



Getting to know our members! Interview with Sue Lawrence

This is the second in a long list of interviews I intend to conduct with each and every one of you during my time as Illustrator Coordinator. (If you are willing, of course!) I hope that by getting to know each other we will grow stronger as a community of Kid Lit creators!

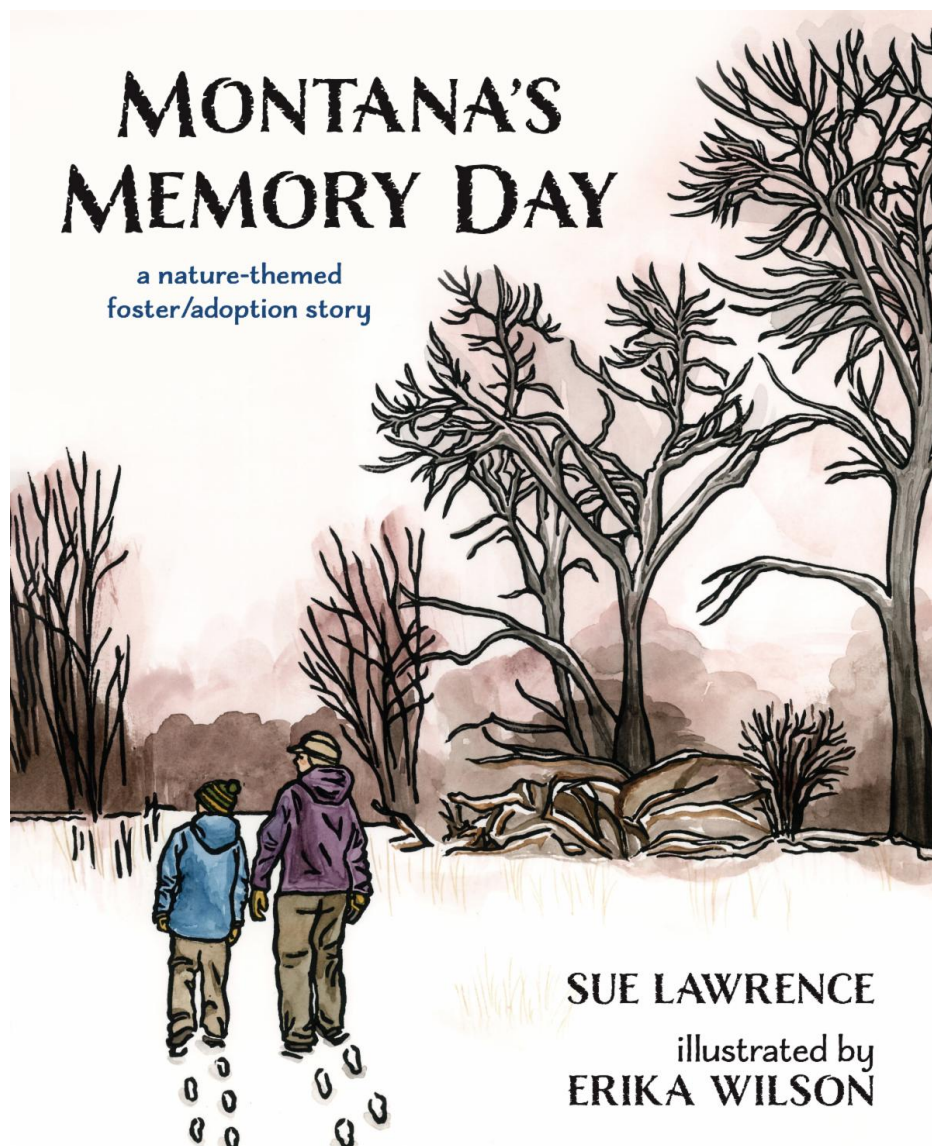
This month I had the privilege of interviewing author Sue Lawrence. Many of you might know Sue from our Instagram account- she was the one who planted the seed and grew it to 900 followers single-handedly! She is a huge supporter of our regional creators and if you need someone to talk to about your creative path, Sue is a wonderful cheerleader! I hope you enjoy the interview and that you reach out to Sue!



Can you tell us about yourself as a creator? What kind of art do you create? How did you get to this point?

I call myself a children's book author, but in truth--- I'm a Storyteller. (Yes, I intentionally capitalized that last word because it deserves a higher rank!) All of us—writers and illustrators, alike—are storytellers, right? We tell our stories through the written word and our art. Well, I don't "create art," – not literally, I mean—but I do paint my stories using lyrical language, alliteration and assonance, onomatopoeia, and active verbs and vivid word-painting language. So, that counts as "art," right?

I got here by way of the scenic route. I'd always wanted to see if Montana was really as appealing as those wall calendar photos I'd seen portrayed it to be; so, in 2017, I gave up nursing in Alabama for creative writing in Billings, MT—where I still live now. My first children's picture book, *Montana's Memory Day: a nature-themed foster/adoption story*, illustrated with hand-carved linocut watercolor prints by Montana's own, [Erika Wilson](#), was honored to receive a starred review from Kirkus and added to their Best Books of 2021 booklist. Now I'm working on two nonfiction WWII books for kids—I'm discovering more and more previously-unknown stuff every week!



What are you hoping to get out of SCBWI?

I've been an active SCBWI member since 2016 and feel its worth through its webinars and conferences—and, my local Billings KidLit Creators critique group. Plus, Jeanne Bowman and Megan Emmot are heading up a virtual Montana Sparks show monthly meet-up that keeps me in touch with fellow writers and artists who love creating kidlit as much as I do—but live all across Montana. That's keeping me creatively inspired—and accountable—to get certain book projects done!

What is the most important thing you have learned as a creator so far?

If I don't put my words down on paper, they won't be read. The only way my stories will outlive me—and be my legacy—is if I take the time, effort, and energy to write and publish them for kids to read—both now and after I'm long gone. I learned years ago that printed words last longer than people do, and photos and art last longer than memories.





Artwork by Erika Wilson

What is the thing you struggle with the most in your creative journey?

Time is my Achilles heel. Not so much procrastination, because I start on projects as soon as they're agreed to. But, everything takes me sooooo much longer to do, compared to other authors. I'm detail-oriented and my creative endurance doesn't keep up with all the lively thoughts in my brain. Is that sensory overload? Maybe.

Who are the creators you look up to?

I admire all the authors of the published children's books I like best. And, the illustrators whose art makes me go, "Ahhhhh," especially because I know I can't do what *they* can do. Kinda like symphony musicians—I can't play a musical instrument, but I hang on to every single note they play—it makes the music dance in my heart long after a concert's completed.

If you could only read one picture book for the rest of your life, what would it be and why?

I've struggled to answer this question for weeks now. You see, I don't have a favorite picture book. I'm 64-years-old now and don't remember reading any picture books as a kid. Or, going to the library or a bookstore. But, my older siblings remember walking a mile, each way, to borrow books from the library bookmobile that'd stop at the only general store in town, once a month. And, my dad could make even the most boring story come alive through his vivid telling of it—with a smattering of exaggeration added in, too, I discovered later.

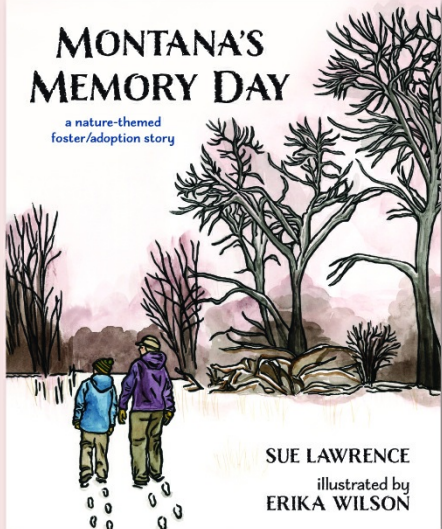
Where can we find more of your work/ follow you/ get in touch with you?

My author website is kidlitconnection.com and it's where I share about my literary journey and writing process behind Montana's Memory Day. You can keep up with me by following my Instagram page [@AllTheGoodThatISee](https://www.instagram.com/AllTheGoodThatISee).

MONTANA'S MEMORY DAY
a nature-themed foster/adoption story

written by
SUE LAWRENCE

illustrated by
ERIKA WILSON



The book cover features a lino-block illustration of two children walking through a snowy landscape with bare trees. The title 'MONTANA'S MEMORY DAY' is at the top, with the subtitle 'a nature-themed foster/adoption story' below it. The author's name 'SUE LAWRENCE' and the illustrator's name 'ERIKA WILSON' are at the bottom.

the BEST BOOKS of 2021 INDIE

"Lawrence's...creative word forms (*rememberer, differentness*) give a lyrical feel to Montana's first-person narrative."

ISBN: 978-1-64543-460-3

"The prominence of whittling and carving is reflected in Wilson's beautiful lino-block images whose subdued colors emphasize the winter setting..."

"A nature theme abounds, but it's the striking closeness between Montana and New Mom that will stick with readers in this warm-blanket bedtime story."

—Kirkus Reviews (starred review) (★)

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Finally, if you could ask just one thing of the next person who is going to be interviewed, what would it be?

If you were given an all-expenses-paid trip (including travel, housing, and meals cooked and delivered to your doorstep) to any artist's retreat in the United States—where would you go and what would you do while there? (Let's say, this was a 7-day retreat, you had absolutely no book project deadlines to meet holding you back, and your kids/spouse were going to have as much fun as you do while you're gone—so you'd not be worrying about "other stuff.")

Thank you so much Sue for letting me interview you! I hope that you reading enjoyed the interview! Please reach out to Sue and get to chatting about kid lit!

Have a fantastic holiday season and I hope I see you at the December Co-working Session! (The 16th at 1 pm!)

Cheers,

Jeanne Bowman
Montana-IC

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