

Julie Hedlund's 12 x12- Featured author

***Poppy's Best Paper***- Synopsis

When Poppy's teacher asks everyone to write a paper, she is sure hers will be the best. Trouble is, she has tall ambitions, but is short on effort, and her jealousy takes over when her best friend's paper is chosen instead. Poppy discovers that she has to get out of her own way if her big dreams are going to come true.

**You are known as an illustrator, primarily for your books illustrated in clay. Did you ever consider illustrating *Poppy's Best Paper* yourself?**

Did I ???!! Ummmm yes... for about 5 years I tried and tried and TRIED!

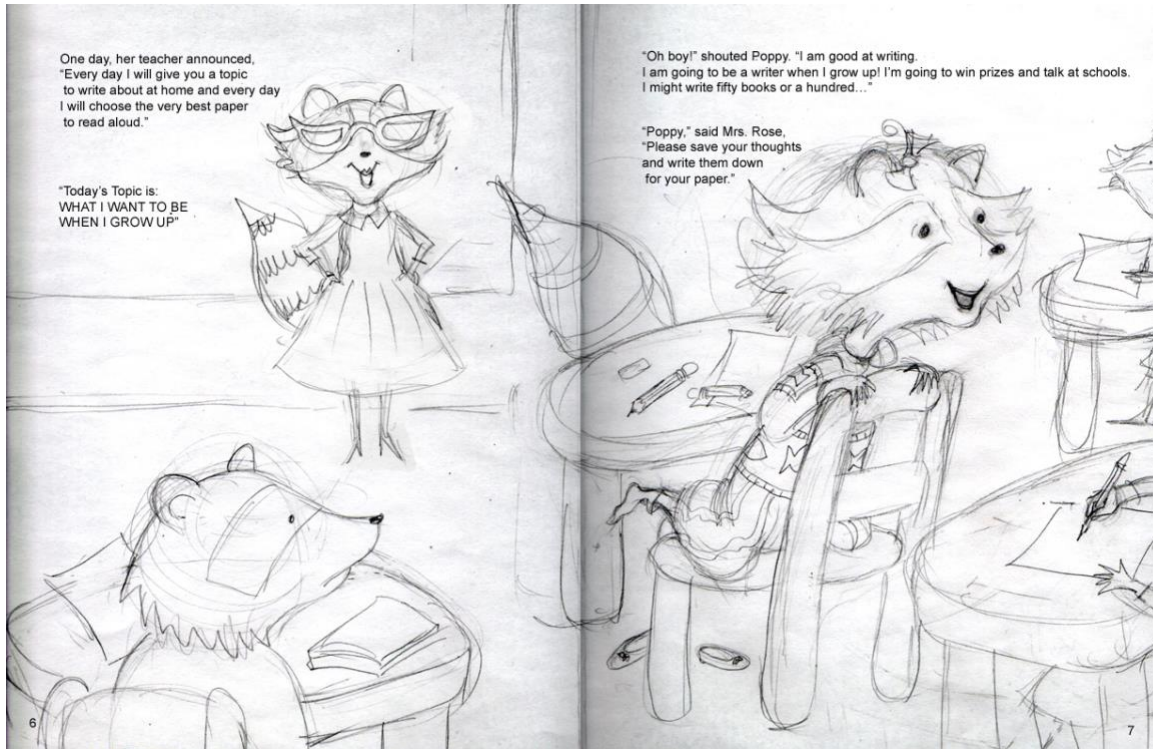
I initially wrote this book in a college class I was taking with Robert J. Blake. <http://www.robertjblake.com> (Akiak, Swift & many more...) Our assignment was to write and create a dummy for our own manuscript over the course of a semester. Yay for a deadline! I am so much MORE productive with them. This story originated in my own elementary school class. It was my proudest moment when my favorite teacher read my composition aloud to the class.

Story first, sketches next; Poppy began life as a raccoon.

# The Very Best Paper

by Susan Eaddy





Then the clay.

The next day Mrs. Rose said,  
"Class, it's time for me to read one outstanding paper aloud."



Poppy smoothed her fur.  
She licked her paw & polished her ear.  
She arranged a modest smile on her face.

Mrs. Adams read, "Why I want to be an Artist, By Lavender Bloom"



Lavender!  
Poppy gave her a huffy face.

Instead of listening to Lavender's paper she whispered  
to her neighbor Petunia,  
"Can you believe it? She does'nt even want to be a writer  
when she grows up!"



When I finished the class I started submitting my dummy and EVERYWHERE I was told, "You know, I like the story, but the clay is just not working for me."

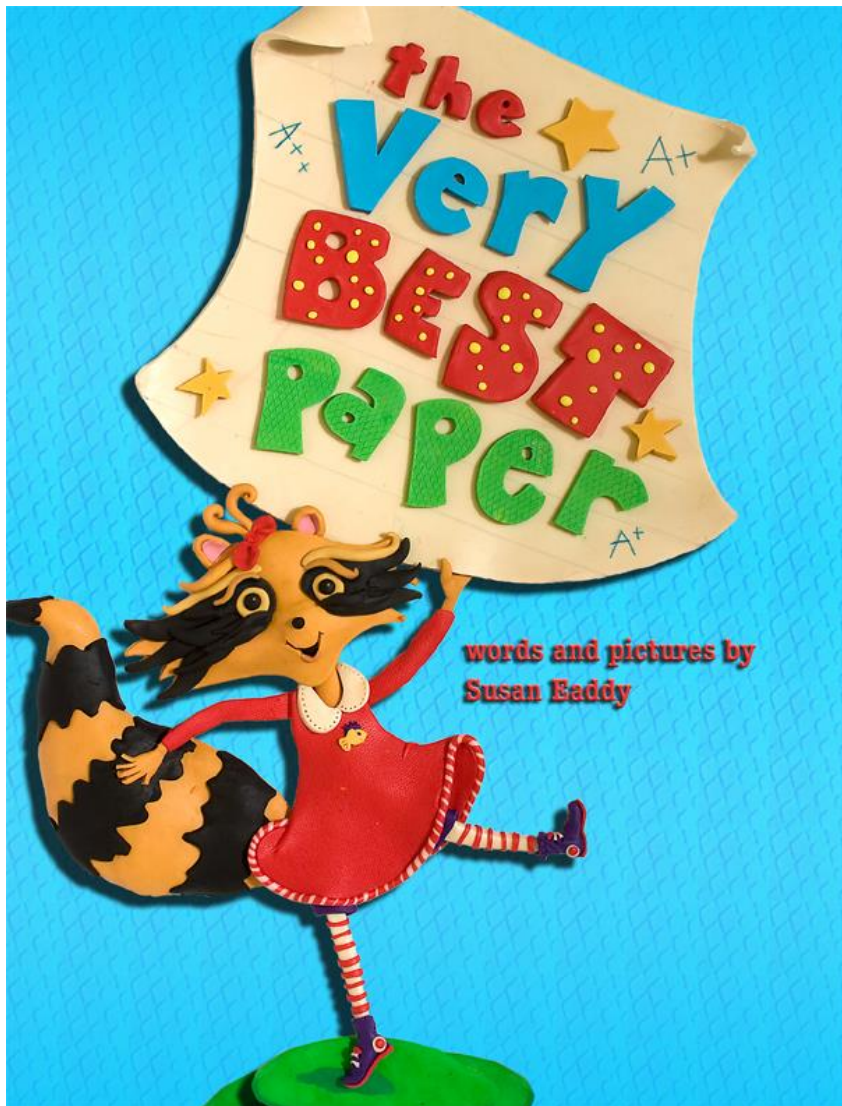


I took that to mean that I was not doing it WELL enough, so I kept at it, revision after revision. Poppy went from blue to Tan...



...then to some other transformations.





Once again, Poppy went back out there for submission. I also took her to the Rutgers One-on-One Mentorship program <http://ruccl.org/One-on-One Plus Conference.html> where I was paired with the amazing Peter Catalanotto. <http://www.petercatalanotto.com> Peter told me... "YIKES! What is this??? This medium is just NOT working! Can't you try it in something else... like watercolor???" (actually he was *much* more tactful)  
So I did .  
I brushed off my brushes and rehydrated my watercolor tubes and started over. For 6 months.



# Poppy and the Very Best Paper

by Susan Eaddy



Mrs. Rose said, "Class, your next paper will be titled: IF I HAD ONE WISH".

"Today," Poppy said after school, "I am going to write the very best paper!"



Then, she took a break.



She wrote some more...

...and she took another break.

Time for a break.

Time for dinner.

Time for bed.



I tried Gouache too.











Peter was so supportive and encouraged me to show him my progress... which I did. When he gently critiqued my watercolors, my bubble burst.

I began to DREAD going up to my studio to work on watercolor. I MISSED the clay and I asked myself, "Why am I struggling in a medium that I don't LOVE??"

So ONCE again. I decided I just wasn't doing the clay well enough.

New style! Baked and painted clay this time. Deep forest setting. Once again I began submitting.





After school she wrote.

*When I grow up,  
I want to be a writer.*

She read her sentence.

She wrote.  
*I am good at writing.  
Mr. Fuzz Dog likes the  
stories I write.*

She read over her paper.

*I will be famous.  
The End*

Poppy hugged herself  
and said, "This is good.

I just know it will be  
the best paper in the class."



In class Mrs. Rose said,  
"I have graded your papers  
and I will read the most outstanding one aloud."

Poppy smoothed her fur.  
She licked her paw & polished her ear.  
She arranged a modest smile on her face.

*My Wish for World Peace  
by Lavender Bloom*

Poppy slumped down.

She gave Lavender  
a mean look.

"You didn't even waste your wish  
on wanting to win."  
she hissed at Lavender.

"Poppy, please pay attention."

"Lavender doesn't even WANT to be a writer  
when she grows up!" complained Poppy.

"Poppy! please stop talking."

"It's not fair!"

**"Poppy!  
Time out! For rudeness!"**

This style was not popular either. Ugh.

By the time I submitted to Karen Grecnik at Red FoxLiterary, I was losing hope. Karen replied right away, with regret that this manuscript was not for her. I thanked

her for her quick reply and quietly mourned. SIX hours later, I got another email from Karen saying... ( to paraphrase)  
“I don’t want to offend you, but both Abi Samoun and I like your story and wondered if you would be willing to let another illustrator take a crack at it. Her name is Rosalinde Bonnet and here is her website.” I looked, I was blown away and I was UN hesitating. “Yes please!!! Take it! I can’t do another thing with this!!”

Six months later, Charlesbridge picked it up!



**How does it feel to have ANOTHER illustrator take over your manuscript instead of YOU?**

Again, I am UN hesitating. It feels GREAT! It may be that if I had not tried every single thing I knew to do with this artwork that I may have felt differently. But I had tried, for YEARS and could not make it work. There comes a time in every stubborn person’s life that you must listen to what the Universe is saying to you, and I was



more than ready to let this go. I was so lucky that both Karen and Abi had the vision to pair this manuscript with just the right person. Rosalinde totally GETS Poppy & has expanded and enhanced her quirky personality in ways I never imagined. I am thrilled and extremely grateful.

***Poppy's Best Paper* is partially about writer angst in its many forms, procrastination, distraction, big dreams. In what ways does her story reflect your own writing process?**

Well. Sigh. Like Poppy, I struggle with getting ahead of myself and letting distractions feed my procrastination. I have 2 primary motivators... Optimism and Panic. Both have a sunny side and a shadow side. The Optimism feeds my dreams, and keeps the hope alive which is completely essential for a late bloomer like me. But the shadow side of Optimism is thinking you can do it ALL and overcommitting.

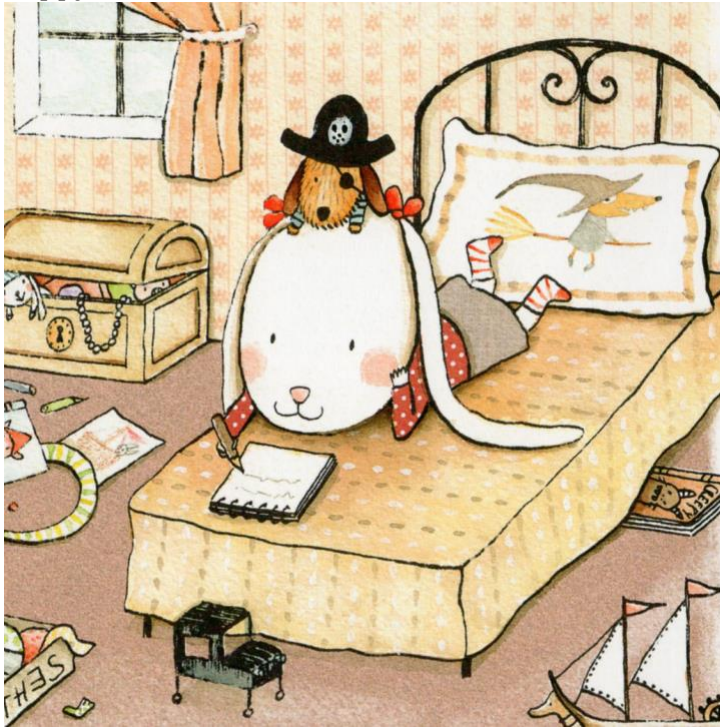
And although Panic can keep you up at night, the sunny side is that it tethers my Optimism & keeps me realistic. I never want to let someone else or myself down by missing deadlines, which I find to be an essential motivator. It forces me to keep butt in chair (or on my treadmill desk) and I have devised all sorts of ways to trick myself into resisting distractions by staying in one place long enough to accomplish something.

**Do you still dream to both write AND illustrate your own book?**

Yes. This IS still a dream of mine. I JUST have to create the perfect manuscript for the clay. Simple, right?

For me, dreams fuel ideas, and are absolutely necessary to sustain the hope and perseverance it takes to be a writer. Especially if you are a late bloomer like me, and that perseverance takes many years. While it took Poppy a few times to get it right... it took ME a hundred times longer and I think that WITHOUT the big dreams I couldn't have sustained the effort. Again, for me, dreams translate into creativity, the drive to harness those ideas, and hope.

Poppy Book Trailer







# Poppy's Best Paper

Susan Eaddy

Illustrated by Rosalinde Bonnet

