

## Evelynne Bernstein

unavoidable. It's the filter through which I understand life, for better or worse, so I can't imagine how I'd do the books without them.

**TingL: Apart from the obvious – that the books are so much fun to read, and so enjoyable – are there any lessons or insights you would like your young readers to take away?**

I hope the books instill some kind of interest in history, as well. As I mentioned before, I feel like Canadian history has an unfair reputation of being dull, so if I can change that script with at least a few young readers by adding ghosts and baseball bat fights, that would make me really happy.

**TingL: You self-published your graphic novel *Quarter-Life Crisis*. Were there challenges in getting *The Dead Kid Detective Agency* published?**

Certainly. I had nearly given up trying to publish *The Dead Kid Detective Agency*. I submitted it to about every Canadian children's publisher. Some of the rejections were cursory. Some came with some explanation – this is too similar to another book we're doing – but the most disheartening were meetings with publishers who liked the book but wanted to change something that was (to me) integral to the book. One publisher liked it, but wanted all the Canadian history taken out. The history was one of the key reasons I was writing it! Another wanted to replace the FLQ in the first book with the mafia, which is – on so many levels – so wrong. ECW Press wasn't publishing books for young readers at the time, so I never submitted it to them, though I loved a lot of the books they were publishing. It was only when one of the editors, who I met at a book launch, mentioned they were starting up a line for young readers that my hope returned (like Jafar and acid-washed jeans). I'm really grateful to ECW – they're a great bunch of people and I guess they saw something in the book that others didn't.

**TingL: Did you have teachers who encouraged your writing and illustrating? Were you encouraged at home? What is the best advice you received?**

I've been really lucky in that there were many teachers and people who encouraged me in my writing and illustration. As a

child, I used to turn my simple school vocabulary assignments into twelve-page short stories, which would have undoubtedly increased my teachers' workloads, but they seemed totally cool with it. And my middle school principal, Dr. Dick Weiner (that's his real name), allowed my friend Greg and I to use the school photocopier to mass-produce our self-made comic books and sell them in the school cafeteria during lunch hour for a week. (I've lived a charmed life and I can't pretend I haven't.) A bunch of those teachers have been given loving homages as the teachers in the series.

My parents were pretty encouraging, as well. I think they were a bit concerned that I'd end up a penniless artist, so they were also pretty adamant that I focus on schoolwork other than writing and illustration. But they read my ridiculous stories. They drove me to the comic store regularly. They picked me up from the school after a late night of set design for the school

