

Gooney Bird

Posted on Mar 29, Posted by [Lois Lowry](#) Category [Uncategorized](#)



Usually when an author receives a foreign edition of a book, there is some clue as to what language you're looking at. If you remember the words from high school French class, okay, that one's easy. When it is Turkish or Hungarian you can figure it out by finding...in the small print...the name of the city where it was published. Ankara or Budapest is pretty definitive.

But this one was a mystery to me. There was nothing recognizable in the small print. So I sent a jpeg of it to my friend Alan, who was once a good Bar Mitzvah boy, and have just heard back from him: yes, it is Hebrew. "Do you want my sister in Israel to translate it?" he asks. But no, I won't bother Alan's sister. If it says "Gooney Bird Greene" in English...as it does...then it will be some similiarly silly name in Hebrew. And isn't it fun to think of kids in Israel getting a laugh out of this character?!

I have just finished writing a third book about Gooney Bird and it is at Houghton Mifflin now, awaiting illustrations and then publication...probably spring 2007. But I can give you a title now - GOONEY THE FABULOUS - and the first few paragraphs, which will provide a hint of content that creates the title:

"And so," Mrs. Pidgeon said, reading the final page of the book she was holding, "because the

ant had worked very hard, he and his friends had food all winter. But the grasshopper had none, and found itself dying of hunger.”

“Oh, no!” Keiko wailed. “I hate stories where people die!”

Malcolm, who had been rolling paper into balls while he listened to the story, tossed a little paper pellet at Keiko. “It’s not people,” he pointed out. “It’s a dumb grasshopper! It’s only a grasshopper! Just a grasshopper!”

“Nobody cares if a grasshopper dies!” Tyrone said.

“I do,” Keiko murmured sadly. She folded her arms on her desk and then laid her head down on her arms.

My good friend Middy Thomas is the one who illustrates the Gooney Bird books. Here's a picture of Middy painting, at my farm in Maine, a couple of Octobers ago.



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