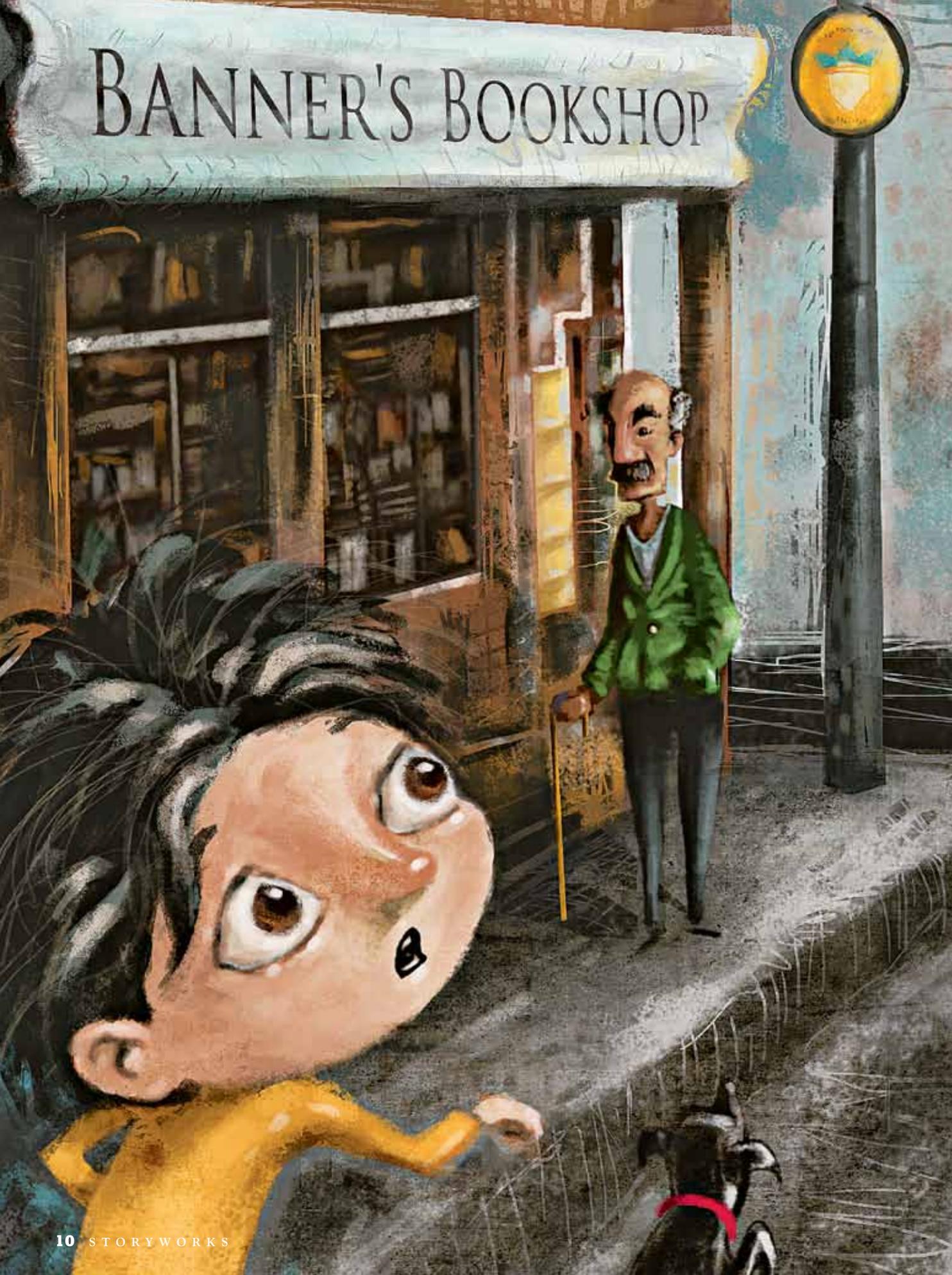


BANNER'S BOOKSHOP



CREATE A CHARACTER CONTEST WINNER!



"My advice for other kids who want to create a character: Try hard and use your best ideas—maybe you'll win! My character was inspired by New York City."—**Ryan Holdridge**

"As a writer, I loved the idea of a boy who works in a bookstore and loves to read. I had fun with it. Roy just came to life so easily!"—**Barbara O'Connor**



Understanding Character In this story, you'll meet a character who has a secret. Think about why this secret is important to him. What does it tell you about Roy?



LOOK FOR WORD NERD'S 5 WORDS IN BOLD

Roy's Secret

What magical mystery does Roy keep hidden away in Banner's Bookshop?

BY BARBARA O'CONNOR | ILLUSTRATIONS BY KYLE M. STONE

Roy Rigatoni had a secret. The secret was swirling around inside him and giving him a stomachache.

"Hurry, Rex," he said to the little black dog trotting along beside him. "We're going to be late again, and Mr. Banner will be mad."

Roy pushed his tangled brown hair out of his eyes and hurried up West 9th Street. He nodded to neighbors sitting on their stoops

or tending the tiny gardens in front of their apartment buildings. He waved to the boys playing basketball in the little park next to the church.

Roy had no time for basketball. Every day after school, he dropped his backpack off at his apartment and did the chores scribbled on the notepad on the kitchen table. Then he put a leash on Rex and hurried to Banner's Bookshop to sweep and dust and haul trash

to the alley out back. Roy loved working at the bookshop. He enjoyed the peace and quiet of the little shop. He liked the smell of the books that filled the shelves from floor to ceiling. And he looked forward to seeing Mr. Banner (even though sometimes the old man was a little grumpy). But the main reason Roy loved working at the bookshop was a secret—the same secret that was giving him a stomachache.

Roy and Rex rounded the corner onto busy Court Street. Mothers pushed strollers. Teenagers bopped along to music on their headphones. Old ladies pulled shopping carts loaded with laundry or groceries. Old men snoozed in lawn chairs in front of their shops. Dogs with leashes tied to parking meters sat patiently waiting for their owners to come out of the delis and bakeries and hardware stores. Men and women with briefcases hurried down the stairs to the subway, below the sidewalk, leaving the quiet Brooklyn neighborhood for the noise and traffic of Manhattan.

When Roy pushed open the door of the tiny bookshop, a bell tinkled and Mr. Banner looked up with a frown.

“You’re late again,” he said, shoving a feather duster toward Roy.

“Sorry,” Roy said. “I had a lot of chores.”

Mr. Banner rolled his eyes and muttered under his breath about “all those kids.”

Roy’s mother had a tiny apartment but a huge heart. Ever since Roy could remember, a steady stream of foster children had lived with them. They filled the bunk beds and the fold-out couch and the cots in the hallway. They left piles of hand-me-down clothes in the closets and thrift-shop toys on the floor. They passed outgrown sneakers along to the younger kids and argued over who had the blue toothbrush and whose turn it was to do the dishes. Every day, Roy was surrounded by noise, noise, noise . . . until he got to the quiet little

Roy had disappeared from Banner’s Bookshop and drifted into a world of giants and elves, greedy queens, and talking wolves.

bookshop.

His dog, Rex, curled up on the rug in the back of the shop while Roy swished the feather duster over the books. Tiny speckles of dust swirled in the late-day sunlight that streamed through the front window. Roy worked his way up one side of a narrow aisle and back down the other. Every now and then, he glanced at Mr. Banner, slouched in his beat-up chair by the door.

Finally, the old man’s whiskery chin dropped to his chest, his glasses slid down his nose, and his snores filled the tiny shop.

Roy tiptoed to the back of the aisle and reached high up on the top shelf. He carefully took down a small red book with gold lettering on the front. *The Little Book of Fairy Tales*.

Roy rubbed his hand over the smooth leather surface of the book. He traced the gold lettering. Then he sat on the floor and opened the book. Within minutes, Roy had disappeared from Banner’s Bookshop and drifted into a world of giants and elves, greedy queens, and talking wolves. He wandered lands where mountains were made of glass, and enchanted princes were turned into frogs. Dogs were called hounds. Girls were called maidens. Hunters were huntsmen, and doves

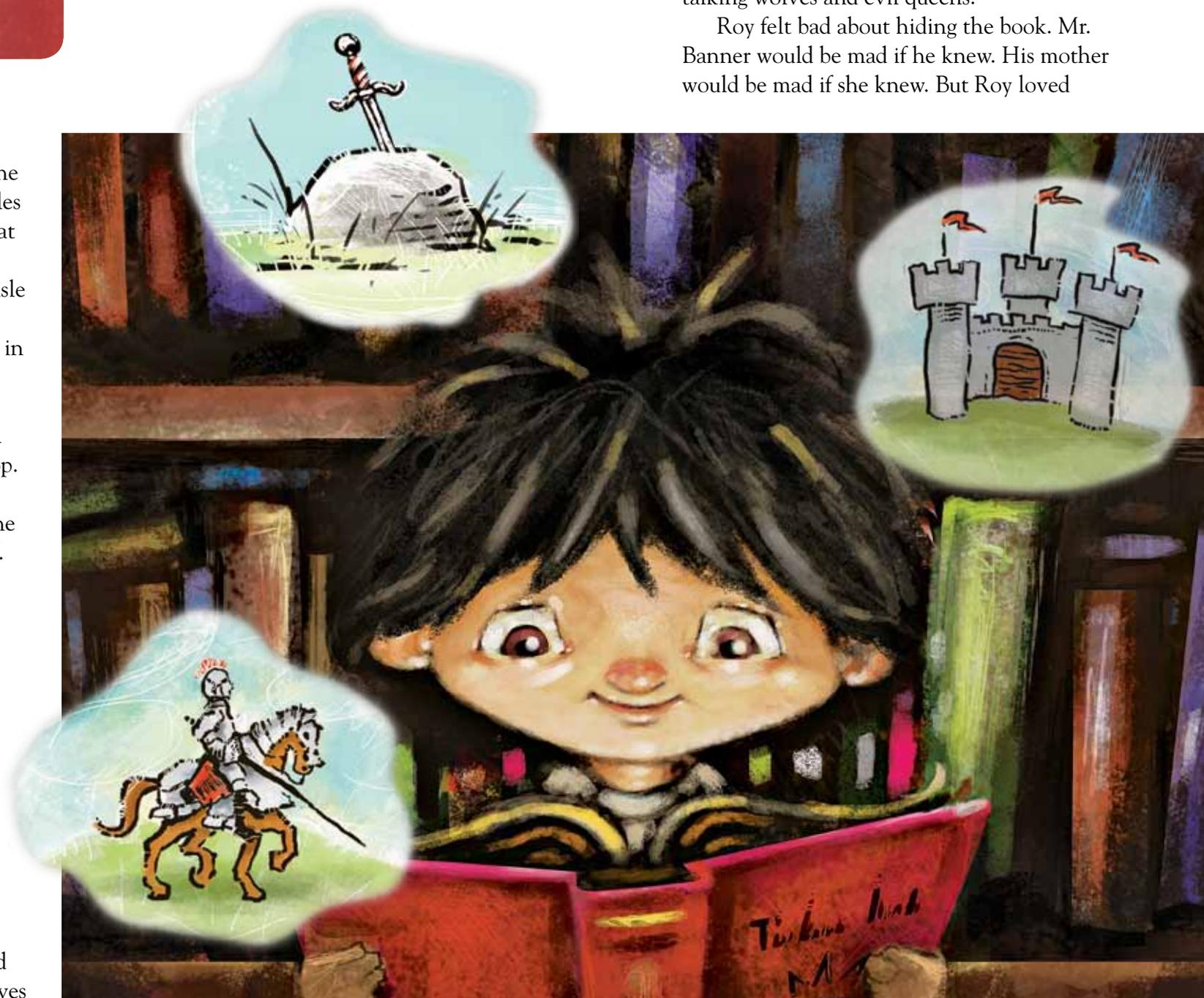
said, “Prithee.” There was a house made of bread and cake and a boy no bigger than a thumb.

Every day, Roy got lost in the fairy-tale world while Mr. Banner snored in his chair. Every now and then, the bell over the door tinkled when someone came into the shop. Mr. Banner would jump to his feet with a grunt and Roy would scurry to find a new spot to put *The Little Book of Fairy Tales*. Sometimes he wedged

the book on a shelf way down on the bottom with the history books. Sometimes he tucked it between the cookbooks. And sometimes he pushed it back behind the biographies.

Roy was hiding the book so that no one could find it. If no one could find *The Little Book of Fairy Tales*, then no one would buy it. And if no one bought it, then Roy could keep disappearing into the world of castles and talking wolves and evil queens.

Roy felt bad about hiding the book. Mr. Banner would be mad if he knew. His mother would be mad if she knew. But Roy loved



getting lost in those fairy-tale worlds. And best of all, at the end of the day, he took the worlds home with him. Every night, he sat on the floor of his tiny bedroom surrounded by sleepy-eyed children, and he told them some of the stories he remembered from *The Little Book of Fairy Tales*. He told them about a little man who spun gold into straw and a beautiful maiden whose hair hung down from the tower of a castle. He told them about a princess who slept for 100 years and an evil queen with a poison apple. The sleepy-eyed children listened in awe. They curled up on pillows and snuggled with blankets while Roy described the mountains made of glass and the boy no bigger than a thumb. He kept telling them stories



until Mrs. Rigatoni scolded them to turn out the lights and go to sleep.

Then one day, when Roy and Rex got to the bookshop, something bad happened. Mr. Banner told Roy that he had sold the shop. A young couple from Oklahoma had bought it and were changing the name to Hardy's Bookshop. The Hardys would not need Roy to sweep or dust or haul trash to the alley out back.

Roy's feet felt like cement as he walked toward the door, with Rex strolling droopy-eared behind him. The little bell over the door tinkled when Roy opened it. But just as he started to step out onto the bustling sidewalk, Mr. Banner called, "Wait!"

When Roy turned, Mr. Banner held out a book.

A small red book with a smooth leather cover and gold lettering.

The Little Book of Fairy Tales.

"Maybe all those kids at home will like this," Mr. Banner said.

Then he shuffled over to his beat-up chair and plopped down with a groan.

Roy stared at the book. His face grew hot. His hands shook a little.

Mr. Banner had known his secret all along!

Roy tried to say "Thank you," but it came out soft and mumbled. He took a deep breath, stood up straighter, and tried again. "Thank you," he said loud and clear.

The old man looked up solemnly from his beat-up chair. Then he smiled a teeny-tiny smile and winked. "You're welcome," he said.

That night, Roy read stories to the sleepy-eyed children gathered around him in the tiny bedroom. He read about an enchanted prince turned into a frog and doves that said, "Prithee." He read about maidens and hounds and huntsmen. And they all got lost in the fairy-tale world until Mrs. Rigatoni scolded them to turn out the lights and go to sleep.

AUTHOR SPOTLIGHT

A CLOSER LOOK AT ONE OF OUR FAVORITE AUTHORS!

Barbara O'Connor

Who could resist a name like Roy Rigatoni? Barbara O'Connor couldn't—that was the first thing that drew her to the character that Ryan created. Throw in Roy's love of books and his furry friend, Rex, and she just had to write about him. Here at *Storyworks*, we're thrilled with the results!

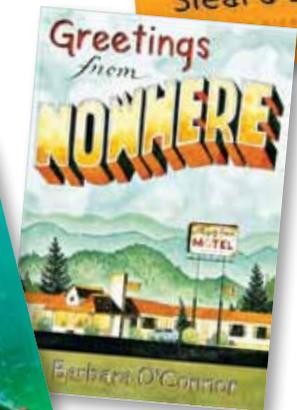
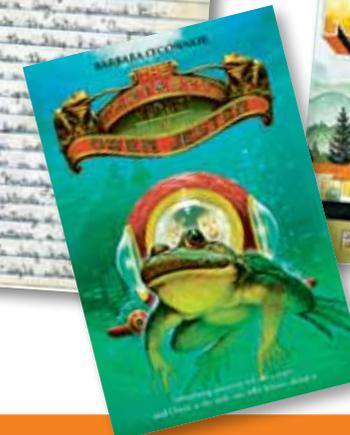
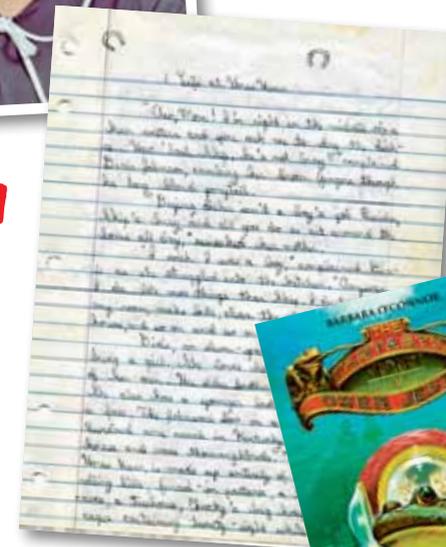
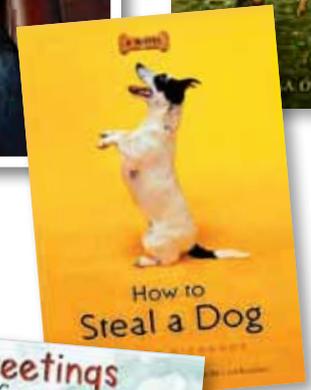
Growing up in South Carolina, Barbara loved to write stories. But she never dreamed she would grow up to be a writer!



Barbara wrote her first "book" when she was 12. Titled "Just a Little Will Power," it was a story of a girl who loves horses.



Here's Barbara with her dog Ruby. Her family also includes a cat, another dog, her husband, and her son—who's grown up and lives in Brooklyn like Roy!



Barbara has written nine novels for young people. They all take place in the South, her "heart's home."