

Q&A with Megan McDonald



When and why did you decide to write this first-ever book starring both Judy Moody and her brother, Stink?

When my sister and I were both living in Minnesota, she had a mailman whose name was Jack Frost. We thought that was quite hilarious, and I've never forgotten it. The idea of Jack Frost as a mailman who has "Santa-like" powers has been with me for a long time. I began thinking Stink could want snow for Christmas more than anything, and Judy could be into just the opposite—a Hawaiian Christmas. I wasn't sure if it would be a Stink book or a Judy Moody book, and Mary Lee Donovan, my editor, suggested, why not both? We talked over lots of possibilities, but the most exciting was her suggestion that maybe this book, being different from the others in the series, could appear in full color. My readers have been pleading with me for a long time to get to see Judy and Stink in color. So *voilà!*

How did writing a book about both siblings differ from writing either a Judy Moody book or a Stink book?

It was a challenge. . . . Judy kept trying to take over the story (you know how bossy she is!), so I had to make sure that Stink had his say—and his day. It was so much fun to give Judy and Stink and their sister-brother dynamics the whole canvas. Best of all, though, are the moments when Judy gets to overcome her moodiness and do something bighearted. That's my favorite part of this book. (That and Stink dressing up like a snowflake and trying to fit through the doorway! For a long time now, I've been dying to have Stink dress up as either a snowflake or the *Titanic*.)



What was your favorite holiday tradition growing up?

I would have to say going with my dad to the Christmas tree farm. My sisters and I would all pile in and drive miles and miles through a snowstorm to get to a town called Cranberry, where we'd tromp through the forest, which was magically quiet from the hush of all the just-fallen snow. We were there to make sure Dad got the biggest and best tree, but we always came home with a Charlie-Browner, too—the one that looked lonely and in need of a home and a family for Christmas.

You've said before that sometimes, you think you *are* Judy Moody. What is it like to have a fictional alter ego who's been embraced by millions of kids around the world?

It makes my heart skip a beat. It's so thrilling to have readers who care so deeply about my characters. And I love that Judy Moody makes it OK for kids to think about and talk about their many moods—good and bad.

What's next for the brother-sister duo? Will there be more dual adventures to come?

I hope so! I can't really give it away yet, but here's a hint: think *treasure hunt!*



Q&A with Peter H. Reynolds

When and why did you decide to illustrate *Judy Moody & Stink: The Holly Joliday* in full color—a first for the brother-sister duo?



Although the Judy and Stink books have been created in black and white up till now, in my mind I have always seen the color. I grew up watching a lot of black-and-white TV and films, so I'm good at using my imagination to color things with no color. I was excited when Candlewick suggested that we actually use full color in this special holiday book. Finally, the world gets to see what my brain has been seeing for years!

Do you have a favorite holiday memory from your own childhood?

Our house, in Chelmsford, Mass., had no fireplace, so my dad bought the family a cardboard one. It had bricks printed on it, and in the hearth was a little light bulb with a bit of metal that swirled around it, giving the illusion of flickering fire behind the cardboard logs! I would sit and stare into the "fire," completely enchanted. I was equally impressed with the fact that Santa could get down our artificial fireplace, which made for an even more magical Christmas!

How has your journey as an artist evolved over time? Were you a creative kid, or did you need encouragement to express your inner artist?



I think I get the same exquisite thrill and satisfaction while drawing now as I did when I was six or seven, sprawled out on my bedroom floor, swimming in paper, pens, and markers. (Growing up in a house of accountants meant that we had lots of paper, adding-machine tape, grease pencils, and various other materials and tools that I put to good use.) My twin brother has always been a big supporter of my work. He would go through all the doodles I had produced in a school day and review them with me. I loved that he loved my art. He hasn't changed in four decades; he still is cheering me on.

I have been drawing Judy Moody and the whole cast of characters for almost a decade now. It gets easier and easier to draw them. As I read Megan McDonald's words, my mind immediately conjures up the scene. I know all the characters well—as though they are part of my family. I half expect to run into Judy or Stink on the street.



Through the *Judy Moody and Stink* books, you've reached millions of kids with your artwork. What is it like to have created a globally recognizable character?



It is amazing to me to have created characters who are known worldwide. When ever I go on school visits, as soon as I draw a curlicue, the kids cheer, "JUDY MOOOOODY!" I am stunned that they can tell who I am about to draw from just seeing that curly loop of hair. I pinch myself when I think how lucky I am to have collaborated with Megan McDonald and Candlewick Press to create the fantastically fun world of Judy Moody! I feel truly blessed!