

# NEWSLETTER

## Introducing Rachelle Delaney

*and her second novel THE LOST SOULS of ISLAND X*



INTERVIEW: There's always fear surrounding The Second Book: first, there's the idea that one will never quite pull off the writing of a second book...then that the second book won't live up to the first.

In this case, you were actually signed to a two-book contract, so perhaps that makes it a bit different...possibly, even tougher! Rachelle, can you share how you felt about the process of sequel?  
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Book no.2 of The Lost Souls stories, written by Rachelle Delaney, with two protagonist voices, a boy Jem, and girl, Scarlet, about a group of children pirates, published by HarperCollins Canada  
Fall 2009 The Ship of Lost Souls  
Fall 2010 (The Lost Souls of Island X)

### WRITERSWEBWORKSHOP CLASSES...HOW THEY WORK...

On-line. In class. Night school or MFA. Face-to-face. Retreats. Information books...how to learn to write. Or, how to continue to grow as a writer. Decisions.

WritersWebWorkshop courses have now been active for almost a year (first starting as

“writersworkshop”), so it’s good to take a step back, and see how they have a place in this learning process.

I’ve taught all, if you can include a “summer intensive” UBC Writing Centre course as a retreat, and each has its strengths.

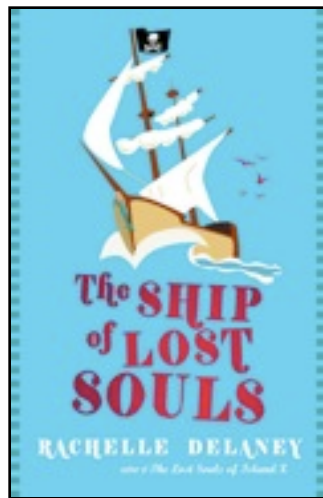
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RACHELLE DELANEY CON'T...



**Cover:** *The Ship of Lost Souls* - first cover, Fall 2009



**Cover:** *The Ship of Lost Souls* - new cover, Fall 2010

**Alison** con't: Was this something you had in mind as you wrote the first book? Or was it a new thought? How was the process?

**Rachelle:** When I was first signed the two-book deal, I was so excited about the prospect of writing a sequel. I'd had a few ideas for it while writing the first book, but nothing concrete. I didn't want to think too hard about a second book in case nothing ever became of the first. When the time came to actually write Book 2, though, I found it very challenging. Writing a sequel involves giving enough backstory to fill in readers who haven't read Book 1, but not so much that you bore the heck out of readers who have read it. I found it very tricky to keep the action moving forward while giving that backstory. It involved a few rewrites.

**Alison:** You won the Canadian Authors' Association's Emerging Writing of the Year award this past year--wow. Congratulations! Can you tell us about the award, and what it means for you? How did you learn that you were the Emerging Writer of the Year?

**Rachelle:** Thanks! The award is

given to one Canadian writer under the age of 30 every year (I turned 30 a month after winning—phew!). I was floored to find out that I was one of three finalists. I figured there was absolutely no way I'd ever win. I mean, the other finalists were accomplished “adult” writers—one fabulous poet and one acclaimed novelist. They're very Canlit—serious and literary and raw. And throughout my writing degrees, I always failed miserably at being “Canlit”. I gave that up a long time ago. So winning wasn't just a great achievement for me, it was also a coup for kid lit. The CAA chose a novel about pirate children! How great is that!

**Alison:** I believe you were quite deliberate in seeking out an agent as opposed to submitting the manuscript yourself. How did you go about this?

**Rachelle:** When I first decided the novel was ready to be sent out, I sent it directly to about 12 publishers...and received about 12 rejections. That's when I decided to try the agent route. Basically, I spent a lot of time Googling for agents that  
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## WRITERSWEBWORKSHOP AT SURREY INTERNATIONAL WRITERS CONFERENCE

Yes, we will have a table at the Surrey International Writers' Conference--come and visit! For conference participants, there will be the opportunity to enter a draw for half-tuition of a course of your choice through WritersWebWorkshop. SIWC has, as always, a terrific line-up of speakers and events.

Check out their web-site: [www.siwc.ca](http://www.siwc.ca)

RACHELLE DELANEY CON'T FROM PAGE 2

represent kidlit, reading their bios, and trying to decide which ones sounded like the best fit. My agent sounded lovely (and she is!)—the kind of person who'd appreciate a bit of humour and light-heartedness. Within about four months of signing with her, I had an excellent publisher and editor. It was a dream come true.

**Alison:** What do you think an unpublished writer should focus on in her/his work?

**Rachelle:** I think new writers—well, *all* writers, really—should write what feels true to the them, in whatever voice feels authentic. Even if they're not sure it'll be marketable. That's what you're going to be best at writing. Ignore what that trendy writer is doing—she's not you. Write what you'd want to read, what would make you laugh or cry or shudder. Chances are it'll make someone else do the same.

Lately I've let myself write stories with talking animals in them. I've heard several people advise against this kind of anthropomorphism, but frankly, that's what's in me. A talking muskox. And she wants out.

**Alison:** And where do you think the published

writer's focus should be?

**Rachelle:** I think published writers should do the same, and write what really speaks to them. But it's not always that easy. Once you've got a book out, there's more pressure to please your editor or agent. You've got their voices in your head.

In theory, though, if that first book you wrote was authentically “you”, chances are they (and your readers) will like your next authentic creation too. That's what I like to think, anyway.

**Alison:** Do you want to share what you are working on at this point?

**Rachelle:** Sure. It's a middle-grade novel about Arctic animals (hence the muskox). I actually wrote it once and sent it to my agent, who came back with something along the lines of, “You can do better than this.” I was really grateful for that. I'm now almost finished rewriting it, and I do think it's a stronger story. Fingers crossed that my agent and publisher agree—and like talking muskox. Not to mention caribou.

**Alison:** Thanks, Rachelle! Can't wait for the muskox and cariboo...

### \*HOLIDAY MEMOIR & STORY course

November 1-29

This course is a number of possibilities. If you're into creating your own holiday gifts, this could be the first step to a meaningful one for family and friends, with the re-telling of a favourite tale. You might even want to print, illustrate, and bind in some colourful way. (If you do this, please let me know, and send along a pic for the December newsletter!)

Or it could be you taking another look at this time of year—a look at the other layers of “holiday”—maybe something funny, sardonic. Holidays are often times of heightened emotions; all is not easy and light.

Whatever path you choose—a children's story, or one for adults, fiction, creative nonfiction—let's have some fun...an explore!



**WORKSHOP - P. 1 CON'T**

In the face-to-face of weekly classes, body language is another form of communication. However, given that writing is all about communication, what is “lost” with online workshops, can be gained in the practice and search for precision in word choices, and in the pacing of the black marks on white space—whatever that white space might be, page or screen—whether in a story or when communicating with each other. This can only benefit all written work.

In face-to-face classes, there is also the pressure of the deadline and clock: you must show up at a particular time, preferably with work-in-hand. In online workshops, we also have deadlines. But we can maintain a certain flexibility with this, as the workshops are peopled with busy adults, with responsibilities. Writers—people who want to write, and who do write—come to WritersWebWorkshop to do exactly that, but life can throw a few surprises: illness in the family, something popping up at work, finding some artistic block. we work with the assumption that you want to write in spite of any bump. So while we have deadlines, there’s also a flexibility, together with communication about what is happening: “I need to submit material on Friday instead of Monday.” We adjust...and it works. Both face-to-face and online nurture a sense of responsibility to each other and to each other’s work.

Advanced courses, as in college or uni, carry the carrot-on-stick of grades, and this does motivate some writers. But there’s a need to wean oneself from this. The writing *must* be enough in the do-ing. This can’t last as motivation, not if a lifetime of writing is to be sustained. So online workshops can cause growth of habit to life-long writing. Your responsibilities are to your own self, your work and your peers’. Notice that there is no need to “please” the teacher. That’s of no consequence. It’s about your story.

There’s a “space” peculiar to working on-line—a spiritual/intellectual space...even physical. It mirrors the writer’s traditional space in many respects. And it allows for a certain stillness, a certain reflection. A quote from a current student: “...I find beneficial..that there is time to read and dissect the writing offered. I have taken classes where each writer read aloud their work to other members of the class. You do in this way hear the rhythm of the words and you can tell quickly when something isn’t reading well, but I get much more out of reading other’s work myself over a few days. I also like to read and re-read what others say about my work. It usually clears up some doubt in my mind or sends me down a path I hadn’t thought of.” (Debra - Writing for Children - summer 2010)

Time to write. Time to think. ~~~~~

**WritersWebWorkshop Courses**

**October-November**

Writing for Children

**Nov 1-29**

Holiday Memoir/Fiction

**January-April**

Novel Writing

**January**

Writing for Teachers

**TBA**

Elements of Fiction

Screenwriting



**WRITING FOR CHILDREN**  
8 week course, beginning Oct. 6  
The opportunity to write and give and receive feedback on 3 complete short pieces.

[www.writerswebworkshop.com](http://www.writerswebworkshop.com)

Alison Acheson  
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