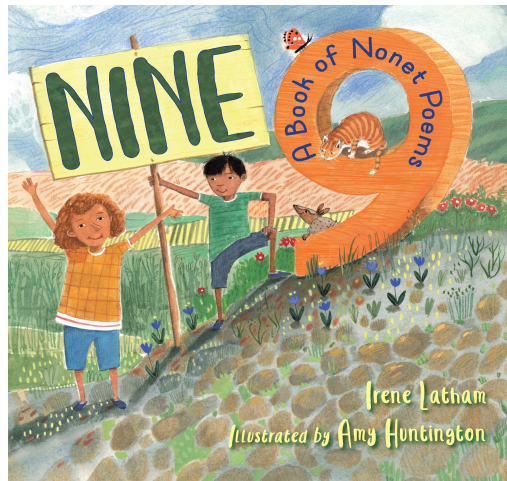


Q & A with Irene Latham about *NINE: A Book of Nonet Poems*



What attracted you to the nonet form of poetry?

Most of my poems are written in free verse. But as a lifelong student of poetry, I often try new forms. I like the challenge of counting syllables – without other constraints of meter and rhyme, which for me can turn a poetic effort from fun to torturous. I enjoyed writing nonets from the get-go – but I didn't really fall in love with them until I discovered the syllable procession could begin with one syllable on the first line OR end with one syllable on the last line. Something about being able to build the poem in either direction really attracted me.

What's the most challenging thing about writing nonet poems?

There are two things that consistently prove difficult: 1. finding a powerful one-syllable word for the one-syllable line. It would be easy to cheap out on “easy” words here, but having only one word on a line draws such attention to itself that it really needs to be a powerhouse word. 2. finding powerful words at the end of each line (and not leaning on prepositions or conjunctions, just because it would fulfill the syllable count).

What were you like as a 9 year old?

When I was 9 years old we moved from Livingston, Tennessee to Folsom, Louisiana, where we would live for five years. So I was, once again, the “new kid.” I was also shy and loved reading – especially horse books. I loved animals of all kinds – still do! My siblings and I spent hours and days outside exploring the countryside where we lived. We created rich, imaginative play-worlds, like “Egypt,” which was complete with a huge oak tree named Queen Nefertiti and another across the pasture named Rameses. There was a creek which we called the Nile, and puddles in which we watched frog eggs hatch to tadpoles and sometimes (if the puddle lasted long enough) even frogs. It was a magical, wondrous time.

What do you have in common with the 9 year old main character in the book?

Like the main character in the book, I love exploring museums, learning history, and attending live musical performances. Our family had a weekly Game Night. I've been to the circus, and my husband and I have a cat named Maggie. I don't, however, have an armadillo – though once my great aunt did give me a plush toy one. I'm also not much of a sports person, and when I was nine years old (or any age), I'd do just about anything to get out of playing baseball/softball.

What would you like to tell you 9 year old self?

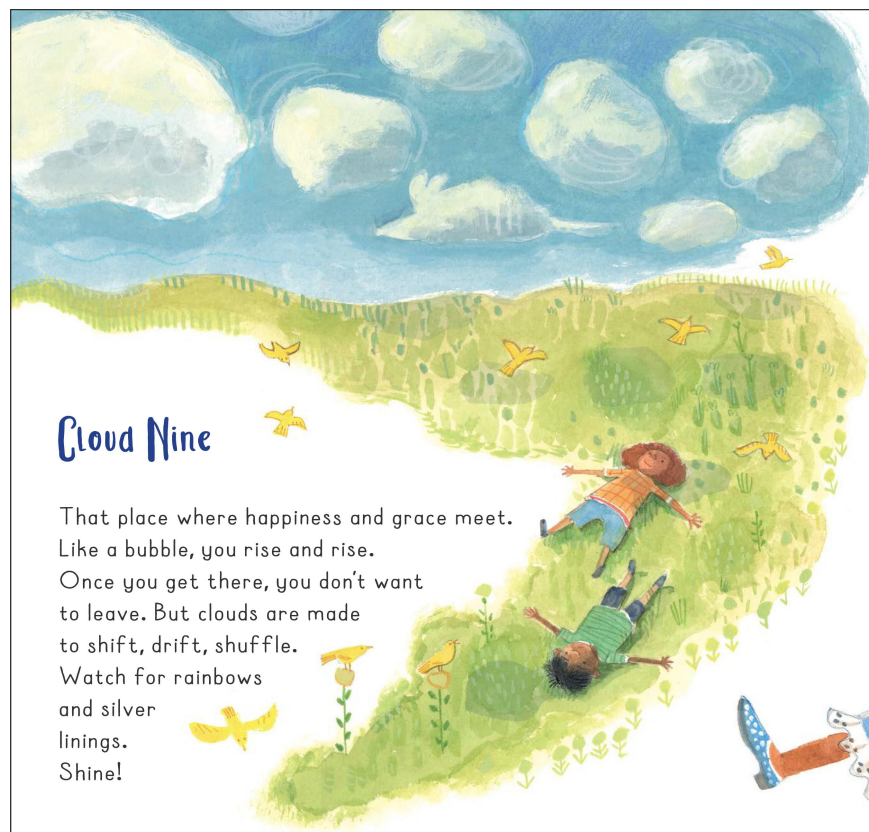
Nature, books, siblings, imagination – these are the things that will carry you across a lifetime, wherever you live, whatever the challenge. Cultivate these feelings of freedom and always live your life with this same spirit of love for the world.

If you had 9 lives, how would you like to spend them?

One of the best things about being a writer is that it allows you to live many lives... through different characters and books! For instance, while I didn't choose to become a veterinarian, I got to “be” one in one of my books.

The book features a girl sharing adventures with a younger brother. Do you have a younger sibling?

As the middle child of five kids, I am lucky to have two older brothers and also a younger sister and baby brother named MicaJon. So I was delighted when Amy decided to feature a girl with her little brother! I've always adored MicaJon, and this book has given me an opportunity to share that love with others. Also, as an adult I was gifted three new siblings – a sister and two brothers – when my mother adopted them. While I am old enough to be their parent, and we haven't grown up together, I enjoy spending time with them and watching them grow.



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