

A LETTER TO YOUNG READERS FROM LOUISE BORDEN



DEAR READER,

Years ago when I was attending elementary school in Cincinnati, Ohio, I had no clue that I would someday grow up to be a writer. I was too busy playing with my older sister Cindy, my younger sister Margaret and our friends in the neighborhood. On blue sky days, I loved to ride my bike and when rain kept me indoors, I played halting songs on our old black upright piano. And I loved school, especially reading, art, music, social studies (MAPS!), and recess. The books I read were those of realistic or historical fiction, adventure, foreign countries, and biographies. I also enjoyed reading poems and listening to the sound of words.

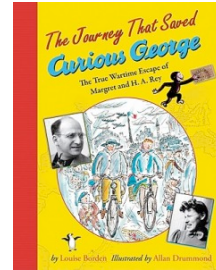
THE WHEEL ON THE SCHOOL, and THE WITCH OF BLACKBIRD POND were among my favorite books and by the time I was in fourth or fifth grade, I was fascinated by faraway places. I became an armchair traveler and would write letters to the exotic tourist offices advertised in the back of National Geographic magazines, requesting the travel brochures of their various countries. Thick envelopes would arrive in our mailbox, filled with maps of places like Sweden and France, and pictures of famous cities like London, addressed to me! (This was long before computers, the Internet, and wonderful Google.)



My first real trip occurred when I was in 6th grade. I traveled by train from Ohio all the way to San Francisco with my sisters, through the northern part of the U.S. and back to Cincinnati via a southern route. I still have the small notebook I carried to take notes along the way, and some of the photos that I took. And I've been a reader, traveler, and writer ever since. On my sixth grade report card, my teacher Mrs. Resor wrote: "I think that Louise will always enjoy research - Bon Voyage!" How did she know? Teachers are always so smart!

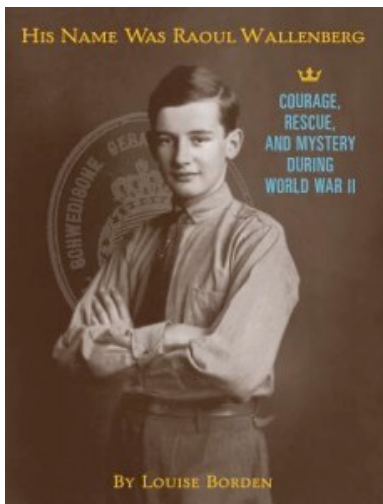


I've had over 25 books published and many have taken me on unique adventures and travels: To the beaches of Dunkirk, to the canals of Holland, to a hotel and chateau in France (where H. A. and Margret Rey worked on their very first story about a curious little monkey and the man with the yellow hat), to Raoul Wallenberg's home city of Stockholm in



Sweden and to Budapest where he helped to rescue the lives of thousands of Hungarian Jews during World War II. For more than 20 years, I've taken a lot of small steps along my writing road, and connected with amazing students, teachers, artists and writers along the way. I've met interesting people who have been important in helping me to research my books. And always my encouragers have been my husband and our three kids AND the talented editors and artists and designers who work as a team to create my published books. I'm the luckiest person in the world because I get to work with words, pictures, kids, and schools. I get to follow my heart and my curiosity, learn new things and make new friends.

Now to. . . Biographies!



Yes, I loved reading these when I was in school and I'm still reading biographies and autobiographies. I read about people who inspire me: artists, photographers, inventors, pilots, and ordinary or famous people. (My dad took me flying in small planes when I was in school so this is why three of my books are about aviation.) People like Bessie Coleman ([FLY HIGH](#)) and John Harrison ([SEA CLOCKS](#)) are my heroes. The [Reys](#) are my heroes.

In January, 2012, something very special happened: [HIS NAME WAS RAOUL WALLENBERG](#) was finally published. This is not the first biography that I've worked on, but it was certainly the most difficult. When I write about people who lived a long time ago, I try to immerse myself in the places and events of their lives. I try to become part of their amazing experiences and life story through my own words.

A famous writer from Turkey, Orhan Pamuk, says this: "(The writer). . . must have the artistry to tell his own stories as if they were other people's, and to tell other people's stories as if they were his own, for this is what literature is. . ."

I spent years circling the idea of writing about Raoul and then gathering information, meeting people in Raoul's family, and following in RW's footsteps, looking for the best and most important details of his remarkable life. The

last few chapters of the book were the most challenging to write. So much mystery surrounds what happened to Raoul, and I wanted to only include authentic facts and information. After the text was finished and there were long delays in production, my editor and I decided to use photographs rather than illustrations to complete the book. This took even



more time. . . . but in the end, how wonderful that this book was published in the year of 2012: one hundred years after the birth of Raoul Wallenberg! His birthday is August 4. In 2009 in Chicago, our grandson Brooks was born on August 4! How exciting for our family! A double reason to celebrate this day.

I was drawn to Raoul Wallenberg because of his moral compass and his great heart, but also because he was a traveler, a reader, and an artist. I like to think that some of his courage and creativity came from his years of living in America as a college student.

As I have written in one of my books, "America is the stories of all of us told together ...". Raoul was made an honorary citizen of our country by our Congress. He, and his life story, are part of us now in the 21st century, part of our shared history as Americans. He inspires all of us to honor tolerance and human rights, to help others, and to make a difference in the world.

Your Friend,

[Louise](#)