

# Laurie Morrison



## **School Visit Presentation Options** **(in-person or virtual, 40-60 minutes including Q&A, ideal for grades 5-8)**

### **Persistence on the Path to Publication**

This presentation chronicles my journey as an author—from a kid who loved to read novels but didn't believe I was creative enough to write fiction, to an adult who found the courage and inspiration to try. I share my experiences of persevering through many, many rejections and disappointments before my first book sold, and I emphasize the benefits of resilience and flexibility, showing how I was able to “recycle” my favorite elements of my early manuscripts and work them into stronger, more original new stories. I get students thinking about the beliefs they hold about themselves, the times when they have persevered through challenges, and the ways in which resilience and flexibility can help them achieve their goals. Students do not need to have read any of my books to be engaged in and inspired by this presentation.

### **From Inspiration to Publication: A Behind-the-Scenes Look at the Book of Your Choice**

If students are reading one of my books and want to know more about the story behind that story, this presentation is a great choice! I briefly chronicle my journey from kid-reader to published author and then offer a behind-the-scenes glimpse into the writing, editing, and publishing process for one of my novels (your choice). I give an in-depth look at how publishing works and how one particular novel came to be—from the initial idea all the way through the final edit and book design, including all the setbacks, roadblocks, and triumphs along the way.

## **Writing Workshop Options** **(in-person or virtual, 40-60 minutes including Q&A, ideal for grades 5-8 but** **can be adapted for adults)**

### **Writers Control Time: Speeding Up and Slowing Down Your Storytelling**

In this workshop, I show students that writers have the power to control how quickly time passes by making strategic choices about how much page space each moment in a story deserves. Using concrete examples from *Coming Up Short*, I demonstrate how I slowed time down to develop an important scene with internal narration, dialogue, and vivid sensory detail, and I also reveal how I sped time up and skipped past an insignificant event. I then lead students to write a scene in which they slow down and zoom in on the important moments while speeding past the boring bits, or to revise a scene they've already written by harnessing their power to control time.

### **Where to Begin?: How to Hook Your Reader with an Engaging Opening**

In this workshop, we look at the first draft of one of my books alongside the very different first chapter in the published book. Together, we consider why the published version is a more effective opening than my first draft, and we come up with a list of criteria for a story beginning. We test our list out against other story beginnings, and I lead a writing exercise in which students create their own story beginning—or revise their own if they've been working on stories already.

### **What's Your Point (of View)?**

In this workshop, I share my experience of rewriting *Saint Ivy* to change the point of view from first person to third person; I show side-by-side examples of each version and explain my reasons for undertaking such a big revision. Together, we look at a variety of novel excerpts that use different points of view and tenses, and we investigate the opportunities and challenges of each one. Then I lead a writing exercise in which students rewrite a scene from one point of view to another to see what changes and gain a deeper understanding of why perspective and tense matter so much.

### **Reading Like a Writer: How Your Favorite Books Can Help You Level Up Your Craft**

The question I get asked most frequently is whether I have any tips for young writers, and my biggest advice is to read a lot and read like a writer. One of the best ways for writers to improve their craft is to find mentor texts they can analyze and learn from. In this workshop, I'll show students how I use mentor texts when beginning a new project, and I'll lead them through an exercise of reading a short piece with their writer hats on, to investigate effective craft moves, and then writing a scene that uses the lessons they gleaned.

### **Testimonials from Educators:**

"My class is full of Laurie Morrison super fans! I introduced them to Laurie's writing through *Saint Ivy* and afterward many of them just wanted to keep reading. I have had Laurie zoom with my class several times to discuss her writing process. Being a teacher herself, Laurie really has a way of choosing what is important to highlight when she speaks to students. One thing that really stood out to my readers and writers was how Laurie persevered through her process. I think it is important for students to hear how hard it can be to become a writer and also the important underlying theme of never giving up and developing grit. Now when I offer revision feedback on my students' writing they take it more constructively and are open to it because they see that EVERYONE can improve. I have a hard time keeping track of her books in my classroom library because they are always checked out. Laurie writes relatable books for middle grades readers, offers engaging presentations, has a great way of interacting with kids, and has really helped my class learn valuable lessons through hearing from a published author."  
-Betsy Lamitina, 6th and 7th grade English teacher

"My 7<sup>th</sup> graders were so fortunate to learn alongside Laurie Morrison! During her 'Power of Persistence' presentation, I was blown away by her honesty and ability to reach young writers. Morrison excels at making kids feel seen and heard - whether in reading or writing - and is able

to coach writers, while encouraging and engaging all!" -Jenny Adelman, 8th grade English teacher and literacy coach

"Laurie Morrison virtually visited my fifth grade class to speak about the power of perseverance. For most of my students, this was their first time meeting an author, and it helped bring to light the possibility that they too, could be a writer. After her presentation, several shared that seeing her persevere made them feel like they could accomplish hard things too. She also took the time to answer their questions, giving each student a moment of connection. The visit was such a joy, and will probably go down as one of the best memories of the year." -Melissa Tanaka, 5th grade teacher

"Our students thoroughly enjoyed your informative presentations and were completely engaged. You held their attention with your knowledge and enthusiasm, which is no small feat with 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> graders. The students who attended the Writers' Workshops told us that they learned a great deal and will be applying this knowledge in their classroom writing." -Marques Stanard, middle school principal