

Rachel Winchester:

Children's literature is one of our passions around here, and we believe children should have the very best. Why settle for less than beautiful art and meaningful stories when reading to our children? Today we are revisiting an episode from the archive. Today's author wrote iconic stories that will rock your world.

You're listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid. I'm Rachel Winchester. This is a podcast to help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably.

In this episode, Carole is sharing about one of her favorite authors, Lois Lenski. Lois Lenski's picture books will be your little children's best friends, and her regional stories will leave an indelible mark on your lives.

Listen in.

Carole Joy Seid:

Well, I just realized today as I was talking to my sweet assistant, Rachel, that I've never done a podcast on Lois Lenski. What was I thinking? So I couldn't get through the day until I got this podcast recorded. So I have a stack of some of my most precious books sitting around me as I'm recording this, and I want to share Lois Lenski with you.

Lois Lenski is probably one of the most important illustrators and authors, in children's literature. Let me tell you a little bit about her. So she lived in Ohio. She went to Ohio State University, and she was an art major. And she was determined to really be a true artist, not just an art teacher or something which is, you know, kind of the the safer, more conventional road to take, but she was determined.

And so, eventually, she went to New York City, and she worked on greeting cards and things like that. And she took classes at the Art Students League, which I've mentioned, before. George Bridgeman, who's on my handouts in the high school years for fine art. He and Hogarth, Bernd Hogarth and George Bridgeman. I have both of their books on anatomy on my handouts for serious art students. And George Bridgeman, as I said, was one of the professors at the Art Students League. And she studied there and made some really sweet friendships and then worked part time, as I said, doing greeting card lettering and just picking up enough to survive so that she could still just take her class. She could only afford one.

During her time of striving and surviving in New York City, her teacher at the school, sadly lost his wife after she gave birth to their second child. She suddenly died of pneumonia, and it was a very traumatic thing, for him, of course. But soon after that, he began to notice, this sweet little gal, Lois Lenski. She died, with a child who is 7 and then a brand new baby. And so, Arthur, his name was, Covey, proposed, and, eventually, they married. And he, of course, was an artist, and he was a mural artist and a mural painter. And he had some really great jobs to do for I think one was for the Pan Am expedition and exposition, I should say, and, banks and schools and and different things, and he was very successful.

Then Lois began to pursue, books and writing books and illustrating books, and she finally settled on a character that really made her name.

His name was Mr. Small. At that time, she herself had a little boy who was 4 years old, and she designed these books so that her little boy really was mister Small. And she wrote some very, unique books that no one had ever done anything like this. So she wrote a book called *The Little Auto*, *The Little Sailboat*, *The Little Fire Engine*, *The Little Farm*, *The Little Airplane*, *The Little Train*, and I'm probably leaving several out.

She also had one called *The Little Family*.

But my favorite of all of her books for young children is a little book called *Papa Small*.

It talks about papa small going to work in the morning, and he has this beautiful little family, mama small, baby small, and the small smalls, Paul and Polly, and they live in a big house on the hill. And in the morning, the small smalls watch their daddy shave. And when he drives away, they stand outside and wave.

And then mama small takes care of the house, and the small smalls help, and they all vacuum together. And mama cooks the meals, and they set the table, and baby small is kind of hungry. And when he comes home, when daddy, papa small comes home, everybody runs to meet him, and they have a beautiful dinner together. And then papa small puts her his feet up, and mama Small does the dishes with the small smalls. But on Monday, mama Small washes the clothes, and papa Small hangs them up when he comes home from work. On Tuesday, mama Small irons the clothes, and papa Paul papa Small puts on his clean shirt in the morning. Papa Small helps around the house. On Wednesday, he hangs a picture up for mama.

On Thursday, he fixes the kitchen sink while the small smalls watch. And on Friday, papa small cuts the grass, and Paul rakes it, and baby small, is in the buggy and mama small watches and rests. And on Saturday, the smalls go to town and do their food shopping, but the high point of the day is Sunday. On Sunday, after they have brought their groceries home and drive home in their little auto on Saturday, they, oh, and they I forgot to tell you. They plow the garden and hoe and rake, and mama sets the seeds. But on Sunday, the high point of the day, the smalls go to church. They drive in the little auto, and they park the car and walk. The small smalls sit still in church.

They listen and sing. Papa small sings too. Baby small cries and has to be taken out, and there's this darling illustration of mama small carrying the baby over her shoulder out of the church. And when they get home, papa Small cooks Sunday dinner, and then they go for a ride in the little auto. And then at nighttime, papa small reads them a story while mama small gets their beds ready. And at the end, as all the small books end and that's all about the smalls.

Rachel Winchester:

Did you know we have a free book list to help you start building your home library? Carole listed out over 150 books that are on her bookshelves that have stood the test of time. Whether you are just starting to build your family's home library or you want to fill in gaps, this list is for you. Why spend time, money, and bookshelf space on mediocre books when there are so many wonderful ones in the world? Visit www.homeschoolmadesimple.net/booklist to download the book list today. Happy reading!

Carole Joy Seid:

So her books are wonderful, traditional, totally unique.

Her illustrations are highly simplistic and brilliant, and children love learning the names for the parts of the airplane or the train or the farm or the sailboat, she got into the head of children. And, she also believed that children should be able to handle books, so they're in a beautiful small format and that children need to learn how to respect books.

But as time wore on, she began to expand her boundaries, and what she began to do was studying different geographical areas. And let me tell you, no one has done a better job of it

than Lois Lenski. And so I have some of her books here. She would go and study extensively the history of the period, the culture of the period. And one of her first forays into these ideas was her book, *Indian Captive*, about a little girl who's, kidnapped by Native American people, and she loves being in their culture and in their community so much that when she has the opportunity to leave, she refuses. She loves being with them and and they have become her adopted family.

Then Lois Lenski went on to write her geographic novels, and they have won every kind of award. She won the Newberry for *Strawberry Girl* in 1946. She also, wrote many, many others. So I'm gonna share with you a few that I love.

Strawberry Girl is probably her best known because it won the Newberry, but *Blue Ridge Billy* is a very powerful book, about a little boy who's being raised by kind of a an alcoholic father, in the in the Blue Ridge Mountains in poverty and, you know, what that looks like.

Corn Farm Boy, *Houseboat Girl*, and *BoomTown Boy*.

Boom Town Boy is set in Oklahoma, so I had to track that one down and pay a fortune for it used. There is *Texas Tomboy* and *Bayou Suzette*.

She has one about an Asian little boy in San Francisco during the time of the building of the railroads and all the Chinese people that moved into the Bay Area and this little boy living there.

Her books are brilliant. She was an amazing illustrator and a very, very gifted writer. And what she was trying to accomplish for children was to build compassion in their lives, that comes from knowing the inside scoop of people's family life and the struggles.

I mean, in *Strawberry Girl*, how they're struggling to survive and they're Florida crackers and what that meant, you know, for their culture and how hard the kids had to work and how much sacrifice they had to make. So I highly recommend her books to you. You will never regret them.

Some of them are out of print, of course. But if you can figure out a way to collect her books, bag, borrow, and steal, her books from your public library or from used book distributors. Please raise your children with Lois Lenski's books. She will enrich your lives. If you want to know more about her, she's done, there has actually been a biography on her life that is fairly recent called *Lois Lenski story catcher* by Bobby Malone.

So thank you for listening to my podcast today.

Rachel Winchester:

You've been listening to the Homeschool Made Simple podcast with Carole Joy Seid.

A full list of the books mentioned in this episode is available on our website.

As we plan new episodes, we'd love to hear from you. If you have questions about homeschooling or a topic you want to hear about on the podcast, you can submit your questions or ideas at homeschoolmadesimple.net/ideas.

You can find the link in the show notes as well. Thanks for joining us this week on the Homeschool Made Simple podcast. Be sure to join us next time as we help you homeschool simply, inexpensively, and enjoyably. Blessings!