children, Parents and Teachers*, Doubleday, 1948, Linnet, 1993.
- Child Study Association of America, *Read Me Another Story*, Crowell, 1949.
- Rutherford George Montgomery, *Kildee House*, Doubleday, 1949, Walker, 1994.
- Lee Kingman, *The Best Christmas*, Doubleday, 1949, reprinted, Peter Smith (Magnolia, MA), 1985.
- Phyllis Krasilovsky, *The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes*, Doubleday, 1950.
- Seeger, *Animal Folk Songs for Children: Traditional American Songs*, Doubleday, 1950.
- Nellie M. Leonard, *Graymouse Family*, Crowell, 1950.
- Child Study Association of America, *Read Me More Stories*, Crowell, 1951.
- Montgomery, *Hill Ranch*, Doubleday, 1951.
- Elisabeth C. Lansing, *The Pony That Ran Away*, Crowell, 1951.
- Kingman, *Quarry Adventure*, Doubleday, 1951, published in England as *Lauri's Surprising Summer*, Constable (London), 1957.
- Lansing, *The Pony That Kept a Secret*, Crowell, 1952.
- Mary M. Aldrich, *Too Many Pets*, Macmillan (New York City), 1952.
- Margaret Wise Brown, *Where Have You Been?*, Crowell, 1952, reprinted, Scholastic Book Services (New York City), 1966.
- Barbara Reynolds, *Pepper*, Scribner, 1952.
- Miriam E. Mason, *Yours with Love, Kate*, Houghton, 1952.
- Brown, *Christmas in the Barn*, Crowell, 1952.
- Catherine Marshall, *Let's Keep Christmas*, Whittlesey House, 1953.
- Seeger, *American Folk Songs for Christmas*, Doubleday, 1953.
- Leonard, *Grandfather Whiskers, M. D.: A Graymouse Story*, Crowell, 1953.
- Kingman, *Peter's Long Walk*, Doubleday, 1953.
- Lansing, *A Pony Worth His Salt*, Crowell, 1953.
- Jane Quigg, *Fun for Freddie*, Oxford University Press (New York City), 1953.
- Margaret Sidney, *The Five Little Peppers*, Doubleday, 1954.
- Brown, *The Little Fir Tree*, Crowell, 1954, reissued, 1985.
- Margaret G. Otto, *Pumpkin, Ginger, and Spice*, Holt, 1954.
- Helen Kay (pseudonym of Helen C. Goldfrank), *Snow Birthday*, Farrar, Straus (London), 1955.
- Louisa May Alcott, *Little Women; or, Meg, Jo, Beth, and Amy*, Crowell, 1955.
- Louise A. Kent, *The Brookline Trunk*, Houghton, 1955.
- Catherine S. McEwen, *Away We Go! One-Hundred Poems for the Very Young*, Crowell, 1956.
- Marshall, *Friends with God: Stories and Prayers of the Marshall Family*, Whittlesey House, 1956.
- H. Kay, *City Springtime*, Hastings House, 1957.
- Neil Anderson (pseudonym of Jerrold Beim), *Freckle Face*, Crowell, 1957.
- Henrietta Buckmaster, *Lucy and Loki*, Scribner, 1958.
- Harry Behn, *Timmy's Search*, Seabury (New York City), 1958.
- Margaret G. Otto, *Little Brown Horse*, Knopf (New York City), 1959.

- Elizabeth George Speare, *Seasonal Verses Gathered by Elizabeth George Speare from the Connecticut Almanack for the Year of the Christian Era, 1773*, American Library Association (Chicago), 1959.
- *Le Hibou et la Poussiquette* (French adaptation of *The Owl and the Pussycat* by Edward Lear), translated by Francis Steegmuller, Little, Brown (Boston), 1961.
- Walter de la Mare, *Peacock Pie: A Book of Rhymes*, Knopf, 1961.
- Noah Webster, *The American Speller: An Adaptation of Noah Webster's Blue-Backed Speller*, Crowell, 1961.
- Otto, *Three Little Dachshunds*, Holt, 1963.
- Sarah Orne Jewett, *A White Heron: A Story of Maine*, Crowell, 1963.
- Virginia Haviland, *Favorite Fairy Tales Told in Spain*, Little, Brown, 1963.
- *Papillot, Clignot, et Dodo* (French adaptation of *Wynken, Blynken, and Nod* by Eugene Field), translated by F. Steegmuller and Norbert Guterman, Farrar, Straus, 1964.
- Hugh Latham, translator, *Mother Goose in French*, Crowell, 1964.
- Anne Molloy, *Shaun and the Boat: An Irish Story*, Hastings House, 1965.
- Jane Goodsell, *Katie's Magic Glasses*, Houghton, 1965.
- Samuel Morse, *All in a Suitcase*, Little, Brown, 1966.
- Aldous Huxley, *Crowns of Pearblossom*, Random House (New York City), 1967.
- Alastair Reid and Anthony Kerrigan, *Mother Goose in Spanish*, Crowell, 1968.
- Edward Lear, *The Owl and the Pussy-Cat*, Little, Brown, 1969.
- Natalia M. Belting, *Christmas Folk*, Holt, 1969.
- Eugene Field, *Wynken, Blynken and Nod*, Hastings House, 1970.
- William Wise, *The Lazy Young Duke of Dundee*, Rand McNally (Chicago), 1970.
- Homer, *Dionysus and the Pirates: Homeric Hymn Number 7*, translated and adapted by Penelope Proddow, Doubleday, 1970.
- Felix Salten (pseudonym of Siegmund Salzmann), *Bambi: A Life in the Woods*, Simon & Schuster (New York City), 1970.
- *Book of Princesses*, Scholastic Book Services, 1971.
- Homer, *Hermes, Lord of Robbers: Homeric Hymn Number Four*, translated and adapted by Penelope Proddow, Doubleday, 1971.
- Homer, *Demeter and Persephone: Homeric Hymn Number Two*, translated and adapted by Penelope Proddow, Doubleday, 1972.
- John Becker, *Seven Little Rabbits*, Walker, 1972, 1994.
- May Garelick, *Down to the Beach*, Four Winds (Bristol, FL), 1973.
- Robyn Supraner, *Would You Rather Be a Tiger?*, Houghton, 1973.
- Dorothy Joan Harris, *The House Mouse*, Warne (New York City), 1973.
- Edna Mitchell Preston, *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose*, Viking, 1974.
- Zora L. Olsen, *Herman the Great*, Scholastic Book Services, 1974.
- Elinor L. Horwitz, *When the Sky Is Like Lace*, Lippincott (Philadelphia), 1975.
- Jean Poindexter Colby, *Lexington and Concord, 1775: What Really Happened*, Hastings House, 1975.
- Preston, *The Sad Story of the Little Bluebird and the Hungry Cat*, Four Winds, 1975.
- Marjorie Weinman Sharmat, *Burton and Dudley*, Holiday House (New York City), 1975.
- M. Jean Craig, *The Donkey Prince*, Doubleday, 1977.
- Aileen Fisher, *Plant Magic*, Bowmar, 1977.
- Ellin Greene, compiler, *Midsummer Magic: A Garland of Stories, Charms, and Recipes*, Lothrop (New York City), 1977.
- Donald Hall, *Ox-Cart Man*, Viking, 1979.
- Delmore Schwartz, *I Am Cherry Alive, the Little Girl Sang*, Harper (New York City), 1979.
- Norma Farber, *How the Hibernators Came to Bethlehem*, Walker, 1980.
- Wendy Ann Kesselman, *Emma*, Doubleday, 1980.
- Margot C. Griego and others, selectors and translators, *Tortillitas para Mama and Other Nursery Rhymes: Spanish and English*, Holt, 1982.
- John Bierhorst, translator, *Spirit Child: A Story of the Nativity*, Morrow (New York City), 1984.
- Rumer Godden, *The Story of Holly and Ivy*, Viking, 1985.
- Sergei Prokofiev, *Peter and the Wolf: A Mechanical Book*, Viking, 1985.
- Toni de Gerez, reteller, *Louhi, Witch of North Farm*, Viking, 1986.
- Gloria Houston, *The Year of the Perfect Christmas Tree: An Appalachian Tale*, Dial (New York City), 1988.
- Alice McLerran, *Roxaboxen*, Lothrop, 1991.
- Michael Bedard, *Emily*, Doubleday, 1992.
- Jane Yolen, *Letting Swift River Go*, Little, Brown, 1992.
- Ruth Sawyer, *The Remarkable Christmas of the Cobbler's Sons*, Viking, 1994.
- Opal Whiteley, *Only Opal: The Diary of a Young Girl*, selected and adapted by Jane Boulton, Philomel (New York City), 1994.
- Mary Lin Ray, *Basket Moon*, Little Brown, 1998.

OTHER

- *Twenty-Five Years A-Graying: The Portrait of a College Graduate, a Pictorial Study of the Class of 1938 at Smith College, Northampton, Massachusetts, Based on Statistics Gathered in 1963 for the Occasion of Its 25th Reunion*, Little, Brown, 1963.

Contributor of illustrations to periodicals.

MEDIA ADAPTATIONS:

Chanticleer and the Fox was adapted as a sound filmstrip by Weston Woods, 1959; *Wynken, Blynken and Nod* was adapted as a

sound filmstrip by Weston Woods, 1967; *Owl and the Pussycat* was adapted as a sound filmstrip, 1967; *The Man Who Didn't Wash His Dishes* was adapted as a sound filmstrip by Weston Woods, 1973; *Squawk to the Moon, Little Goose* was adapted as a sound filmstrip by Viking, 1975; *Miss Rumphius* was adapted as a filmstrip with cassette by Live Oak Media (Somers, NY), 1984; *Ox-Cart Man* was adapted as a filmstrip with cassette by Random House and as a videocassette by Live Oak Media; *How the Hibernators Came to Bethlehem* was adapted as a filmstrip with cassette by Random House; *American Folk Songs for Children* was adapted as a cassette.

Sidelights

Described by Kay E. Vandergrift in *Twentieth Century Children's Writers* as "one of the most prolific and most versatile author/illustrators in the children's book field," Barbara Cooney is recognized for bringing dignity, delicacy, sensitivity, and technical skill to over a hundred books--mostly for children. Praised for her diversity, insight, thorough research, and attention to detail as well as for the love of nature and strong sense of place in her works, Cooney is the creator of picture books, retellings, fiction, and nonfiction. As a reteller, Cooney is acknowledged for bringing freshness, wit, and accessibility to stories that come from historical sources. As an artist, she is well known for creating a recognizable style while using a variety of mediums as well as for developing a scratchboard technique and the craft of color separation.

Cooney went from using black-and-white line drawings, a medium with which she was initially forced to stay by her publishers, to drawing in charcoal, working with collage, and painting in watercolor and in bright hues with acrylics on fiber. Celebrated for her evocation of landscapes and exteriors, Cooney is often acknowledged for her success in matching her illustrations, which reflect primitive and folk art as well as medieval designs and cultural details from her international travels, to the texts of the books she illustrates. In honor of her talents as an artist, Cooney was twice awarded the Caldecott Medal, for *Chanticleer and the Fox* in 1959 and for *Ox-Cart Man*, a book by Donald Hall for which she provided the pictures, in 1980. Lee Bennett Hopkins, a writer for whom Cooney has illustrated four books, wrote in *Books Are By People*: "Her work . . . is interrelated with her life. Her books are gay, entertaining, and simple, yet complex. Is it any wonder that children young and old enjoy books by Barbara Cooney?"

Cooney is perhaps best known for her adaptations of European tales and for her picture books with American settings. Several of these latter works are set in the nineteenth or early twentieth centuries and include autobiographical background information. In these books, which are often regarded as superior social histories, Cooney expresses the continuity and interconnectedness of generations; her characters are frequently young children and the elderly, especially those who are considered somewhat different and who are in tune with the natural world. Cooney underscores her works with her affection for New England, particularly for her adopted state of Maine. Cooney's books are often noted for their authenticity and accurate depiction of lifestyle.

Born in Brooklyn, New York, Cooney comes from a long line of artists. Cooney once told *CA*, "I've been drawing pictures for as long as I can remember. It's in the blood. . . . My favorite days were when I had a cold and could stay home from school and draw all day long" "I was no more talented . . . than any other child," Cooney related in *Horn Book*, "I started out ruining the wallpaper with crayons, like everybody else, and making eggs with arms and legs. Most children start this way, and most children have the souls of artists. Some of these children stubbornly keep on being children even when they have grown up. Some of these stubborn children get to be artists. . . . I became an artist because I had access to materials and pictures, a minimum of instruction, and a stubborn nature." "I wanted a liberal arts education, and so went to Smith College," she told *CA*: "In art, I was way behind technically, and what I've learned I have had to teach myself. To this day, I don't consider myself a very skilled artist." At Smith, Cooney took courses mainly in art history. "As graduation neared," she told *CA*, "I realized I had to decide what to do with myself in the 'real world.' Book illustration, I thought, might be a way to use what little talent I judged I had." Cooney began receiving instruction in etching and lithography at the Art Students League in New York, "not so much," she confided to *CA*, "because I wanted to work in those mediums but because I thought they would help my black-and-white drawing skills. After not too long, I put together a portfolio, trudged it around to art directors and landed some work."

Throughout her career as an illustrator, Cooney has provided pictures for the works of such authors as Margaret Wise Brown, Edward Lear, Margaret Sidney, Delmore Schwartz, Louisa May Alcott, Walter de la Mare, Elizabeth George Speare, Sarah Orne Jewett, Eugene Field, Rumer Godden, Homer, Jane Yolen, Felix Salten, Virginia Haviland, Noah Webster, Ruth Sawyer, and Aldous Huxley. Soon after beginning work as an illustrator, Cooney began writing and illustrating books of her own. Although she received positive reviews for her first three books, all stories for middle graders, the picture book *Chanticleer and the Fox* was recognized as a work of special merit. A retelling of the fable from Geoffrey Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* in which a handsome rooster nearly loses his life through the flattery of a sly fox, *Chanticleer* is lauded both for its contemporary flavor and for the beauty of its illustrations, line drawings with five-color overlays. A reviewer in the *Chicago Tribune* described the book as a volume "destined by its design and superb illustrations to be a modern classic" and claimed that many children will "love and recognize this book as a treasure. Many adult collectors will claim it for their own." Margaret Sherwood Libby of the *New York Times Book Review* echoed this praise, calling *Chanticleer* a "book for all ages to cherish," while Aldren A. Watson of *Horn Book* maintained, "To lure, coax, or lead the reader to take part in such a story is an art, but to have combined art and artistry in such an ancient and repeatedly published tale as that of Chanticleer is an achievement. It has the look of having appeared now for the first time."

Cooney began *Chanticleer*, she said in her Caldecott Medal acceptance speech, because "I just happened to want to draw chickens." Searching for a vehicle, she found her inspiration when she was sick in bed one day with the grippe--"I do seem to get my best ideas when I'm slightly feverish," she noted--and read "The Nun Priest's Tale" in Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* collection. "I tried to convey in my pictures," she related, "what Chaucer conveys in his words: that people--in this case, chickens--can be beautiful and lovable even when they are being ridiculous. There is another reason, too, for *Chanticleer and the Fox*, and that is, I do think Chaucer is possible for children. . . . [They] have a greater capacity of accepting the world as it is than is generally supposed." Cooney does not think children "should read only about things they understand." Instead, she feels that "a man's reach should exceed his grasp." So should

a child's. For myself, I will never talk down to--or *draw* down to--children. Much of what I put into my pictures will not be understood. . . . Yet if I put enough detail in my pictures, there may be something for everyone. Not all will be understood, but some will be understood now and maybe more later. That is good enough for me."

Writing in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, Cooney said, "It was not until I was in my forties, in the fifth decade of my life, that the sense of place, the *spirit* of place, became of paramount importance to me. It was then that I began my travels, that I discovered, through photography, the quality of light, and that I gradually became able to paint the mood of place." When she began to work on her story *The Little Juggler*, a retelling of the legend of the juggler of Notre Dame, Cooney went to France. She wrote in *Horn Book*, "And what unconsciously happened was that my characters began to be no longer isolated from their backgrounds. More and more they became part of the landscape, part of their environment. Perhaps a certain humility was born." Shortly thereafter, her editor asked Cooney to illustrate *Mother Goose in French* and *Mother Goose in Spanish*; the artist moved her family to both France and Spain and began traveling to several other countries. Cooney stated in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, "After traveling to many places, both physically and in my head, I finally came home again. I built a house on the coast of Maine, and there. . . I finally painted New England in full color. The pictures for Donald Hall's *Ox-Cart Man* were the first I did in the new house. They show the passage of the seasons in the New Hampshire hills."

Ox-Cart Man, a picture book about a nineteenth-century New Hampshire farmer who makes the long journey from his inland home to a coastal market, is illustrated with art that evokes early American primitive wood paintings while depicting the cycle of working and growing. Writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, Harold C. K. Rice called *Ox-Cart Man* "remarkable in any season," adding "It's the pictures that knock you out." *Horn Book* reviewer Mary M. Burns stated, "Like a pastoral symphony translated into picture book format, the stunning combination of text and illustrations recreates the mood of nineteenth-century rural New England." *Junior Bookshelf* reviewer Marcus Crouch claimed, "This book is a winner. . . . Here is a whole way of life set down and preserved in all its integrity and beauty." The book brought Cooney her second Caldecott Medal. After receiving the medal, Cooney felt that she had finished her apprenticeship as an author and illustrator; the award, she determined, gave her the freedom and assurance to do the books she wanted to do in the manner in which she wanted to do them.

"After [*Ox-Cart Man*]," declared Cooney in *Children's Literature Association Quarterly*, "came *Miss Rumphius*, which is so much my heart that I cannot see it clearly. It is many places, and all of them are part of me. . . . They are all part of me--and I am part of them." In an interview with Julia Smith in *Instructor*, the author said that the creation of *Miss Rumphius* was a major development in her art because, claimed Cooney, "she has a *real* soul." Smith concluded, "*Miss Rumphius* is the story of an artist's challenge. Wanting to add to the beauty of the world, an artist must search for the right means of adding to the beauty that already surrounds us. *Miss Rumphius* finds her answer and challenges the artist in all of us to find ours."

Miss Rumphius is a picture book inspired by a real woman--Hilda the Lupine Lady--who had went about planting flower seeds, addresses the theme of bequeathing beauty as a legacy. In Cooney's story, a young Alice Rumphius promises her grandfather that she will make the world more beautiful when she grows up. After becoming an international traveler, she comes back to her home town in Maine as an elderly woman to live by the ocean and to create something of beauty before she dies. Alice fulfills her promise to her grandfather by scattering five bushels of lupine seeds around the countryside. As *Publishers Weekly* critic predicted, Cooney received several honors for the book, including: the American Book Award in 1983, selected as a *New York Times* Best Book of the Year in 1983, and in 1989, the Children's and Young Adults' Services Section of the Maine Library Association created the Lupine Award in honor of Cooney and *Miss Rumphius*.

With her next original picture book, *Island Boy*, Cooney created a hymn to self-reliance and the continuity of life by describing the life and death of a nineteenth-century man on a remote New England island. Loosely based on the story of John Gilley, who was born on a lonely Maine island in the nineteenth century, the story is noted for sensitively presenting death to the picture book audience. "Cooney's flawless transitions between the generations and between third-person points of view always maintain a child's perspective," wrote Ginny Moore Kruse in *School Library Journal*. A *Kirkus Reviews* critic claimed that Cooney's illustrations for "this tribute to self-reliance and an ideal America are as lovely as the ones for *Miss Rumphius* and as evocative of their setting as those in *Ox-Cart Man*." Writing in the *New York Times Book Review*, Rebecca Lazaar-Okrent concluded that *Island Boy* "is an invitation to our budding rocket scientists and corporate moguls to consider and vicariously enjoy another sort of successful life. For them, Ms. Cooney has created a book in which every word and picture fits her story and its themes." In an interview with Robert D. Hale in *Horn Book*, Cooney dubbed *Island Boy* her favorite work, for reasons she called "obvious."

Cooney's next work as an author/illustrator, *Hattie and the Wild Waves: A Story from Brooklyn*, is a picture book about her mother's childhood in New York City at the turn of the century. While describing Hattie's comfortable life in a Manhattan mansion, a summer house on Rockaway Beach, a Long Island estate, and a Brooklyn hotel, Cooney focuses on her character's decision to become an artist. "Cooney is at her best here," maintained Zena Sutherland in *Bulletin of the Center for Children's Books*, while Ilene Cooper of *Booklist* commented, "Cooney sets out to capture an era, and at this she succeeds, but the heart of the story is a girl's determination to follow her dream."

With *The Story of Christmas* (1995), an informational book for primary graders, Cooney traces the origins of a variety of global facts, legends, and customs that helped to define the celebration. The book is a revised edition of the author's earlier *Christmas* (1967). Although some reviewers questioned the reduction of Christian references in the revision, a reviewer in *Publishers Weekly* asserted that Cooney does "a commendable job" of bringing together biblical stories, legends of pagan festivals, and modern customs.

Eleanor is a picture biography of Eleanor Roosevelt that describes Roosevelt's life from her unhappy childhood through her graduation from an English boarding school at the age of eighteen, an experience that she said "opened the world" for her. According to Maria B. Salvadore in *Horn Book*, Cooney includes illustrations in *Eleanor* that "use a palette of reds and deep pinks to reflect Eleanor's growth in self-confidence." Barbara Kiefer of *School Library Journal* stated, "Cooney once again brings her unique vision to

biography," while Leslie Bennetts of the *New York Times Book Review* commented that "Ms. Cooney's tale is affecting; any child will find it easy to relate to this classic account of an ugly duckling." In an interview with Julie Yates Walton in *Publishers Weekly*, Cooney said: "I've done a lot of books based on history, but they were not totally factual. I loved writing this book because somehow I felt that I had done what I had never been able to do before: to write exact truth. Every word is researched and true, every sentence I tried to whittle down to its true meaning. I think that *Eleanor* is the nicest thing I've ever written."

Responding in *Horn Book* to queries as to why she became an illustrator, Cooney said, "The answer is that I love stories. . . . I love illustrating a good story." As to why she decided to make picture books for children, Cooney declared, "[In] the world of illustration, the picture-book field is far and away the most exciting. And . . . I am *not* making picture books for children. I am making them for *people*." Reflecting on her career, which spans over 50 years, Cooney once told *CA*, "As I look back on the decades I've been making books for children, I feel extremely grateful. I've been able to do the books I wanted in the way I wanted. And I have enjoyed some of the 'trappings' that accompany what we tend to think of as 'success.' But the trappings are of relatively minor importance. What counts is the mark on the page."

In 1997, Cooney contributed \$550,000 for a new library in her home town of Damariscotta, Maine, and she donated another \$280,000 for the purchase of additional property at the site. The library will open next year.

FURTHER READINGS:

FURTHER READINGS ABOUT THE AUTHOR:

BOOKS

- *Children's Literature Review*, Gale (Detroit), Volume 23, 1991.
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