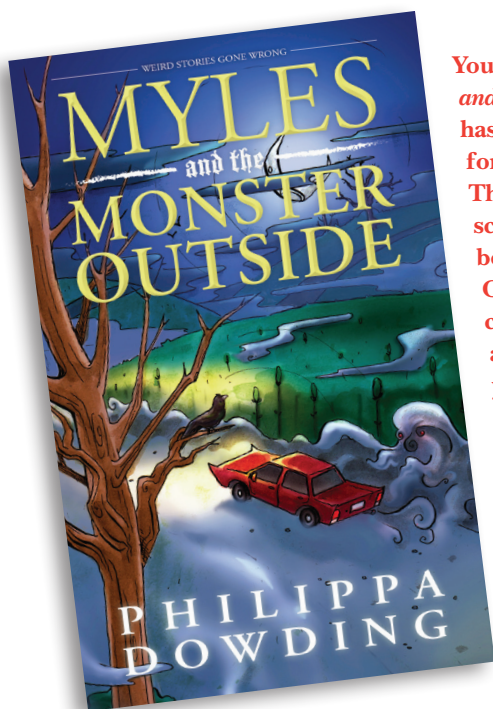


...continued from page 15



Your latest book *Myles and the Monster Outside* has been nominated for several awards. The teachers at my school read it aloud before your visit. Our students were completely hooked and wondered if you deliberately left each chapter with a cliff-hanger or if it just happened. How do you go about organizing your material so cliff-hangers occur?

That's such an interesting

question! The short answer is that cliff-hangers are carefully crafted, and are put in certain spots to keep the tension of the story high, and building.

I can't say that I always know exactly where they're going to fall though, and sometimes I do write a chapter, and make it shorter because the cliff-hanger happens earlier than I anticipated. So the rest of the material for that chapter might get cut, or massaged and moved to the beginning of the next chapter.

It's whatever feels right, and therefore, quite fluid. The first two chapters usually have pretty big cliff-hangers to build interest, then I make them a bit less scary for a while, then build them up again to a crescendo in the final chapters.

It's a lot like writing music! Also, I mentioned earlier that I'm a copywriter as well as a children's author, and writing copy teaches you how to keep people reading, how to get them to turn the page, fill out a form, subscribe, give to a good cause and so on. It's good training for writing cliff-hangers.

What are some of the most important and memorable aspects of being nominated for the OLA Forest of Reading awards?

The first time I received the call that I had a Forest of Reading Silver Birch Express nomination for *The Gargoyle Overhead* (in 2012), I actually said to the OLA member on the phone, "Okay, very funny, who is this?" She laughed, and said, no, no, this is real. No kidding. And I had to sit down.

It's a life-changing moment, to be honest. You're going to tour, you're going to meet thousands of kids, your book is going to be in schools, libraries and bookstores across the province, and across the country. It's always an incredible surprise, an immense honour, and a delightful experience.

I think the biggest take-aways for me from the Forest of Reading are ...

... meeting the wonderful librarians and teachers who promote our work ...

... connecting with fellow Canadian children's authors, who have devoted their careers to writing kids' books ...

... talking to the young readers at the Forest of Reading festivals, that's always so fun!

There are so many great memories, but here is a standout memory from the Red Maple ceremony in 2015:

A young boy asked me to sign his copy of *The Strange Gift of Gwendolyn Golden*. He said, "Thank you so much for writing this book. It's my favourite book this year." I asked him why. His answer, after thinking for a moment: "It got me through a really terrible winter."

I'll never forget it. If there's a better reason to write children's books, I honestly can't think of it.

Thank you to the OLA, for the amazing gift of the Forest of Reading, for so many reasons.

Which of your own books is your favourite or holds a special meaning to you? Why?