

# Through a Dark Wood



## A Novel Workshop with Nancy Butts May 3, 2009, 9:00-4:00 Prince Conference Center

*Midway in the journey of our life  
I came to myself in a dark wood,  
for the straight way was lost.  
-Dante's Divine Comedy*

The purpose of this workshop is to help those midway through the process of writing a book - whether they are just starting the first draft, or are mired in revision - to find their way through the thorns and deadfalls back into the light of a successfully completed project.

### Details

- Maximum workshop participants - 10 (lottery to be held with more than 10 applicants; notification to all by April 10, 2009).
- You do not need to have a complete novel, but it's ok if you do.
- You will submit the first twenty pages of your novel, and a one page synopsis or short (no more than two pages) chapter-by-chapter outline with your registration.
- This is a *workshop*, and participants will read and comment on each other's work and do various hands-on exercises.
- You need to bring a notebook, shoebox, recipe box, laptop computer or whatever you like best for organizing your thoughts. You will be developing a Baedeker, or field guide, to help you through the process of brainstorming, planning, researching, organizing, drafting and revising your novel.

Participants will receive guidance on characterization, plot and narrative choices such as viewpoint, scene construction, pacing, theme, character voice and authorial voice. At the end of the day, participants will walk away with specific insights on their manuscripts and a plan for moving forward in terms of the various elements of fiction named above. You will also have the beginnings of your own personal Baedeker, or field guide, to help you along the path to your novel's completion. You will have renewed inspiration and ideas about how to restructure your creative life so you can be more fruitful.

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Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Send submission materials (see above) and \$80 check (includes lunch) payable to SCBWI-MI to: Mindy Krasner, 13036 Spencer Road, Milford, MI 48380. Email [mkrasner@greenhillsschool.org](mailto:mkrasner@greenhillsschool.org) w/questions, or call Mindy at 248-684-8633.

## All About Nancy

When she gets up every morning, Nancy Butts is never sure how many hats she will have worn before she finally collapses into bed that night. Writer, editor, teacher—at some moments she manages to squash all three hats onto her head at once. But although if often feels as if she has to steal time in order to do it, her love is writing fiction. Specifically, she loves novels: both her own, and those of the hundreds of students whose work she has been privileged to guide as a writing instructor and mentor over the years.

Nancy is a former newspaper reporter and freelance writer who went on to publish two young adult novels with Stephen Roxburgh at Front Street Books. “I learned everything I know about the twin crafts of writing and editing from Stephen,” she says. *CHESHIRE MOON*, her first novel, is about a deaf girl struggling to find her place in a hearing world. *THE DOOR IN THE LAKE*, her second novel, is a science fiction book about a boy whose homecoming after a mysterious disappearance is definitely *not* happily ever after. Among its many awards, *DOOR* was an ALA Quick Pick for Reluctant Readers and a Scholastic Book Club Selection that was also “translated” into the Queen’s English for a British edition. Boyds Mills Press released a new edition of the book in the fall of 2008.

Nancy works frequently with educational publishers, having published five books under her own name for Pearson Education in the past two years. She is also the editor for Writer’s Institute of a forthcoming book on revision and children’s fiction by the author and playwright Sandra Asher.

For over seven years, Nancy has also taught two courses in children’s writing for the Institute of Children’s Literature. One of these is a graduate level course during which she leads students through the entire process of writing a book, from that initial creative spark all the way through the first draft and finally to revision. One of her proudest moments was when her student, Monica Roe, published the novel they had worked on together (*THAW*) in the spring of 2008 with Front Street.

“What I hope to do with my students is to be a compass,” Nancy says. “It is easy to get lost in the trackless waste that the middle of a novel often feels like. I try to lead writers through that dark wood, as Dante called it.”

Nancy is a graduate of Duke University and former Jeopardy champion who grew up all over the country (including a stint in western Michigan). She now lives in a tiny town in rural Georgia, and is currently trying to steal enough time to work on two of her own novels.