



Meet the Authors

Kirby Larson and Quinn Wyatt

Award winning author **Kirby Larson** is the author of the Newbery Honor Book *Hattie Big Sky*, and its sequel, *Hattie Ever After*, and the award-winning nonfiction picture books: *Two Bobbies* and *Nubs*.

Quinn Wyatt lives in Kenmore, Washington, with her two wonderful daughters, fabulous husband, and so-so dog. She loves to grow things in her garden, learn new crafting techniques, volunteer at her kids' school, and bake yummy things (especially with chocolate). She has lived with Crohn's for most of her life and is encouraged by all the progress that has been made over the years in the treatment of Inflammatory Bowel Diseases.

Q&A

Tell us about yourself. How did you become a writer?

Kirby: Ever since I learned to read, books have been magic carpets and maps. Magic carpets because books have transported me to other times and places, broadening my understanding of this glorious, messy world; maps because they have shown me ways to navigate perplexing situations, like how to be a good friend or own up to my mistakes. Books inspired me to write all through school but I never dreamed of being a writer because I didn't see it as an option for an ordinary kid like me. Rediscovering children's books with my own children provided the impetus to learn how to be a writer myself; I am fortunate and blessed to have been able to pursue this career for the past thirty years.

Quinn: I am a mother, baker, crafter, volunteer and now a writer! I also have Crohn's Disease. I have felt for a long time that there are conditions that live in the shadows because they are hard to talk about. I love that books today tackle these hard topics and I was inspired to share my story. I wanted other kids to not feel as alone as I felt growing up going through embarrassing and painful symptoms.

What have been the biggest influences—people or experiences—in your work?

Quinn: I was, of course, influenced by my mother and her ability to reach so many with her gift of storytelling. As my daughters have grown, I have been moved by the way books

make such a difference in how kids see the world and those around them. The stories we read can truly make a difference in our lives.

Kirby: Immediate influences include my parents who modeled a powerful love and respect for reading and story, my husband who believed in me when I most certainly did not believe in myself and my children who have kept me on my toes from the get-go. Karen Cushman's incredible *Catherine, Called Birdy*, helped me see historical fiction in a new light; her friendship emboldened me to pursue my own passion for that genre. I continue to be inspired and challenged by the many gifted writers I am blessed to call friends.

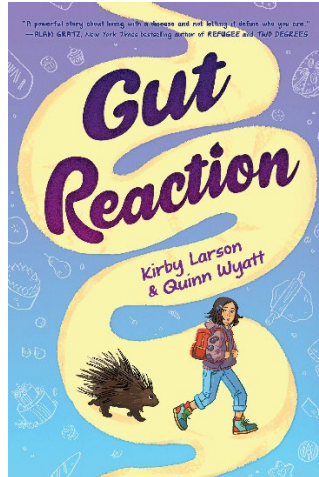
What was your creative process like for this book?

Quinn: This book was a journey that spanned almost a decade. My mom and I went through several revisions of Tess. Who she is and what she is going through changed multiple times! We created timelines and character studies and bios for our main characters to really dive into who they are. We traded the manuscript back and forth adding scenes and working through the storyline. It was truly a collaborative process from start to finish.

Kirby: If not for Quinn's quiet persistence, this book would not have happened due to my reluctance to revisit a very tough time in her childhood. Once I understood how important it was to her to tell this story, I was on board fully. We started with a retreat weekend discussing character and plot, sketching out a road map. This book is guided by Quinn's lived experiences, so she wrote the scenes from the main character's POV and I wove those into a narrative based on the road map we'd created. Our insightful agent, Jill Grinberg, and her chief of operations, Denise Page, helped us revise and hone the story, pushing us to add more emotion and lots more baking.

If there was one message that you'd want every reader of this book to have, what would it be?

Quinn and Kirby: We are so happy to see so many books normalizing the conversation around both mental and physical health. By writing a hopeful, honest, and sometime humorous story of living with Crohn's disease, it is our hope to add to that conversation. We also want to support the Quinns and Tesses of the world dealing with various hard-to-talk about conditions – from alopecia to vitiligo – by saying it's okay to talk, even about the embarrassing stuff. And for those blessedly unaffected by physical or mental health challenges, we hope this story offers insights that may foster greater understanding, empathy, and kindness.



GUT REACTION

By Kirby Larson and Quinn Wyatt

Hardcover: 9781338893137 | Ages 8–12

On Sale 3/5/2023

Critically acclaimed, bestselling author and Newbery Honor-winner, Kirby Larson, and her daughter, debut author, Quinn Wyatt, pen this gorgeously moving and often funny story that explores what living with a chronic illness is like. Inspired by Quinn's own personal journey, *Gut Reaction* is full of heart and humor and highlights the importance of asking for help when it comes to mental and physical health alike.