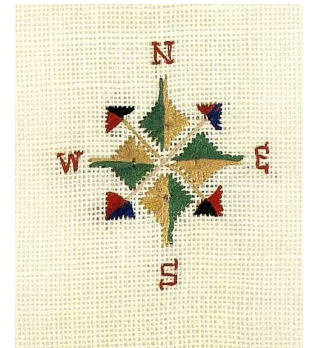
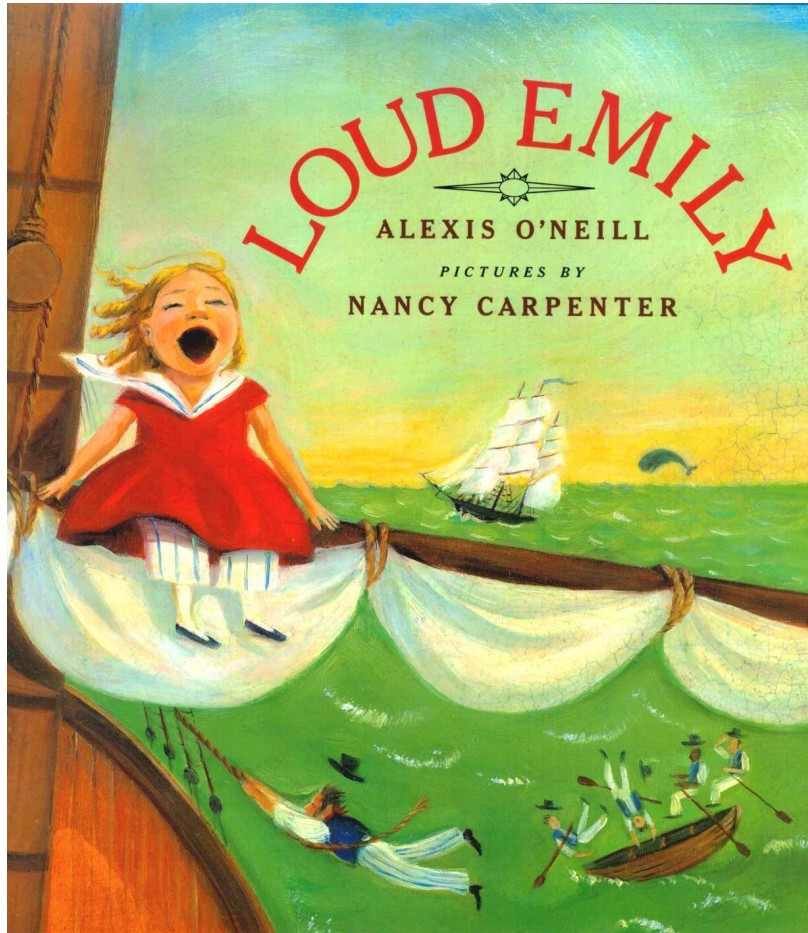


Because You Asked . . .

Questions & Answers

About *LOUD EMILY* and Author Alexis O'Neill



About Writing *Loud Emily*

How did you come up with your story?

When my good friend had a baby girl, she named her Emily. My friend told me that when Emily was in the nursery at the hospital, you could hear her above all the other babies! Even the nurses laughed about Emily's voice.

This tiny bit of a story must have stuck in my memory somewhere (and I'm not sure I even remember it right), but years later, I began to think about what it would be like to be a parent who had a kid who was very loud. Then I started thinking what it would be like to be a KID who was very loud (but not on purpose). I wondered what it would feel like to have everyone cringe each time you spoke. Also, over a hundred years ago, people used to believe that "Children should be seen and not heard." Imagine how hard it would be for any kid to be quiet! Especially Emily! So from that seed of a story, my book *LOUD EMILY* grew.

Where does the story take place?

Although Emily could have lived in almost any seaside town, I pictured her living in New Bedford, Massachusetts. When I was grown up, the business my dad worked for moved there. My sister, Donna, and I loved to go to the Whaling Museum and then shop for school supplies at Saltmarshes store.

How many times did you submit your manuscript before a publisher bought it?

I wrote the first draft for LOUD EMILY in a hurry in June 1993. I wanted to get a rough version done so I could bring it to a Society of Children's Book Writers and Illustrators Critiquenic in July. At a Critiquenic, writers sit in a circle in the park and hear the first three pages of their latest works-in-progress read out loud. Then the group tells what they like and what they think needs improvement in your work. In 1993, I knew I was on the right track with LOUD EMILY when people at the Critiquenic asked, "But what happens next?" when the reader stopped after the third page. I submitted my manuscript to six publishers before Simon & Schuster Books for Young Readers offered me a contract for it in November 1995. By then LOUD EMILY had gone through many revisions – including the title which used to be, *The Little Girl with the Very Big Voice*. Each revision made my story better and better. Simon & Schuster liked the version I sent to them and wanted to publish my book. The news made me want to dance on the ceiling!

How long have you been writing stories?

I began making up stories even before I went to school. I told them out loud to my family and friends. It was fun to see them laugh or ask, "And what happened next?" In school, I especially liked to write stories when I thought that the teacher might read them out loud. Back then, I had never met any professional writers. I didn't know that people could earn a living as a writer until I grew up.

What was the first piece you ever had published?

When I was in high school, *The Wakefield Daily Item* published a series of my articles and photographs that I sent to them from the Girl Scout Roundup in Idaho.

At first, I wrote stories for adults and submitted them to magazines off and on for many years. My first acceptance was

by *Writer's Digest Magazine*. It was a nonfiction article about how families should keep story albums using photographs. I was surprised when the editors at the magazine put my article in a special issue about how to write for children.

What else have you written?

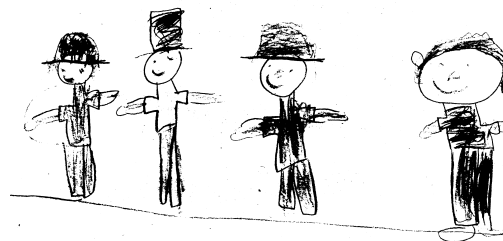
Before LOUD EMILY, I wrote two books about the history of Syracuse, New York – one for kids and one for adults -- and a book for kids about an artist named Gustav Stickley.

I also wrote Irish folk tales that were published in *Cricket* magazine, and I had my games, activities, photographs and articles published in *Cobblestone*, *Faces*, *Calliope*, *Odyssey* and *Spider* magazines.

At home, I have four drawers in a filing cabinet filled with stories and ideas for stories. I work on many different kinds of projects at once – both fiction and nonfiction.

Do you enjoy writing books for kids?

Remember the part in LOUD EMILY when she goes to Front Street with the cook for the very first time and she says, "I LOVE IT HERE!"? That's how I feel about writing for kids. I love it here!



To arrange for author appearances and workshops, contact:

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