



hear it most of all. I read the gruesome binge and vomit scene from my YA novel, *The Hunger*, which is a great one for reluctant readers. The class was silent except for groans in all the right places. I closed the novel and asked, "Could you see pictures in your head?" And of course they could, but they wished they hadn't!

They wanted me to read more from *The Hunger*, but instead I read them the bullying scene from Hope's

War – another great one for reluctant readers. Even the mouthy boys were hooked. They wanted me to read on, but I put it down and read the scene from *Nobody's Child* when the children are on the roof of the mosque while the Adana massacres are in progress. Then I launched into the writing workshop, which is a fairly lively exercise and always good for rowdy children.

As I was wrapping up the session, one by one, all of those "I hate books" boys came up to me to tell me that they needed to know where to get one or another of my books because they had to read them. I was thrilled!

The next day, I went to Oxdrift school, which has approximately 68 students. The other half of the students from Eagle River were bussed in and participated in the morning. Virtually every child was working above grade level. During the younger student writing workshop, the stories were of a more sophisticated calibre than the older students at the other school. One thing that I do in my writing workshop is to brainstorm two

characters with the class, and then we decide on an event that makes the two characters meet. The characters at the other school were so very sad: a single alcoholic teen mother with three students and a man who lives in a box. The Oxdrift kids brainstormed a poet from London England and a lumberjack/carpenter from Remoteland Ontario. Some of the Oxdrift students filled three foolscap pages in 20 minutes.

During the lunch hour on Thursday, I drove the 10 kilometres back into Dryden to meet a grade 5 student at Riverview Public School who had been an "honourable mention" in a national writing contest for which I was a judge. I gave her autographed copies of my books and congratulated her on her wonderful talent. Her mother was there, as was the principal and teacher librarian and a local reporter. The story that she had written had been about her and her father watching deer at sunrise. Her father had died of leukemia the same week she'd found out that her story got an honourable mention. Apparently, my coming to meet her lifted her spirits when she needed it the most. I gave her my e-mail address and told her that I would be delighted to correspond with her and also to read any stories she would like to send me. We still swap e-mails regularly.

They had put out a lunch for me but I didn't have time to eat, so I grabbed some goodies and ate on the drive back to Oxdrift. I did two more sessions there and then drove back to Dryden to make a brief appearance at the public library, and then headed straight for the airport. When I got home, I did laundry!

In my experience, author visits can be powerful experiences for everyone involved. Yes, such events require time and effort, and there's a cost involved, but it's worth it to get children excited about reading and writing.

Sincerely,