

From Fact to Fantasy

CAROLYN ARMSTRONG

Unveiling the Inspirations Behind the Eco Warriors Series

In a world where environmental concerns are at the forefront of discussions, Carolyn Armstrong emerges as a beacon of hope through her captivating middle-grade fiction. As the author of two published juvenile books, “At The Edge Of The Ice” (2023) and “Because of Khalid” (Tiger Stripe Publishing, 2018), with a third eagerly awaited installment on the horizon, Armstrong has carved a niche for herself as a storyteller with a purpose.

Armstrong’s passion for animals, combined with her love for travel, manifests beautifully in the Eco Warriors series. A former educator turned author, she seamlessly blends her experiences in the classroom with her dedication to environmental causes. Her goal? To educate and empower young readers, turning them into advocates for our planet. Armstrong believes that the journey towards a sustainable future can begin with small actions, such as picking up trash and refusing a plastic drinking straw.

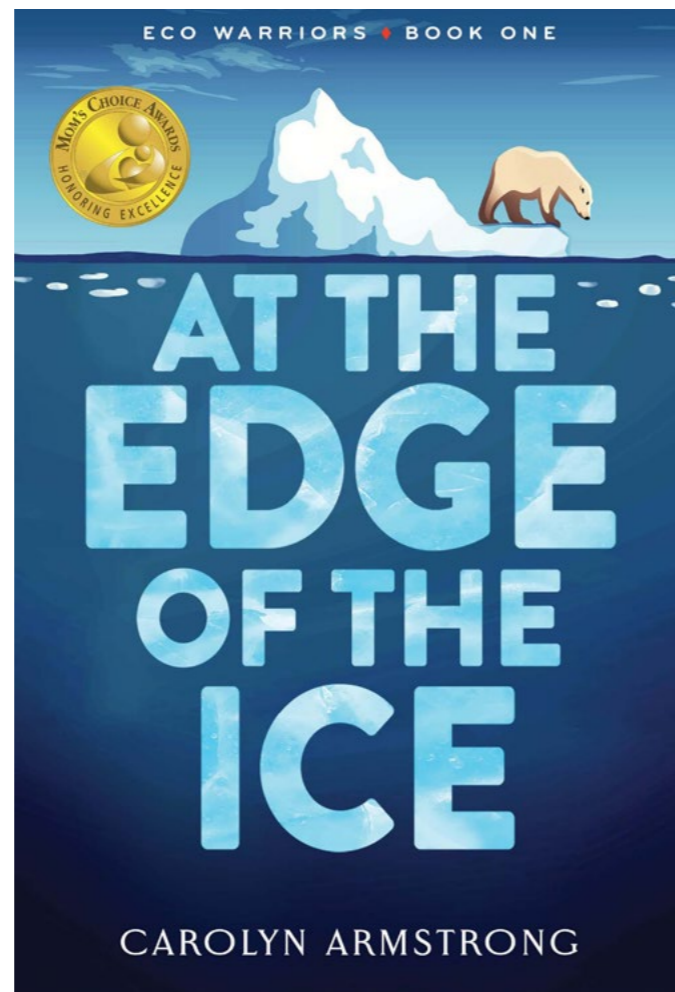
The Eco Warriors series takes readers on a global adventure, tackling real-world issues like climate change, global warming, and animal habitats. Set in authentic locations, Armstrong’s meticulous research process involves firsthand experiences, ensuring she can vividly portray the settings of her books. From the Arctic landscapes of Svalbard, Norway, to the coast of Monterey, California, and the Monarch Butter-

fly Biosphere Reserve near Mexico City, Armstrong immerses herself in the environments she portrays, making her narratives resonate with authenticity.

One of the distinguishing features of the Eco Warriors series is its unique blend of fact-based fiction with a touch of fantasy. While the settings and the facts are rooted in reality, Armstrong introduces a fantastical element where the main character, Sydney, communicates with animals. This touch of fantasy serves as a whimsical yet profound way to engage young readers in the midst of complex issues, such as the climate crisis.

In a recent interview, Armstrong shared insights into her writing journey and the inspiration behind the Eco Warriors series. Her dedication to bridging the gap between fiction and reality is evident in her extensive research process, which includes travel to the actual locations featured in her books. Armstrong’s commitment to educating children about environmental issues shines through, and she hopes to inspire the next generation to become eco warriors themselves.

As readers eagerly await the release of the next installment in the series, set to explore ocean plastic pollution off the coast of Monterey, California, Carolyn Armstrong stands as a storyteller with a mission. Through her words, she encourages readers not only to delve into captivating narratives but also to become stewards of the planet,



fostering a sense of responsibility and care for the world we all call home. Explore more about Carolyn Armstrong’s work and her advocacy at www.ckabooks.com, where she shares an educator’s guide, monthly newsletters, and blogs about writing, books, and sustainability.

Carolyn Armstrong is the author of Earth-friendly middle grade fiction. She has two published juvenile books (At The Edge Of The Ice, 2023, and Because of Khalid, Tiger Stripe Publishing, 2018), with a third book on the way. A former educator and now an imperfect environmentalist, she blends her love of travel and animal well-being into her stories. She encourages everyone to become advocates for Planet Earth. It’s as easy as picking up trash and refusing a plastic drinking straw! She’s also an active member of SCBWI—Society of Children’s Book Writers and Illustrators. Head to www.ckabooks.com for an educator’s guide, monthly newsletters, and blogs about writing, books, and sustainability.

Both of your novels are about animal conservation. Were you a scientist before you became an author?

No. When I was a child, I wanted to be a marine biologist, but I always get seasick. Instead, I became an elementary school teacher who educated kids about animals. The animal kingdom was always my favourite science unit.

What was the inspiration for the Eco Warriors series?

Four things. My love of animals. My desire to travel the world. My own experiences with raising twin boys. And, my need to understand the climate crisis—it’s a complicated and confusing issue. I’m an adult and if I’m feeling overwhelmed, I can only image how kids must feel. One of the goals for writing this series was to educate and empower my readers. I want them to feel inspired. To get involved. To become eco warriors themselves.



You call your series fact-based fiction with a touch of fantasy. What’s real and which part is fantasy?

The settings are real places. Svalbard, Norway is the setting for book 1. The facts about climate change, global warming, and animal habitats are real. The only fantasy element is that Sydney, the main character, communicates with animals. Sydney talks to all kinds of animals, but they never speak back. Then one day, the impossible happens and she can hear a ringed seal say something. That dynamic adds a touch of humor to balance out the heaviness of the climate crisis. It is fiction after all, and I want kids to keep reading!

How would you describe your research process?

I travel to the settings of my books. If I can’t experience it for myself, I can’t write about it very well. In 2019, I traveled to Svalbard, Norway so that I could see, hear, smell, taste, and touch the Arctic sea ice. I wanted to know what polar day was like—the months when the sun never sets. It takes me months, if not years, to complete my research and do all the fact-checking. I read nonfiction books, study endless facts and charts, and rely heavily on National Geographic. Many of my Internet searches begin with “How to explain ___ to a ten-year-old.”

What’s the last great book you read?

I like to read multiple books at the same time. Two great ones I just finished:

Spare by Prince Harry. I thought it was a raw and honest memoir. At the same time I also loved Inconspicuous Consumption, The Environmental Impact You Don’t Know You Have by Tatiana Schlossberg.

What’s your favourite book no one else has heard of?

Ash & Starlight, Prayers For The Chaos And Grace Of Daily Life by Arianne Braithwaite Lehn. This is a wonderful book of prayers. I have transcribed almost all of them into a word doc. When a friend is going through a rough patch, I copy and paste a prayer and email it to them. It’s as if that prayer was written specifically for the recipient.

You’re organizing a party. Which two authors, dead or alive, do you invite?

Greta Thunberg and Jane Goodall. The meal would probably be vegan which means my husband wouldn’t be joining us.

What moves you most in a work of literature?

Even if it’s a work of fiction, I like to learn something new. I love it when adult nonfiction reads like a novel.

What books and authors have impacted your writing career?

Wonder by RJ Palacio—I was after reading this middle grade novel that I made the bold decision to learn how to write kids’ books.

Fearless Writing: How To Create Boldly and Write With Confidence by William Kenower

What’s the next for the Eco Warriors series?

Book 2 takes place off the coast of Monterey, California and highlights ocean plastic pollution. Due out summer 2024. Book 3 takes places at the Monarch Butterfly Biosphere Reserve near Mexico City. In a few short weeks, I’ll be trekking into the Mexican mountains to see this World Heritage Site.

“Author Carolyn Armstrong, weaving tales of adventure and environmental advocacy in the Eco Warriors series, inspires young minds to become stewards of our planet.”