******

***Song for a Whale***, interview with author Lynne Kelly – 2/22/21

1. **What was your inspiration for the book?**

- I found out about the real [lonely whale](https://www.washingtonpost.com/sf/style/2017/01/26/the-loneliest-whale-in-the-world/), who sings a song other whales can't understand. I kept thinking about him and wondering what his life was like. Pretty soon, I knew that I had to write something about him.

1. **Why does Iris like radios so much?**

- I think she likes that she can look at them and see what the problem is and figure out how to fix it. Even if it's a challenge, she can work it out. And she enjoys taking something that's broken and finding a way to make it work again. Through this unusual skill, we see that she's a smart and creative girl.

1. **What motivated you to write the book?**

- I was fascinated by the real-life 52 hertz whale, and had to start writing about him. I didn't know yet what his story would be, but it felt like this was an idea that wasn't going to let me go. Then I came up with a character who would feel connected to him so strongly, she'd have to try to find him.

1. **Who are some authors who you liked as a kid?**

- E.B. White, Roald Dahl, Betsy Byars, and Norton Juster

1. **What is your writing process?**

- I don't plan much of the story before I start writing, but instead discover it as I go along. I usually have the ending in mind, because I know there will be a scene that shows the reader that the characters accomplished what they needed to. When I'm drafting, I try to write without stopping to think about it too much, and I get to know the characters and figure out what they want and what they'll do throughout the story. After that, there's a lot of revision to get the story in shape.

1. **Did you write this book to help spread awareness of the deaf community, or to be relatable to deaf readers?**

- I didn't write it for that reason--I really just wanted to tell a good story, and it made sense for Iris to be a deaf character. Once I decided that there would be deaf characters, though, it was really important for me to get them right, and show them accurately and respectfully.

1. **How did you come up with the idea for this book?**

- After learning about the real-life "lonely whale" and writing a little about what his life might be like, I thought about what character would feel a strong connection to him. That's how I came up with Iris-- as the only deaf student at school, she feels like she and the whale have a similar life in a way, since they both feel alone even though they're surrounded by others. That connection she feels is so strong, it'll send her on a journey to reach out to him.

1. **What parts of the book (or which characters) were easier/harder for you to write?**

- It seems like right before the middle of the book is hardest for me-- I know the character is going to try to keep trying to reach their goal and they're going to keep failing (otherwise the story would be over), but sometimes it's hard to keep that going in a way that's interesting enough but not repetitive.