

# The life and writing of caroline b. cooney assignment

Literature



**ASSIGN  
BUSTER**

The Life and Writing of Caroline Cooney (1947- Present) However famous and beloved an author she is, Caroline Cooney is an ordinary person that one could expect to see walking down the street. An avid lover of music, she plays the organ and is a member of two choirs (Faith 4). When she goes to visit schools, she enjoys it when students treat her as an equal and have discussions with her about her latest books and what they would like to see in the future (Faith 7). For an author who finds her readers' opinions important, these visits are essential.

Caroline Cooney is one of those authors, and though they are a chance to learn, she also views them as great fun. Surprisingly, she never finished college (Email 10), though she attended Indiana University, Massachusetts General Hospital of Nursing, and the University of Connecticut (Popular 69), she has never taken a writing course. Cooney does not consider these obstacles, however, and calls herself " self-taught" (Email 10). Many genres have been written by Caroline Cooney's versatile hand (Faith 1).

About half of them contain romantic elements, and the others are realistic fiction, suspense novels (Bio 5), horror, adventure, and thrillers (Popular 70). Since she does not restrict herself to one genre, she had at one point wished that she had written under several pseudonyms so as not to confuse her readers. Now, she is comfortable with her decision to use her real name (Faith 2). Obviously, from the proportion of romance to other genres, Caroline Cooney considers romance to be very important. She believes this, and also thinks that young girls cannot stop reading books of that type.

Actually, she believes that women her age cannot get enough of it either (Bio 6)! This shows that Cooney is truly a writer who incorporates into her writing not only what she is fond of, but the likes and dislikes of her readers as well (Faith 7). Among her favorite fan letters is one written by a twelve-year-old girl who hated to read; she admitted that the book by Cooney that she had been reading had actually been enjoyable and that she planned to read another book in the near future. Creating new readers is one of her main goals, and she is ecstatic when that goal is achieved (Q and A 1).

Creating plots was always why Caroline had a passion for writing (Cooney 1). When she is constrained by an already formulated character, the writing is not always as enjoyable because she is no longer able to make her own story (Q & A 4). Perhaps this is why her first eight novels of historical fiction were not published. Coincidentally, *The Ransom of Mercy Carter*, the story of a girl kidnapped by Native Americans, was her first novel of this genre to be published; the reason she wrote about Mercy was that there was little information about the girl herself except her date of birth and her name.

Cooney wanted to create her, to make her real (Q & A 2). Another reason was that the lesson to be learned from Mercy's situation is still applicable today. The same conflicts she faced still rage around us, when people believe that what one does is the "right" way, and that all others are wrong (Q & A 3). A simpler reason for authoring the book was that she had loved three books about Native American captives as a child, and the fascination with the topic carried over into adulthood (Q & A 2). Though Mercy Carter was a real person, her thoughts and fears were fiction in the book.

As in other works of historical fiction, it is difficult to create personalized characters and situations as the decision has been taken out of the author's hands; nothing can be changed very much, and there are no surprise endings (Q & A 2). " Ideas come from paying attention..." says Caroline (Email 11). All have seen the MISSING posters, but how many have written a book? Cooney often models her stories after actual events (Email 12), or issues featured on the news, like Driver's Ed, which is about a group of teenagers who, as a prank, inadvertently cause a car accident by removing the stop sign from the side of a road (Email 12).

Some come from personal experiences as well, like Emergency Room, which was written based on her time as a hospital volunteer. As many ideas as Cooney is able to come up with, she will be the first to admit that writing is not a one-man process; editors are essential. According to her, an editor is like a lifetime English teacher: always thinking that it is possible to do it better (Cooney 2). Editors also help to narrow down ideas and give advice about whether to continue a book into a series (Q & A 4).

They have also given her ideas, and as she says, " It is exciting to ' write to order'. It often involves an idea or characters I've never thought about before, and I have to tackle it cold like any other assignment. Editors have such good ideas! " (Bio 3). Burning Upwas actually born from a misconception. Cooney believed that just as Wade Sibley had been " smoked out" of town, her black music teacher had also been the victim of arson. After speaking with him, she realized her mistake, but he encouraged her to write the book, saying that it was " a tory that needed to be told (Faith 9 '

10). Some of these books hold no interest for her after they are published, but others stay close to her heart (Q & A 4). Despite the fact that she has authored seventy-five books so far in her writing career, Caroline Cooney is no workaholic (Faith 4). She works five days a week (Popular 70), and actually based her schedule at one point around her children's bus schedules, and follows the same schedule today. A very industrious woman, Cooney takes about three to four months to write a book, working on two or three at a time (Q & A 6).

She started out writing full manuscripts on paper (Email 2), and her proudest moment as an author was holding her first, handwritten, finished manuscript (Email 9). She then graduated to a typewriter, and now works in her office on the computer (Email 11). The process of writing books differs from novel to novel (Faith 8), though since she began writing for Scholastic she has written outlines for all her books (Bio 3). A fast typist, Cooney writes at the speed of light and leaves spaces so that she can add new ideas in later.

She thinks that writing the way she does is permissible as long as she goes back a number of times until the story is complete (Email 3). A piece of advice that she has voiced to her readers is " Learning to write is like learning a musical instrument...you have to practice every day" (Q & A 7) to get better. Cooney indeed has experience in this matter, from the incredible number of books she has produced. After seventy-five books, thinks she has the same style as at the start of her career but must admit that she has gotten quite a bit better (Q & A 5).

Some things said about her career choice puzzle her, however. She is opposed to the assumption that writing is difficult and dissatisfying, and instead says “ I love writing and do not understand why it is considered such a difficult, agonizing profession. I love all of it, thinking up plots, getting to know the kids in the story, their parents, backyards, pizza toppings” (Q & A 1). Cooney is a fulfilled individual who really enjoys what she does. From a beginning of “..... wiring with a pencil, between the children’s naps.... (Bio 2), to an award-winning authorship and even a movie based on the first two books in the\_ Janie\_ series (Bio 5), Cooney definitely has a right to be proud of herself. Works Cited “ Caroline B. Cooney. ” Authors and Artists for Young Adults, Vol. 32. Gale Group, 2000. Reproduced in Biography Resource Center. Farmington Hills, MI: Gale, 2008 (Bio) “ Caroline Cooney” at internet site (Cooney) Drew, Bernard A, The 100 Most Popular Young Adult Authors. “ Caroline Cooney. ” Englewood, NJ: Libraries Unlimited, 1997. (Popular) Sissi, Pamela Carrol. Caroline Cooney: Faith and Fiction\_. \_Lanham, MD: The Scarecrow Press Inc, 2001. (Faith)