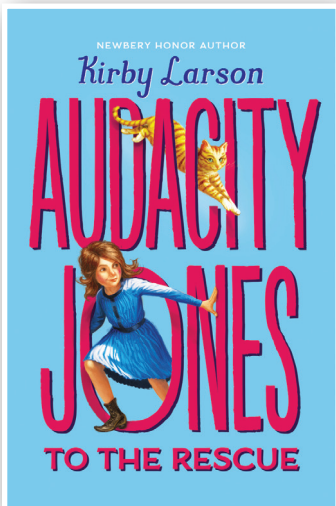


# #TrueFriends



**Four friends write  
four books about  
friendship for  
middle-grade readers**



978-0545840569, Scholastic

**Audacity Jones  
to the Rescue**

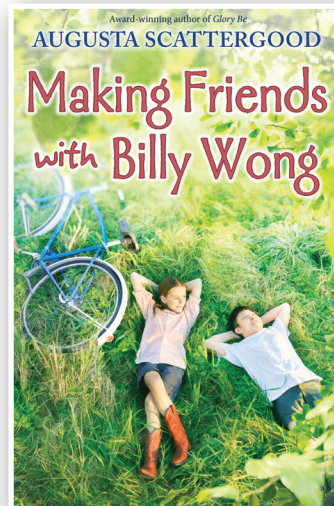
BY  
KIRBY LARSON



978-0553511345, Knopf

**The Magic Mirror**  
Concerning a Lonely  
Princess, a Foundling  
Girl, a Scheming King,  
and a Pickpocket Squirrel

BY SUSAN HILL LONG



978-0545924252, Scholastic

**Making Friends  
with Billy Wong**

BY  
AUGUSTA  
SCATTERGOOD



978-0374302733, FSG

**Wish**

BY  
BARBARA  
O'CONNOR

*Visit [YouTube.com/user/#TrueFriends](https://www.youtube.com/user/#TrueFriends) to watch these #TrueFriends talk about their books and offer writing prompts for students.*

[kirbylarson.com](http://kirbylarson.com)  
 @kirbylarson

[susanhilllong.com](http://susanhilllong.com)  
 @susanhilllong

[augustascattergood.com](http://augustascattergood.com)  
 @ARScattergood

[barbaraoconnor.com](http://barbaraoconnor.com)  
 @barbaraoconnor

# A Conversation Between #TrueFriends

Kirby Larson, Susan Hill Long,  
Augusta Scattergood, and Barbara O'Connor

**Describe the #TrueFriends in your new book in 160 characters or less.**

**KIRBY:** In *Audacity Jones to the Rescue*, a book smart young orphan relies on #TrueFriends old and new to rescue the president's kidnapped niece.

**AUGUSTA:** Billy Wong and Azalea Morgan, such unlikely friends! She's content with her one friend back in Texas; he can't wait for a new school and new pals. Happily, they find each other and become #TrueFriends.

**BARBARA:** In *Wish*, angry, hot-tempered Charlie is lucky to become a #TrueFriend with content and calm Howard. He helps her learn the true meaning of family just when she needs it most.

**SUSAN:** Foundling girl Margaret gathers a merry medieval band of #TrueFriends on her journey to find the mysterious man she glimpses in *The Magic Mirror*.

**When you were the age of your characters, did you have any special #TrueFriends?**

**SUSAN:** When I was Maggie's age, my sister was (and still is) my #TrueFriend. Especially on drizzly days, we loved to explore—we'd walk and talk for hours.

**BARBARA:** I lived in a neighborhood full of kids, so I was lucky to have quite a few #TrueFriends. But the one that I remember the most lived across the street from me and guess what we did for fun? Wrote books! Seriously. I still have one that I wrote and illustrated. I take it to schools to show students and they are very impressed that I wrote a 72-page book BY HAND without a computer.

**AUGUSTA:** My lifetime #TrueFriend is still that. We laughingly say we bonded before we were born because our grandparents were even friends! Writing about a girl who was perfectly content to have just one friend was a challenge. When I was Azalea's age, I was surrounded by friends. But we never wrote books together. I'm impressed, too, Barbara!

**KIRBY:** When I was Audacity's age, I was the new kid in school (again!), and a little clique decided to torment me by leaving ugly notes on my desk each day. It was tough to take . . . until two girls from my neighborhood asked me if I wanted to walk home with them. I don't know why they took pity on me, but it changed the class dynamics and ended the cruel notes. Though we aren't as close as we were in 6th grade, we've stayed in touch and I count each of them as a #TrueFriend.



KIRBY



SUSAN



AUGUSTA



BARBARA

## How does your friendship with each other influence your writing?

**BARBARA:** Above all, I count on these guys to be honest. I respect their opinions and know I can trust them and bounce ideas off of them. That helps me feel more confident with my writing. And we laugh a lot. That's very beneficial to writing.

**KIRBY:** Because I write without an outline, I typically hit the wall at least twice with each book. Barbara can be counted on to talk me down off the roof, day or night. Former librarian Augusta provides fresh insights for my writer brain. And Sue's critiques push me to stretch my writing muscles. And, as Barbara said, we laugh. A lot.

**SUSAN:** Writers need to take themselves and their work very seriously. But not too seriously. These #TrueFriends help me gain that balance.

**AUGUSTA:** The first time the four of us gathered for our initial writing retreat at Kirby's we had an instant connection. How often does that happen? But I was in awe of my #TrueFriends' writing accomplishments. They challenged me to think hard about my story. Thank goodness, there was laughter.

## What scene or character in one of the books written by your #TrueFriends do you especially admire and wish you'd written?

**AUGUSTA:** Barbara has a knack for nailing her characters and their connections to other characters with one simple statement. "The next day, I wore Jackie's old white majorette boots to school. I knew I'd made a mistake the minute I got on the bus." I mean, really, doesn't that say so much about those two sisters and about Charlie? I strive to write lines like these!

**SUSAN:** *Audacity Jones* grabs the reader from word one, which is: WARNING. And it doesn't let go! "If you are a reader whose knees wobble at the mere mention of adventure, danger and derring-do, close these covers immediately" . . . See? From the very first lines in that first draft, I was drawn to Kirby's storytelling voice, and couldn't wait to read more.

**KIRBY:** I am in awe of Augusta's ability to weave historical details into her books in such a seamless way and I really appreciate her leaving room for the reader. There is a scene in *Making Friends with Billy Wong* that like to broke my heart: Azalea and Grandma Clark are listening to the radio when Daddy's favorite song comes on. When Azalea mentions this, her grandmother tells her to turn off the radio. That moment said so much about Grandma Clark's feelings about Azalea's daddy.

**BARBARA:** So many great characters to choose from in Sue's *The Magic Mirror*. But I have to admit to writer envy that she created those two hilarious rascals, Minka and Bilious. I love how they're so grumpy with one another and yet true affection shines through. The perfect pair. But, alas, I could never have written them as colorfully as Sue did.

## What one piece of advice would you give to aspiring writers?

**KIRBY:** I'm sure my #TrueFriends will second this advice: read, read, read. If you are usually a reader of fantasy, read in other genres. Reading will get the sense of story in your bones. And then, write! At some point, do get others' thoughts about your work, but mostly, have some fun.

**AUGUSTA:** Ah, yes, Kirby. Read, and even reading aloud—that *is* crucial. I also scribble descriptions and characters and all sorts of writing stuff into notebooks. You must write as often and as seriously as you can when you're first starting out, and notebooks are perfect for this.

**BARBARA:** What Kirby said, for sure. I would also add, don't be afraid to write something that isn't very good. You can always make it better. But you can't fix what you haven't written. A page full of mediocre words is better than a blank page. So just do it!

**SUSAN:** I would add that there's so much advice out there, it can be a pitfall to spend more time reading about how others do it than to finding your own way. Have faith that a way—your way—will emerge as you commit your own words to the page.



# Friend Catcher

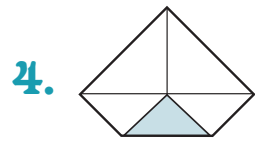
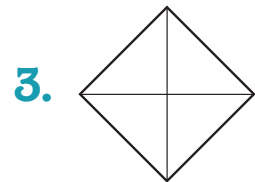
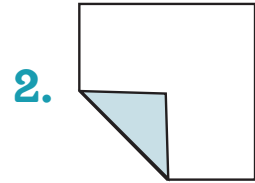
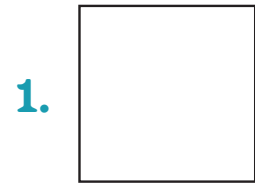
Cut out the Friend Catcher template on the next page along the black lines.

## FOLDING INSTRUCTIONS

1. Put the catcher face down on a table; the plain side of the paper should be facing you.
2. Fold the four corners in toward the center of the square creasing along the blue lines.
3. Flip that square over so the "True Friends!" side is facing you.
4. Fold the four corners in toward the center of the square, creasing along the red lines.
5. Fold the bottom edge of the square so it's even with the top edge, creating a rectangle.
6. Work your thumb and first finger under the four flaps and push your fingertips together to create the four points meeting in the center. Work your fingers in unison moving side to side and then up and down to make your Friend Catcher open and close. When it's open you'll see numbers on the inside flaps.

## FRIEND CATCHING INSTRUCTIONS


- ★ Invite a classmate to pick one of the book characters on the outside of the catcher: Audacity, Azalea, Margaret, or Charlie
- ★ Working your fingers in unison, spell out the name of the chosen character, moving the catcher with each letter. Example: C-H-A-R-L-I-E moves the catcher seven times.
- ★ Have the classmate pick one of the numbers showing. Move the catcher that many times.
- ★ Have the classmate pick a number again. Open the catcher to reveal the question beneath the number chosen and pose it to your classmate.



*Now you've caught a friend!*

# Friend Catcher Template

# Audacity

A stylized illustration of a woman with brown hair, wearing a blue long-sleeved dress with a white collar and black boots. She is captured in a dynamic pose, jumping or falling over a large, thick red oval. The background is a solid light blue. The entire illustration is framed by a thick red border.

What is the best way to make a new friend?

Have you ever befriended someone who other kids ignore or pick on?

1  
What do your friends like best about you?

Describe a time when you helped a friend.

6 Describe a time when you made friends with someone who seems very different from you.

Do you have one best friend  
or a lot of  
best friends?

Can an animal be a true friend?

What is the most important quality a friend must have?

# Charlie