

The NSK Neustadt Prize for

CHILDREN'S LITERATURE



"A good book is never finished

– it goes on whispering to you from the wall."

– Virginia Euwer Wolff

Born in 1937, Virginia Euwer Wolff grew up in a log-cabin home in Portland, Oregon. Although her home had no electricity, it did have a grand piano and a multitude of books. Wolff attended Smith College and earned a Bachelor's Degree in English in 1959. After graduation, Virginia got married and had two children. After being a stay-at-home mom for years, Virginia went on to teach both elementary-school and high-school English.

Wolff started writing later

in life and was not published for the first time until 1988 at the age of 51. The book, *Probably Still Nick Swansen*, won the International Reading Association Award and the PEN-West Book Award. Also popular, her *Make Lemonade* trilogy was written in free verse, a unique style for a novel. Music, chamber music in particular, has a strong influence on Wolff's writing. She has explained that music "consists of basically one person per part, and that's perhaps at the core of how I know every voice needs to be heard." Virginia always plays music in the background when writing and explains that many of her characters are inspired by the music she hears.



In 2011, Virginia Euwer Wolff won the NSK Neustadt Prize for Children's Literature from the University of Oklahoma and *World Literature Today*.

Reflection:

We are all inspired by the things around us and the experiences we have lived. Wolff's influence is music, what is yours? How can music inspire characters in a book? What else can inspire an author? Research some of your favorite authors to determine the influences on them.



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