

Low-Residency MFA in Writing for Children & Young Adults faculty information:

Liza Ketchum

www.lizaketchum.com

Biography:

Liza Ketchum is the author of fourteen books for young people, including the historical novel *Where the Great Hawk Flies*, winner of the 2006 Massachusetts Book Award for Children's Literature and the Boston Authors Club/Julia Ward Howe Prize for Young Readers. Other titles focused on American history are the popular serialized adventure novel, *Orphan Journey Home*, and the non-fiction titles *Into a New Country: Eight Remarkable Women of the West* (an ALA "Best Book" for 2001), and *The Gold Rush*, a companion to the PBS series "The West." Her quartet of young adult novels includes *Blue Coyote*, which was nominated for a Lambda Literary award. She is also the author of a ghost story, two middle grade novels, biographies of women scientists, and the picture book, *Good-bye, Sammy*. "News!" a novel focused on San Francisco during the gold rush, is due out from Viking in 2009. Her books have appeared on the ALA's "Best Book lists," numerous state award lists, the Notable Social Studies Trade Book List, Bank Street College's "Best Book List," and on the NY Public Library's "100 Titles for Reading and Sharing" and their "List for the Teenage."

Liza has taught writing in the Boston area at Emerson College, at the Center for the Study of Children's Literature at Simmons College, at Grub Street Writers, and for the ASTAL Institute at Rhode Island College. She was a faculty member at Vermont College for five years before joining Hamline's program in 2007.

I Am Happy to Work with Students in the Following Genres/Areas:

Because my work covers many different genres, I enjoy working with students in any area of interest.

Other Things to Know About Me as an Advisor:

I see the advisor's role as collaborative, where the coach and the writer work together for the benefit of the story, essay, poem, or non-fiction narrative at hand. I like to focus on a writer's strengths, and my work with students takes the form of an ongoing dialogue. When I critique a manuscript, I pose questions to encourage the writer to articulate his/her story's vision and to open up those places where a story might be blocked. Whether working on fiction or non-fiction, I hope to help the writer discover the emotional line, the energy that propels the story forward. I like to challenge my students to take risks, so I may encourage the picture book writer to try writing a short story or a novel; the novelist to experiment with creative non-fiction or memoir; the non-fiction writer to play with poetry. During the semester, I may assign mini-exercises or specific readings in order to help students with issues of craft or challenges they face in their writing. I believe that everyone has a story to tell and I look forward to sharing the courageous journey that each writer takes when he or she embarks on this program.

Practical issues: I receive student work by e-mail, print it out, and return it in SASEs provided by the students at the residency. (Students reimburse me for printing costs, which usually run about \$10.) I make notes on the hard copy and also write a lengthy cover letter, which I send back via e-mail so that the student has the letter before the hard copy returns. I communicate with students solely by e-mail, except for one telephone conversation that we set up to take place mid-semester. At the beginning of the semester, I give my new group a name, and we exchange e-mail addresses so that we can share thoughts about books, movies, theatre, etc. as well as general questions that might arise.

Books of Mine I Recommend That You Read:

Contemporary novels: *Twelve Days in August*, and *Blue Coyote* (companion YA novels)

Historical fiction: *Orphan Journey Home*, or *Where the Great Hawk Flies*

Middle grade novel: *Allergic to My Family*, or *The Ghost of Lost Island*

Non-fiction: *The Gold Rush*, or *Into a New Country: Eight Remarkable Women of the West*