

born to blog by beth kaplan

TUESDAY, JANUARY 19, 2010

["I know here"](#)

A wonderful visit this morning: Laurel Croza came to show me her book. Laurel took my Ryerson class in 2003, and as she did the first writing exercise for class, the first "creative writing" she had ever done, she tumbled into vivid memories of her childhood in the northwest of Canada. One of her stories was about a girl who's being forced to move from everything she knows in the north to the big city, and how she copes.

I'm proud to tell you that Laurel's story is now a haunting picture book published by Groundwood, one of Canada's best publishers. It's called *I know here*, it's beautifully illustrated by Matt James, and it's coming out in March. Laurel is the most unassuming person, full of self-doubt but also brave and persistent; she stuck to her work, to her need to be heard, and here is her book. And now she's thinking about some short stories ... Brava, Laurel.

Some of the cards or email messages about Beth's Ryerson and U of T classes:

Your U of T class provides a relaxed forum that allows us to express ourselves and share some of our deepest feelings and hardest stories. As students we couldn't ask for anything more.

Anne-Sophie Brieger

Of everything that I love about this class, I marvel most at the honesty. It is not brutal honesty, but gentle, thoughtful and genuine honesty, spoken with the best intentions to create not only superb writing but to preserve the heart of the writer. What can be better than this?

Liz Cotman

The best part about writing is that you can become better at it! This class has been one of the most rewarding experiences of my life.

Cinzia Fabrizi

BTW – I've taken writing courses with 2 other instructors and neither of those classes held a candle to yours. Not even close.

Garnet Pratt Siddall

Since taking your class I have had four pieces published, including (incredibly!) a poem in a journal called *Canadian Women's Studies* published through York University.

Rita

Group dynamics aside, it is all about making us better writers and just about everyone's writing got better. You had people "jumping off the cliff" by week two and not just because they were comfortable with you, but you had everyone comfortable with each other instantly. I jumped three times and I'm still a little bruised and battered, but I'll be better for it.

Brad Furlott

I'm deeply appreciative for the chance to have met such a group of talented people. The experience have been exceptionally rewarding in more ways than one. I discovered a new dimension to myself I never thought it existed, and opened my eye to possibilities that I'm now willing to explore.

Gamal Taha

I cannot begin to tell you what a profound impact you have had on my life. It's truly an honour to learn from you and it is something I look forward to every week.

Wendy Litner

Great session last night!

My son - who is in first year at York - just called me at work and asked me if I could give him a definition of "catharsis". Without hesitating a moment I replied: "Our writing class at Ryerson."

This week I am recovering from the unexpected death of a very close friend, and the group dynamic proved to be just the uplift that I needed.

We are all at such different places in our life stories, and we all have so many relevant and absorbing things to say. The time goes by too quickly, don't you think?

See you next week.

Chris Cameron

I just got an e-mail from Lori Fazari to say they're going to publish me in *Facts & Arguments* sometime between Xmas and New Year's. It's

my anxiety piece. I made the changes you and the class suggested, and Lori has suggested a few more. So now I'm anxious about exposing myself to the world.

Brad

Your course was a great opportunity to hear other writers and have my own work thoughtfully critiqued. I so appreciated your nurturing of the 'talent' each individual brought to the class. It was a pleasure to see someone able to key into each one's ability and identify what was worth working on.

Pat Sharp

I just had my first short fiction class where people commented on the stories. The teacher really critiques the work and so does the class. There is a lot of criticism and I find it quite intimidating. It makes me really appreciate the warm, nurturing environment you create. Not that there isn't constructive criticism in your class, but you really make sure it doesn't get out of hand. I have to hand in my first story next week, my first fiction in a long time and I am very intimidated. I don't feel like a very good fiction writer. I just have to be brave and do it. But I have to brace myself for some harsh criticism. It's a far cry from the safe environment you create.

A. F.

I came to class begrudgingly the other night and left wondering how I could possibly have been anywhere else.

Jason Allen