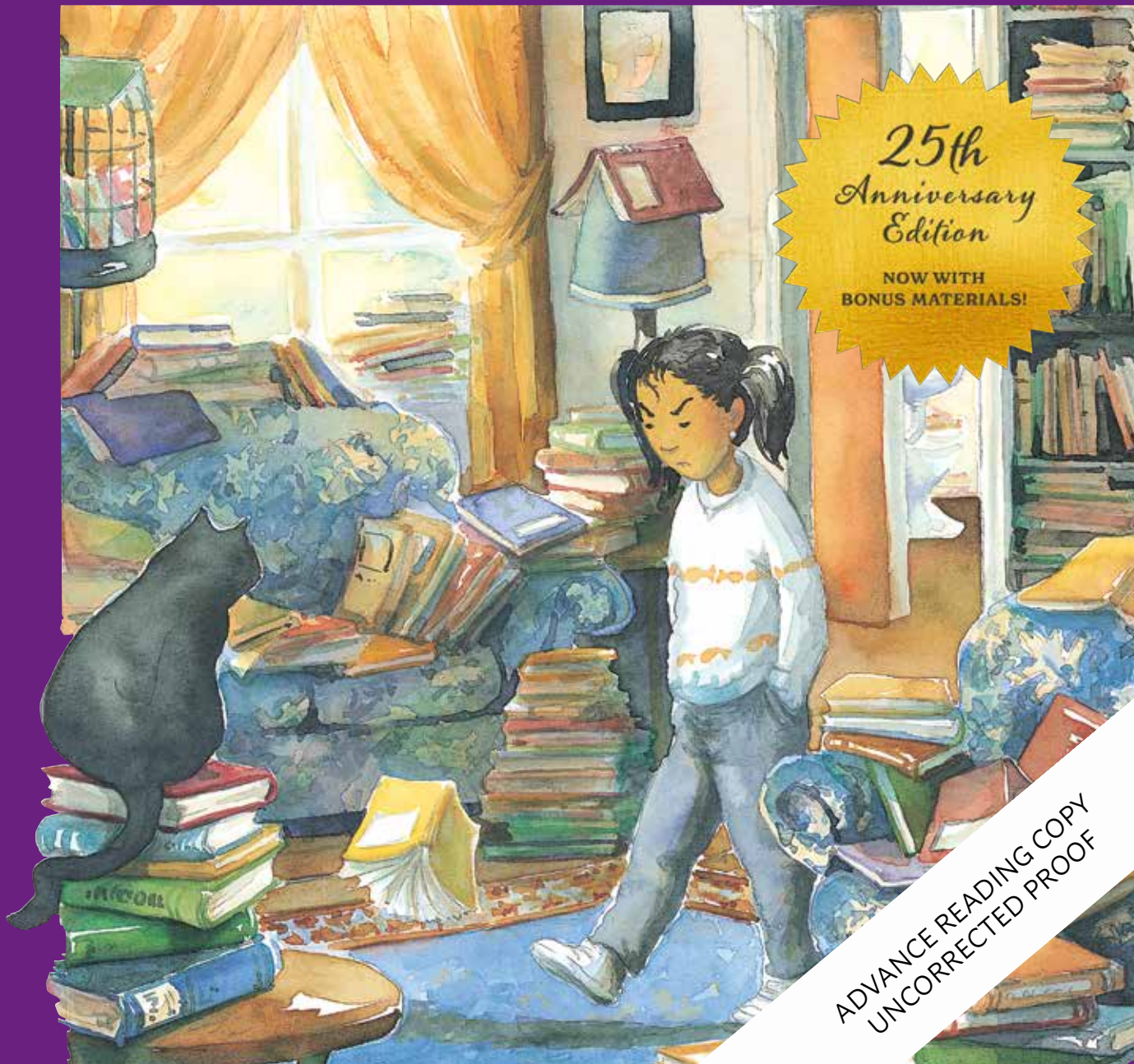


THE GIRL WHO HATED BOOKS



by MANJUSHA PAWAGI Illustrated by LEANNE FRANSON



THE GIRL WHO HATED BOOKS

25TH ANNIVERSARY EDITION

by
Manjusha Pawagi

Illustrated by
Leanne Franson

ADVANCE READING COPY
UNCORRECTED PROOF

Second Story Press

Once there was a girl named Meena. If you looked up her name in a book, you would find that it means “fish” in ancient Sanskrit. But Meena didn’t know that because she never looked up anything anywhere. She hated to read, and she hated books.

“They’re always in the way,” she said. And this was true because in her house books were everywhere. Not just on bookshelves and bedside tables where books usually are, but in all sorts of places where books usually aren’t.

There were books in dressers and drawers and desks, in closets and cupboards and chests. There were books on the sofa and books on the stairs, books crammed in the fireplace and stacked on the chairs.



Worse still, her parents were always bringing home MORE books. They kept buying books and borrowing books and ordering books from catalogues. They read at breakfast and lunch and dinner. But when they asked Meena if she wanted to read, she would stamp her feet and shout, “I *hate* books!” And when they tried to read out loud to her, she would put her hands over her ears and shout even louder, “I HATE BOOKS!”

There was probably only one person in the world who hated books more than Meena. And that was her cat, Max. A long time ago, when he was just a kitten, an atlas fell on his tail. It bent the tip like a pipe cleaner. Ever since, he’s tried to stay on top of the books rather than below them.



One morning, after Meena moved all the books out of the sink to brush her teeth, she went to the kitchen to get breakfast for herself and Max. First she climbed onto a stack of encyclopedias so she could reach the cereal. Then she opened the fridge and moved a pile of magazines to get the milk. She poured some for herself and some for Max.

“Max!” she called. “Breakfast is ready!”

But Max didn’t come. She tried again. “Max!” she called. “Breakfast is ready!” He still didn’t come. “Where could he be?” she wondered. She looked in the bathtub and behind the dryer. She looked under the stairs and on top of the clock. She found more books, but she didn’t find Max.



Suddenly she heard a loud “Meeeyoooow!” She ran into the dining room and there he was, stuck on top of the tallest stack of books in the house. It was made up of all the books her parents kept buying her and she kept refusing to read. At the bottom were big shiny picture books from when she was a baby. In the middle were alphabet books and nursery rhymes. At the top, right by the ceiling, were fairy tales and adventure stories. They were all covered in dust.

“Don’t worry Max,” Meena called up to him. “I’ll rescue you!” She started to climb the pile of books. At first it was easy because the picture books had hard covers, and she felt as if she were climbing stairs. But when she reached the paperbacks her foot slipped on a book of poetry. She lost her balance and started to slide.



CRASH! The books went flying. They fell every which way, the bindings cracking open for the very first time, and the pages flipping apart. As they fell, strange things began to happen. People and animals started falling out of the pages and tumbling to the ground. They dropped one on top of the other, scattering the books and toppling the chairs.



There were princes and princesses, fairies and frogs. Then, a wolf and three pigs and a troll on a log. Humpty Dumpty went flying and then broke in half, behind Mother Goose and a purple giraffe. There were elephants, emperors, emus and elves and an assortment of monkeys tangled up in themselves.

But most of all there were rabbits, falling this way and that. Wild rabbits, and white rabbits, and rabbits with hats.



Meena sat there in the middle of it all, too surprised to move. “I thought books were full of words, not rabbits!” she said, as six more came rolling out of a book beside her.

By now, she couldn’t recognize the dining room at all. The elephant was balancing on a coffee table juggling the good china plates. The monkeys had torn down the curtains and were using them as capes. And the rabbits were nibbling on the table legs.



“**S**top!” cried Meena. “Go back!” But there was so much barking and grunting and thumping going on that no one heard her speak. She grabbed the nearest rabbit and tried to stuff him into a cookbook, but that scared him so much he wriggled out of Meena’s grasp and ran away. She opened another book, and four ducks flew out. She slammed it shut again.

“This won’t work,” said Meena. “I don’t know who goes in which book.” She thought for a minute. “I know,” she said. “I’ll go to everyone and ask them where they belong.”



She started with one strange creature she didn't recognize at all. "Who are you?" she asked. "A is for Aardvark!" the animal said angrily, and stomped off in search of her Alphabet Book.

She found a wolf sobbing under the dining room table and asked him where he belonged. "I can't remember if I'm from *Little Red Riding Hood* or *The Three Little Pigs*!" he wailed and blew his nose on the table cloth. But Meena couldn't help him because she had never read either story.

Then she had another idea. She picked up the nearest book and began to read aloud. "Once upon a time," Meena began. "In a land far, far away ..."



Slowly, the creatures stopped jumping and howling and gibbering and chattering. They crept closer and closer to hear what happened next. Soon they were all sitting in a circle around her, listening to her read.

When Meena reached the top of the second page, the pigs in the circle jumped up. “That’s us!” they cried. “That’s our page! That’s our book!” They leapt up out of the circle, dove into her lap, and disappeared into the book. Meena clapped it shut before they could pop out again.

She grabbed another story. One by one she began reading all her books. And one by one the creatures found out where they belonged.



At last, there was just one little rabbit in a little blue coat left in the room. Meena slowly picked up a book. It was *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. “Maybe I could keep this rabbit with me,” she thought. She was beginning to feel lonely now that everyone else was gone.

But the little rabbit stood in front of her, shifting nervously from foot to foot and twitching his fuzzy nose. He was anxious to get back home. So, with a big sigh, Meena opened the last book. The rabbit hopped in, and with a flash of his white cotton tail, he was gone.

The house was quiet. Max sat on some books washing his face. Meena sighed. “I’ll never see those rabbits again!” she said.

Then she noticed that the books were still there, lying around her. She started to smile.



When her parents came in that afternoon they couldn't believe their eyes. Not because the curtains were gone and the dishes were broken and the table legs were chewed up. But because there, sitting in the middle of the room, was Meena. She was reading a book.



LETTER FROM THE AUTHOR

To the teacher in British Columbia who wrote to me in 2004 and never got an answer back: I am sorry and I want to explain. I loved your letter so much. I still remember how it opened,

Picture a noisy grade one classroom, the teacher starts to read your book out loud. Gradually the children quiet down, until the whole class is sitting mesmerized, waiting to hear what happens next....

I pictured your class being like the creatures gathered eagerly around Meena. It was such a great letter I felt paralyzed. What response would be good enough? Should I include bookmarks? What should I write? I was busy with a full-time job and two-year-old twins, and I kept putting it off until somehow the letter got lost. I tend to lie awake at night fretting about things I should have done differently, and ever since then, anytime I don't have something bigger to fret about, I fret about this. When I heard there would be a 25th-anniversary edition of *The Girl Who Hated Books*, my first thought was, "This is my chance to answer your letter!"

P.S. To anyone else who is thinking of writing me, I promise to write back.

- Manjusha Pawagi

AUTHOR Q&A



What inspired you to write this story?

I was supposed to be studying for law school exams; instead, I walked along Harbord Street in Toronto thinking, “Wouldn’t it be more fun to write a story than to study?” Suddenly, an image popped into my mind of a tall, teetering stack of children’s books. It seemed clear to me that if the books fell, all the characters would fall out. So, I wrote a story to answer the question, “How will they find their way back?”

Who are your favorite characters from stories you’ve read?

They are the ones I love so much I want to be them. I read and reread *Anne of Green Gables* by Lucy Maud Montgomery and the Ramona series by Beverly Cleary. And my husband and I reread *The Well at the End of the World* and all the other amazing stories by Robert D. San Souci to our children. I wished I was Anne, or Ramona, or Princess Rosamond because they are brave and smart and bursting with enthusiasm. And they all love to read.

When you were a child, did you like reading?

All I wanted to do was read. Our house was full of books like Meena’s house, and my parents loved to read like Meena’s parents. But even they thought I was going overboard and insisted that, occasionally, I do something else. I remember carefully spreading craft supplies out on my bedroom floor: glue, tissue paper, pipe cleaners. Then I would lie on my bed and read. If my parents ever knocked to see what I was doing, I would leap up and try to look like I was making paper flowers before they could open the door.

What would Meena be reading or doing today?

The magic of books is that Meena will still be doing what she was doing 25 years ago. She’ll still be madly trying to find ways to cram the characters back into their books and learning to love to read in the process. The comfort of children’s books is that the characters we love never grow up and move away from us. We can count on them to never change.



BONUS CONTENT!

BONUS CONTENT!

Is there anything that surprised you about your readers' reactions to the book over the past 25 years?

I was astonished by how far it travelled, both in distance—with editions around the world—and in time. The children who read it when it first came out are now reading it to their own children. But most of all, I was amazed by the creativity it inspired: an animated short by the National Film Board with an edgier Meena and funnier monkeys; a music video by Tiny Tales in India, where the chorus turns Meena's big pile of books into a big pile of friends; and stories from my readers. One boy told me that *The Girl Who Hated Books* should be in Meena's stack, and then when the books fell, Meena would fall out! A girl wrote that she hated to read until one day when her sister read my book to her. She couldn't wait to read it for herself and she's loved books ever since. She described it with such suspense I wrote back that she not only turned into a reader, but a writer!



AWARDS AND HONORS FOR THE GIRL WHO HATED BOOKS

A copy of the book was given to every Grade 1 student in Canada as part of Canadian Children's Book Centre and TD-Canada Trust for Canada for National Book Week. It was included in the *Globe and Mail's* list of top ten children's books and has been translated into more than a dozen languages worldwide.

The Girl Who Hated Books was also short-listed for the Ontario Library Association Blue Spruce Award, was a commended book in the Canadian Children's Book Centre Our Choice Book, and turned into an animated short by the National Film Board. You can find the video at the Second Story Press website.

This is a great story to share with reluctant readers who may be struggling to find their own joy in reading.

—Tina Buttineau, ETFO Voice

This is the perfect book to introduce children who do not like to read to books as more than just words.

—Library of Clean Reads



LETTERS FROM READERS

Dear Ms. Pawagi,

Your book has really spoken to me! Like Meena, when I was five, I used to hate books. I thought they were boring pieces of paper that had useless words, dull pictures, and absolutely no meaning to my life.

Oneday, after I came back home from school, my older sister told me she had a present for me in her bedroom, so like any five year old kid, I followed her. She put her backpack on her bed and told me to close my eye's. I heard her unzip her bag and pull something out, she carefully placed something cold and hard in my hands. I carefully opened my eyes, it was your book!

Before I could even do or say anything, she grabbed it out of my hands and started reading! At first I thought it was going to be boring but as she began to read I found myself at the edge of my seat, wanting to find out how Meena solves her problems. Your book has brought me from a book-hater to a librarian! I was a total maniac over books!

Sincerely,



Merlyn



Dear Ms. Pawagi:

I like your book very much. I am six years old - my birthday is in May, and I am in Grade 1.

I live in Thompson, Manitoba. My grandma brought me the book "The Girl Who Hated Books" when she was visiting from Ottawa. I took the book to class and my teacher read it to the whole class. My teacher loved the book. My whole class is talking about it, and they gave me treats out of their lunches because they liked it so much.

I like the last page of the book because she started to like books. I like your book and I want you to write more.

Jaime-Lynn

Dear Ms. pawagi,
I really like your book and
I would like to know who
is your favourite character
My favourite character
is Meena and I like the
bit where Meena was sat
down reading. I would
like to know if you
enjoyed writing your book?
Love sophie

18/5/99
Dear Ms. Pawagi,
I really enjoyed
your book. It was excellent
My favourite character
was the little rabbit.
How did you think up
the title?

Love Rosie xxx

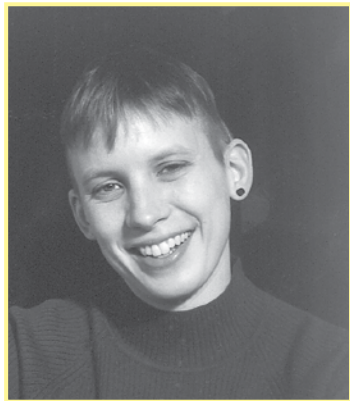
Dear Mrs Pawagi,
I liked your Book
very much I hope
you like my letter
I really love
the part when
all the animals
came out of the
book. My best
bit was when
Peter rabbit was the
last one to go in
the book.





MANJUSHA PAWAGI has a law degree from the University of Toronto and a journalism degree from Stanford University. She has worked as a reporter for CBC Radio in Charlottetown, P.E.I., and The Associated Press in St. Louis, Mo.; and as a lawyer for the Children's Aid Society of Toronto and the Office of the Children's Lawyer. She was appointed to the Ontario Court of Justice in 2009 and she is currently a family and youth court judge in Toronto. She is the author of a best-selling children's book, *The Girl Who Hated Books*, which has been translated into more than

a dozen languages and made into an award-winning animated short by the National Film Board of Canada. She lives in Toronto with her husband, Simon, children Jack and Anna, and a pet lizard who prefers to remain anonymous.



LEANNE FRANSON has been a fan of books, drawing and chocolate since her childhood in Saskatchewan. She now lives and works in Montreal with her dog and cat.



A BELOVED AND TIMELESS STORY CELEBRATES 25 YEARS!

“There were books in dressers and drawers and desks, in closets and cupboards and chests. There were books on the sofa and books on the stairs,” and Meena hates all of them, as does her cat Max, who is shakily balanced on a giant stack. As Meena tries to rescue Max, the books come crashing down, freeing a wonderland of characters and animals who take Meena on a fanciful and funny romp through the magic of reading.

Now translated into more than a dozen languages worldwide!

This 25th anniversary edition features an interview with the author, covers from the international editions, and letters from children—including readers who found their love of stories alongside Meena for the very first time!



This is a playful and satisfying story that explores the pleasures of reading with humour and wit.... Leanne Franson's rollicking illustrations capture the chaos of the hodge-podge of characters as well as the magic of their quiet, intense listening as Meena reads their books.

—Quill & Quire

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