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Irene Latham's

ADVENTURES IN INK

Books for Dreamers, Seekers, & Thinkers

Hello, Friends!



'Tis the Season of Joy and Light!

...and it's also a time of reflection. This time last year I couldn't have imagined what the year would hold. Here are some of the highlights:

When I chose "bewilderment" as my [2021 One Little Word](#), I intended it as a deliberate shift away from cleverness toward seeking depth and mystery. I did indeed feel as if I was tunneling dark, twisty ocean caves for much of this year. *Where was I? Where would I end up?* Well, here I am, still finding hope in poetry and solace in nature. Some things are mysterious and not-mysterious at the very same time!

Like many, I found myself online A LOT during 2021. I really enjoyed connecting with audiences of all types: writers, poets, readers, homeschoolers! A favorite engagement was talking THE CAT MAN OF ALEPPO to a group at the International School in Bangkok who were working on writing nonfiction stories. And I taught many young poets the joys of writing nonets!

These virtual visits have changed the way I (and many others!) dress: pajama pants instead of skirts... and simple, solid jewel-tone tops are my favorite—when once upon a time I was all about the accessories (scarves, necklaces, rings!).

I turned 50 this year and have already logged in "50 Firsts," like picking grapefruit, changing my cello strings all by myself, doing a 5K, becoming a Master Gardener, visiting Churchill Downs, and eating oysters Rockefeller. Yum!

In my writing life I wrote across the seasons in my 2021 ArtSpeak: FOUR SEASONS project. View the 52-poem collection [here](#). I saw two books released and other books awarded. I set a writing challenge for myself to work on an adult project 5-15 minutes each day, and as of this newsletter, the first draft is nearly complete and clocking in at over 81,000 words! *Slow and steady wins the race...*

INSIGHT

I've started a new video series...for writers: **Tuesday 2-Minute Writing Tip!** You can view the (short!) videos at [my Youtube channel](#). Thanks so much to those following along! My goal is to support you in all your writing endeavors. Topics so far include...

How to fill our cups for [more vivid, original writing](#)

How to [claim our writing identities](#)

How to handle [self-promotion](#) (esp. if you're introverted, like me!)

The Empathy of Revision ([part 1](#) and [part 2](#))

How to prioritize writing projects](<https://youtu.be/zEbaqZPmz1g>)

[Forget resolutions, let's celebrate!](#)

Also, I've put together an [Emergency Encouragement Kit for Writers](#), full of quotes, poems, and stories to help you over the humps and bumps of rejection, self-doubt, and frustration. This is in advance of some exciting things I've got in the works for writers in 2022! [Download now...](#) and you'll be added to my special email list for Writers, so that you don't miss any of the goodness that's soon coming!

INSPIRATION

It was my honor to serve this year on the committee for [NCTE Charlotte Huck Award for Outstanding Fiction](#). From books set in [ancient Greece](#) to the [Desert of Lost Souls](#), there's much to inspire readers! Check out our winners list [here!](#)

If you haven't already, and it's showing anyplace near you, please go to [The Van Gogh Experience!](#)

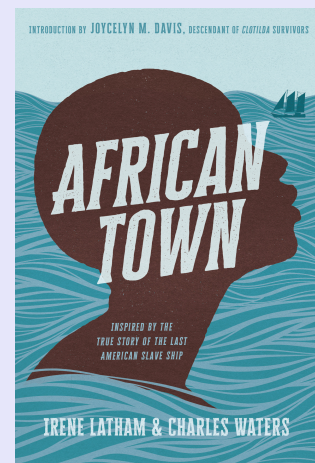
Attention Homeschool Families:

You're invited to a monthly [Homeschool Poetry Party](#) on my blog every 9th of the month! It can feel overwhelming to come up with ways to incorporate poetry, so my goal is to make it easy for you! These posts feature recommended poetry books, a poetry writing lesson, and simple suggestions for bringing poetry into your family's life. I'll be adding a Live feature to this Party during 2022, and you won't want to miss it! Imagine the joy you'll experience through wordplay, fresh images, and the emotional kick poetry provides. Perhaps it will inspire you or your children to become poetry lovers and maybe even write their own poems! To keep up with these monthly offerings, [please subscribe](#) to my email list for Homeschool Families.

IMAGINATION

Much of the past year I've spent imagining myself in west Africa and the southern U.S., during the years 1859-1901, thanks to work with [Charles Waters](#) on AFRICAN TOWN.

Our novel is based on the true story of the last slave ship *Clotilda* and the 110 captives who landed in 1860 Mobile, Alabama. Charles and I tell the story in 14 voices (including the *Clotilda* herself!), and while it was incredibly difficult to enter the terror and brutality of some parts of the story, it was an honor to imagine the shipmates' love, strength, and creativity as they not only survived, but thrived, eventually creating the Africatown community that still exists to this day.



Please join us at our [Book Launch Event](#) January 4, 2022, 5 pm at Alabama Booksmith (Birmingham, AL)! If you're unable to attend, you can [order your autographed copy](#), and Jake will ship it to you.

Thank you so much for reading this newsletter!

It means so much that you've chosen to share your time with me today. As we move into a fresh new year, I'll leave you with these words from Neil Gaiman:

"I hope that in this year to come, you make mistakes. Because if you are making mistakes, then you are making new things, trying new things, learning, living, pushing yourself, changing yourself, changing your world. You're doing things you've never done before, and more importantly, you're Doing Something."

So... go forth and make mistakes! I'll be right there beside you.

Love,
Irene

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