

Author B. A. Hughes Shines Light on Nature's Power To Connect

Glimm, A Glimpse of Light Found guides middle schoolers through unexpected adventures of self-discovery.

SHORT STORY WRITER **B. A. HUGHES** DEBUTS HER NEW FICTION BOOK FOR TWEENS AND EARLY TEENS. We asked her about the book's mystical themes, her writing process, homeschooling, and the delightful illustrations by her granddaughter Quinci Woodall.

The title *Glimm, A Glimpse of Light Found* is intriguing. What does *Glimm* mean? How does it relate to the main themes in your book?

Glimm is a suggestive version of glimpse and glimmer, both themes and objectives in the book. Glimm may intrigue young readers with questions like, "What or Who is Glimm? A wizard or monster? A creature from another world or perhaps a child with an odd name?"

An objective of the stories is to help youth imagine their own responses to the characters' circumstances and find or identify a self-awareness or enlightenment within themselves, thus a "glimpse of glimmer."

Light and dark appear frequently in your book. Why did you want to use this interplay of light and dark to explore deeper themes and characters?

To mine various words, situations, and comparisons which appeal to youth and prick their imagination was a favorite part of the writing process for me. Themes of light and dark appear everywhere – in nature, in headlines, in relationships, and in our souls. Part of my faith walk is to influence youth toward recognizing light around and within themselves. My hope is that darkness fades when light becomes more attractive.

Tell us about the wonderful illustrations in the book by your granddaughter Quinci Woodall.

Quinci was only three when she drew a lifelike fuzzy duckling. Her family was amazed at the detail, angle, perception, and proportion, but Quinci just enjoyed drawing. She drew pictures on birthday cards to family



Photo credit: Kelli Holdeman

and friends. She began journals of illustrations. She joined an art club and recently won second place in an illustration contest sponsored by Masters School of Art, Keizer, Oregon. The contest was open for 12-18-year-olds. Quinci was one of the youngest in the contest, only 12 at the time of her submission.

Quinci was commissioned to draw illustrations for *Glimm*. Quinci illustrates a cocky rooster jumping aboard the hood of a car, a mysterious and broken tunnel found in a family's basement, a waterfall in a ferny glen, an old man spiking the ground with a spear, and a beautiful cheetah in a Serengeti setting, among others.

Many of your stories are dedicated to your grandchildren. How did you start telling them stories?

I am not a great impromptu storyteller. A couple of my grown sons are terrific storytellers, and the whole family is completely engaged, usually laughing, when these sons tell stories for the grans. I am a writer and like to take much quiet time to develop all aspects of a story.

However, one favorite game I enjoyed with grandchildren was, at bedtime, we all lay in one room together and tell an "endless" story. In this game, one person begins any way he/she wishes, telling two or three sentences and stops abruptly where the next person must take up the story. Mostly, the stories get twisted, crazy, and unrecognizable from the opening sentence! I do not recommend this game for putting together a serious story.

Your book draws inspiration from nature. Have you had any mystical experiences with nature or animals? Have these experiences affected your writing?

I have always felt a safety, inspiration, and kinship with all of nature. I have never been afraid outside at night because I feel enveloped in nature. However, I'm not a huge fan of pets! It is probably because I reared six children and am DONE cleaning up after others! However, I certainly respect animals and can sense their intent when I look into their faces. I must admit, I DO have one grandpuppy with whom I am smitten!

I have always loved birds and other "critters" that visit my yard and gardens. I frequently talk to them and feel that they understand and enjoy my presence. No, there has never been an animal that communicated back to me, but there is a gentle calmness, a genuine interest rather than startles that I've noticed between wild creatures and myself.

When I was a child, there was a very large tree on our property with a bulging above-ground root system. I called the tree 'Grandfather Tree' and sat in the roots often to rest or dream or wish fairies would come to visit. I've always loved fairies and believe they must be real in nature, although unseen!

Glimm includes a Guide for Teachers and Educators, including homeschoolers. What resources and sources of inspiration did you use for homeschooling your kids?

I was most inspired by *Home Grown Kids, A Practical Handbook for Teaching Your Children at Home* by educators Raymond and Dorothy Moore. I also followed closely the *Focus on the Family Ministries* by James Dobson. This was in the 1970s. I am unsure if these resources are still available.

I homeschooled for only a few years, but am most pleased that I did not hurry my children into the public school system at tender early years. I believed and still do that young children who live in responsive and caring homes thrive more in the nest of their homes before age 8 or 9 than in organized public settings. Due to the end-of-the-last century aggressive political movements to put babies into child care and early learning centers, family units, in general, have been weakened and parental-child bonds hindered rather than heightened. The home is rarely sacred in the American society today, but my stories hope to attract youth to healthy family relationships.

Your stories deal with teens and tweens facing some big responsibilities and even crises. Why do you like to write for this age group and what do you think are their main challenges today?

As a young mom, I had an older friend who reared eight children. She said the teen years were her very favorite, quite opposite from what society was telling me. I wanted to emulate her great love and patience with her children, so I chose to believe the teen years of my own

little children would be good. One year, out of my own six children, five were teens!! None of my children were perfect, and I was often a loud and bossy mom, but yes, they were the most funny and engaging people I knew and remain the same today!

Now, I am a substitute teacher and love the teens and tweens age group most of all. They are old enough to understand and follow instructions (I AM a teacher after all and must be obeyed), yet these people are curious enough to respect a good story when told by a strong, assertive, and caring adult. They know in a second if you respect/understand them, and they respond strongly and loyally to adults who really care for them and will set healthy boundaries for them.

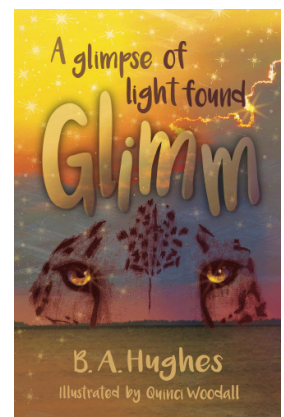
Youth today are often presented with very difficult or confusing family relationships, constant violent headlines, skepticism, anger, and blatant disrespect. Much of their literature focuses on the escapism of sci-fi and fantasy. Some of that is beautiful and wondrous (*Inkheart Trilogy* by Cornelia Funke). But much of their literature and games redirect them from their personal responsibility and pit them against adults. This is not helpful for them to navigate the real world.

Where do you get ideas for your stories? You said you collect snippets and quotes and write a journal. How do you convert these things into stories?

My journals are mostly therapeutic for me. I do capture interesting names, places, phrases, and ideas in a journal when I attend writer's events or when I travel. (Street and road names and even names of backwoods towns are quirky and fabulous!)

This *Glimm* set of stories was influenced directly from six of my thirteen grandchildren. I simply concentrated on one beloved child at a time and imagined an adventure which he or she would like. Then, I tried to enlarge the adventure to appeal to children and draw them to "the light."

Often I used character traits or settings taken directly from the grandchild's life and his/her friends. My grans will recognize some things in the stories that no one else will because they are personal to them. Another *Glimm*-styled anthology complete with the stories dedicated to my remaining seven grandchildren is forthcoming.



***Glimm, A Glimpse of Light Found* by B. A. Hughes, illustrated by Quinci Woodall, is available in print for \$13.95 at www.createspace.com/6658398**