



FRIDAY, MARCH 21, 2014

Friend Friday

*I am thrilled to host **Laura Purdie Salas** today. I first "met" Laura through her lovely book, **A Leaf Can Be**, but then I got to sit right next to her at the Golden Kite Luncheon this past August where that beautiful book received a Golden Kite honor award. I think you will get a tiny picture of her big heart when you learn that she is donating a portion of her author royalties for her newest book, **Water Can Be**, to **WaterAid**, a global water charity.*



Laura Purdie Salas

I know some writers set out to write books that change the world. I never hold aspirations quite that grand, but my books usually at least change **me** in some way.

Water Can Be... started as *A River Can Be...* That's what I submitted to Millbrook Editorial Director Carol Hinz, who edited *A Leaf Can Be . . .* I loved how *Leaf* had turned out, and I thought, "Cool! Let's do that again!" So, I wrote *A River Can Be...*, and I liked it. I mean, rivers are cool. They do everything: carve out canyons, produce electricity, form borders, and--well, like a Swiss Army Knife, a good river can do just about anything. What's not to love?

But Carol declined the manuscript, pointing out that it lacked the universality of *A Leaf Can Be . . .*, because not all kids have access to a river. That threw me. I've lived my life in Florida and Minnesota, two states where a river is almost always within splashing distance.



Laura head over heels at the go ahead to rewrite *A River Can Be*

So I proposed broadening the scope to all kinds of water, not just rivers. She said yes, and I got to work. As I brainstormed, a million memories surfaced:

- Me, age 4, riding a Colorado ski lift with my dad. At the top, he stood and

skied off. I didn't. They had to circle the chair around, and I faced down an enormous snow-covered mountain. Ack!



- Swimming in Blue Spring in Florida, watching manatees play where the spring water joins the warm, alligator- and boat-filled St. Johns River.
- Diving off the high dive at the Langford Pool for the first time.
- Canoeing on Lake Sylvan, two blocks from my childhood home, keeping eyes peeled for alligators. (Shudder.)



- Ice skating (in Florida!) on my first date with my husband, Randy.

- Cross-country skiing at night through the woods, while owls called in the trees overhead.
- Watching a November storm whip Lake Superior into a frenzy, waves sloshing high over the sides of the Duluth Canal.



- Canyoning in Scotland on our 20th-anniversary honeymoon (finally!), sliding down waterfalls in a wetsuit so compressed I thought I would pop.

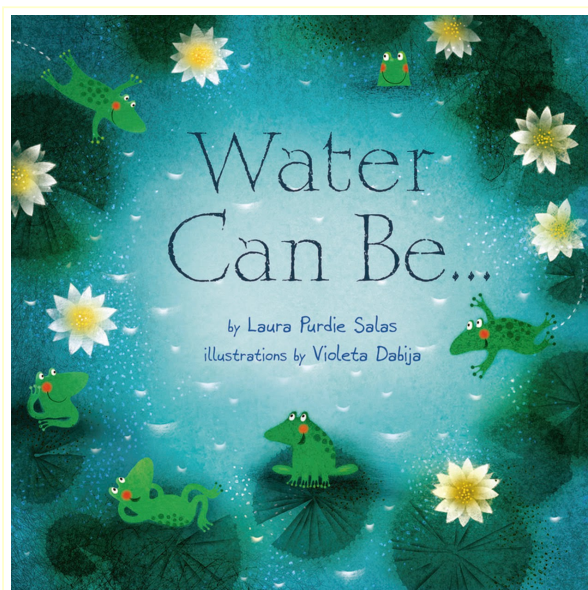
So many memories. I have always loved and respected water.



As I wrote *Water Can Be...*, those general feelings crystallized into a series of touchstones from my life. The world couldn't survive without water, of course. But really, what I was thinking about was that **I** would be a different person without my water memories.



I watched a documentary recently about Arctic exploration in which explorer and photographer Sebastian Copeland said, "[P]hotography has been my weapon. With images, my mission would be to help people fall in love with their world, because I feel we will not save what we do not love." I love that. We have global water problems that cost children's lives every day, and my book isn't going to solve them. But if it makes other people fall in love a little bit, well, that's a first step. And that would make me a very happy writer.



Laura Purdie Salas is the author of more than 120 books for kids and teens, including *WATER CAN BE...*, *A LEAF CAN BE...* (Bank Street Best Books, IRA Teachers' Choice, Minnesota Book Award Finalist, Riverby Award for Nature Books for Young Readers, and more), and *BOOKSPEAK! POEMS ABOUT BOOKS* (Minnesota Book Award, NCTE Notable, Bank Street Best Book, Eureka! Gold Medal, and more). She loves to introduce kids to poetry and help them find poems they can relate to, no matter what their age, mood, and personality. She has also written numerous nonfiction books. See more about Laura and her work [here](#).

