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February 2009

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Great Authors: Gennifer Choldenko

Gennifer Choldenko was born in Santa Monica, California, the youngest of 4 children. She says that her nicknames were Snot-Nose, Short Stuff, and Shrimp.

When she was young, she says she spent most of her time on the back of a horse, exploring the craggy hills of Southern California.

She does not give out a lot of personal information at her website, www.choldenko.com, though she does say that today she lives in the San Francisco Bay Area and has 2 terrific children: a son, Ian, age 12, and a daughter, Kai, age 7.

The family also has a white German Shepherd named Sophie, which they call Houdini dog because she is able to escape from anywhere.

Gennifer's first novel, *Notes from a Liar and Her Dog*, was a School Library Journal Best Book of the Year and a California Book Award winner.

Her second novel, *Al Capone Does My Shirts*, was a Newbery Honor Book and a School Library Journal, Kirkus, and Publishers Weekly Best Book of the Year. *Al Capone Does My Shirts* was short-listed for the Carnegie in the United Kingdom and has been on the New York Times, Booksense, and Publishers Weekly bestseller lists.

Gennifer's novels have been translated into 11 languages. Her new picture book, *Louder, Lili* (illustrated by SD Schindler), was published in September 2009 along with a novel from Harcourt called *If a Tree Falls at Lunch Period*, which has been named a Booksense Pick of the List.

Al Capone Does My Shirts

From School Library Journal: Grade 6-8. In this appealing novel set in 1935, 12-year-old Moose Flanagan and his family move from Santa Monica to Alcatraz Island where his father gets a job as an electrician at the prison and his mother hopes to send his autistic older sister to a special school in San Francisco.

When Natalie is rejected by the school, Moose is unable to play baseball because he must take care of her, and her unorthodox behavior sometimes lands him in hot water. He also comes to grief when he reluctantly goes along with a moneymaking scheme dreamed up by the warden's pretty but troublesome daughter.

Family dilemmas are at the center of the story, but history and setting--including plenty of references to the prison's most infamous inmate, mob boss Al Capone--play an important part, too. The Flanagan family is believable in the way each member deals with Natalie and her difficulties, and Moose makes a sympathetic main character.

The story, told with humor and skill, will fascinate readers with an interest in what it was like for the children of prison guards and other workers to actually grow up on Alcatraz Island.--Miranda Doyle, San Francisco Public Library (Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.)

Books By Gennifer Choldenko

Moonstruck: The True Story of the Cow Who Jumped Over the Moon, illustrated by Paul Yalowitz. The horse seriously doubts that the cow will ever be able to jump over the Moon. (Hyperion, 1997)

Notes From a Liar and Her Dog. Eleven-year-old Ant, stuck in a family that she does not like, copes by pretending that her "real" parents are coming to rescue her (Putnam's, 2001).

Al Capone Does My Shirts. Moose's family moves to Alcatraz so his father can work as a guard and his sister can attend a special school in San Francisco. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2001)

Tales of a Second-Grade Giant, illustrated by Amy Walrod. The other second-graders make fun of the new boy because he is so tall (Putnam's, 2009)

How to make Friends With a Giant, illustrated by Amy Walrod. Jake is the shortest kid in his class, and new kid Giacomo is the tallest. (Putnam's, 2006)

Louder, Lili, illustrated by S. D. Schindler. Lili is the quietest kid in class, and she allows Cassidy to do her talking for her. (G.P. Putnam's Sons, 2007)

If a Tree Falls at Lunch Period. For Kirsten McKenna, the world is crumbling. Only Kirsten's younger science-geek sister is on her side. (Harcourt, 2007)