

### **Why did you write this book?**

When I was a boy, I had a feisty, independent aunt who was an artist and loved sailing. At first, I didn't like her. She was odd and demanding. But she took an interest in me, and slowly I took an interest in her. As she aged, she didn't seem to mellow or retire or relax, but seemed to come even more alive, to throw herself with increasing energy at what she loved, even as that became more difficult. She painted with a trembling, arthritic hand. Some weeks before she died, she managed—in a wheelchair!—to get herself into a small boat and, with the help of someone who held the rudder, sail through some rough weather. That was the germ of *Into the Wind*. I wanted to tell a story about that sort of spirit, that way of living where the difficulty of something is all the more reason to try hard to do it. It's also the kind of spirit that can be passed from one generation to another. In the book, Rusty, a ten year-old boy, comes to appreciate Hazel, an elderly woman with a feisty, persistent spirit that by the end becomes a part of him.

### **The book tackles some tough topics - mental and physical health, school struggles, and more. Why is it important to include those kinds of things in literature for kids?**

So many great middle-grade novels tackle serious topics: loneliness, family struggles, racism, illness, even the death of something or someone deeply cared for or loved. I think that's because by the time kids are eight to twelve years old, they either know of or have experienced some trouble like this. Books that touch upon such trouble can assure readers who've experienced it that they're not alone, and they can cultivate empathy in readers who haven't experienced it yet. They can also be bridges between kids and adults who read together and discuss the important issues of their lives as they see those issues played out in stories. Moreover, though stories, literature for kids can show readers how serious trouble can be survived and turned into wisdom and growth. There is, for example, the sad truth that life comes to an end—but also the truth that it can be filled with fun, uproarious humor, friendship, love, and wonder. I hope that's what readers feel and understand when they finish *Into the Wind*.

### **What surprised you the most about the writing and publishing process?**

I've published books for adults and for kids, and I'm particularly surprised, when writing the latter, by how much of my childhood I've carried into my adulthood: the smells, sounds, sights, and tastes, the moments of sadness and exhilaration, all of it still present in my imagination. I suspect that's true for many people. We are such sponges of experience as children.

And the publication process always has its own surprises for me. A good editor will help make a problematic paragraph or sentence come smooth and clear. Or you might realize, as I did with *Into the Wind*, that the manuscript needs another chapter. When you first see the galleys, or your words as they'll look in book form, there's the shock that *Whoa! People other than my daughter will be reading this!* And, in the case of children's books, there are sketches, then full illustrations that enhance the text, and finally the cover, which, as for *Into the Wind*, conveys the essential spirit of the novel. What begins as a thought in my head becomes a book in others' hands. That still stuns me. —William Loizeaux, Author *Into the Wind*