

An Interview with the Creators

Newbery Honor-winning author Marion Dane Bauer, Caldecott-Medalist Emily Arnold McCully, and their editor, Grace Maccarone, tell readers about creating *IN LIKE A LION, OUT LIKE A LAMB*—the beautiful new picture book that so perfectly captures the emergence of spring.

Holiday House Editor Grace Maccarone

Every book has a story. Here's the story of *In Like a Lion, Out Like a Lamb*, which will have a special place in my heart, as it's one of the first projects I worked on when I joined Holiday House on January 19, 2010.

Mary Cash, the editor-in-chief, asked me to recommend an illustrator for Marion Dane Bauer's wonderful story. I had recently worked with Marion on a book that was published the previous January, and having an opportunity to work with her again was very exciting to me.

Emily Arnold McCully illustrated a book of mine that was published back in 1994. I love the energetic compositions and jewel-like palette in that book. I wanted to work with her again, but the opportunity never presented itself. As it happened, I saw Emily shortly before I began my new job. And I asked her what kind of manuscript she would like to illustrate.

She told me she was looking for something comical; and though not quite comical, Marion's manuscript is joyful and celebratory, and has humor and wit. (And fabulous language!!!!) I thought I'd give it a try. With the support of Mary Cash, Art Director Claire Counihan, and John Briggs, president of Holiday House, I sent the manuscript to Emily on the twenty-first. We were THRILLED when Emily accepted on January 22!

Emily said she pictured the art as a swirly romp in watercolors, and I thought, *YES, YES, YES!*

Every new stage we received—sketch dummy, final art, layouts, f & g's, and best of all, *THE BOOK*—was like Christmas. So in 2010 I had five Christmases. Oops! I mean six!



Author Marion Dane Bauer

My inspiration for this story was something I read one day on a children's lit listserv. A teacher complained that she couldn't find a single book centered on the idea of March coming in like a lion and going out like a lamb. And I thought, *That's a book I can write! It's my territory!* I love writing about the natural world and animals—real or fanciful—and I love weather . . . all kinds of weather. I'm especially fascinated by sudden changes of weather, which is a good thing since I live in the upper Midwest, where sudden changes of weather are the norm. For me the key to being able to write on any topic is that there must be something about the topic that feels important, interesting, exciting, meaningful, or moving to me. And March weather—and the old lion/lamb simile—captured my imagination in all those ways.

The idea came all at once in response to that posting. Making the idea work took many drafts and many weeks, probably months. (I've lost track now.) The lion worked easily. Contrary characters are fun and energetic and easy to write. The lamb came more slowly and was harder to make satisfying. Sweet, cuddly characters can be so boring! Coming up with the idea of the sneeze, finally, was what brought the two together in a way that satisfied me.

In fact, the sneeze was the only specific image I had in mind by the time I turned in the manuscript: first the lion's sneeze that brings in the lamb, then the lamb's sneeze that brings in summer. I didn't have a clue, though, about what those sneezes would/should look like or how the lion and the lamb should be depicted. I don't write with specific visual images in mind. I am very much a word person. I don't see my stories—even my picture books—in pictures as I'm creating the text. When I pick up a new picture book created by someone else, I tend to read it from beginning to end quickly, then I have to say to myself, "Oh, this is a *picture* book." And I go back and examine the pictures. What I always do, however, when I'm writing the text for my own picture books is to very consciously set up the opportunity for fourteen active, changing illustrations. What they will look like I leave to more visually creative imaginations than mine.

I began writing without any specific rhyme scheme in mind or without even having decided whether or not I wanted the text to rhyme. I find locked-in rhythm and rhyme limiting and often not very interesting. Rhyme is very appealing to the ear, though, especially to a young listener's ear, so I love to work with it in a slipping, sliding way, letting the rhymes find their own places in the text and create their own patterns as I go. So when the rhymes began presenting themselves, I went with them.

And the greatest reward for writing a picture book? It's the moment when I see the artist's work for the first time. Such a gift Emily's art is, so energetic and funny and sweet and, yes, beautiful! She brought so much to my small story, and having my name next to hers on the jacket is a privilege.

Illustrator Emily Arnold McCully

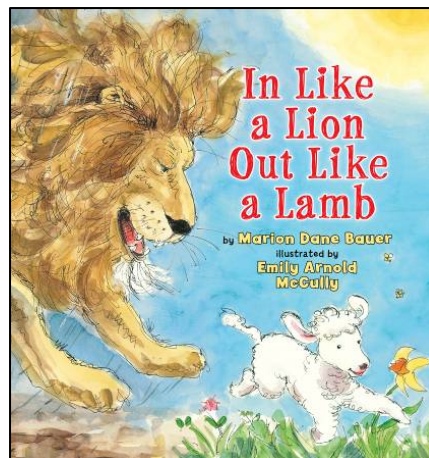
I leaped at the chance to work with Grace again, and she kindly asked me what sort of story would appeal to me. I said: something funny, with animals. The best humor comes out of character, and I find it easier to poke fun with animals than people. Marion's delightful manuscript has tremendous forward momentum, energy, and zip—and I visualized the scenes at once. I was already acquainted with the lamb from other books of my own, but I had never drawn a lion. That meant making myself familiar with lion



postures from photographs until I felt enough at home in the lion's skin to imagine some of the many positions this fellow assumes on his way in and out. He is, of course, both ferocious and absurd. The lamb is adorable and smug, nasal allergies notwithstanding. The child is meant to be a boy or girl, just so readers of both sexes can identify.

I usually work in watercolor and sometimes with line. This book cried out for rapid-fire line drawing. When I work quickly, even feverishly and freely, I think it suggests action. Action is what the story consists of. Such a drawing approach, with light, free washes overlaid, are also useful for creating comic effect.

I laid out the book (the manuscript is a little movie in my head) in a succession of single pages (some with little spots) alternating with double-page spreads. The former offer information and keep things moving, while the latter are for lingering on a dramatic or climactic moment. The double-page spread with bleed is expansive, while the spot is sequential. Finally, the theme is airy (except for the mud), so I wanted many pages to be open, with lots of white space. The colors are tied to the seasons.



IN LIKE A LION, OUT LIKE A LAMB
by Marion Dane Bauer
illustrated by Emily Arnold McCully
978-0-8234-2238-8 • Ages 4-8 • \$16.95



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