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Missionary brings gentle touch to social issues through children's historical fiction series

Judith Grimme

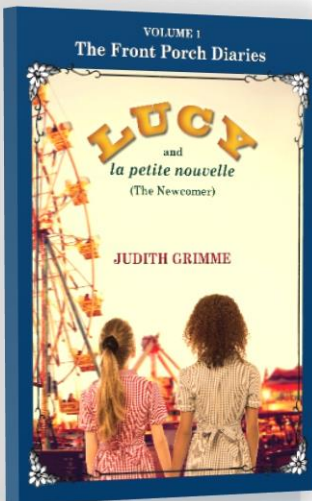
Author of

THE FRONT PORCH DIARIES series

Introduces Volume 1: *LUCY and la petite nouvelle*

Available for interview and book signings

Judith Grimme (pronounced GRIM-ee) received her degree in Sociology from Colorado State University. Early memories of a relative who served as a Catholic nun in Bolivia, as well as her own experiences serving in the mission field in such countries as Canada, Romania, Slovenia, Madagascar, Panama, and El Salvador, fueled Judith's passion for helping people learn to appreciate other cultures, a theme that runs throughout the *Front Porch* series.



The Front Porch Diaries takes place in the mid-1960s in the fictional small Indiana town of East Howard. Nine-year-old Lucy Miller, along with her two older brothers, Eddie and Jon, and younger sister, Carly, find their way into and out of childhood adventures with their family and friends, and transport the reader to an uncomplicated and joyful existence. "Lucy is a chapter book perfect for your readers age 9-12, or to read to younger children. Full of adventure and all the pathos that happens during those pre-teen years, the series is a clean read that will give parents opportunity to talk about important issues with their children," says publisher Leslie Turner. "Although each book gives a nod to important social and political issues through historical context, as well as addressing life traumas small and large that virtually all children face, more than anything else, it's intentionally just a fun, uncomplicated read for children that allows them to escape in a healthy way to another place and time."

Lucy and la petite nouvelle, the first volume in the series, introduces the charming Miller family and the fun-loving children of East Howard, then tops their first book of colorful adventures off with a bang, literally. Volume Two will pick up with Christmas and winter of the following year, and Volumes Three and Four will take the reader well into 1967 and 1968 as the seasons of the year, and of life, come and go.



LUCY
and *la petite nouvelle*
Volume 1

The
Front Porch
Diaries

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MORE ABOUT THE AUTHOR AND SUGGESTED QUESTIONS

Judith Grimme began writing the fictional story of Lucy and her siblings around 2007, a passion that moved into a serious publishing project in 2014 when she realized so many children’s chapter books no longer depicted families where parents had high values, were happily married and provided a safe and stable environment for their children. She noticed very few stories where children worked hard in school, had healthy relationships with their friends and siblings, obeyed their parents, and found their way through life’s ups and downs within a loving and supportive community. “Such families and communities do still exist,” she notes, “and children need to see that family life can be good. Having good friends and strong family relationships is important for us all.” Perhaps more important than any of the broader themes implicit in the series, Grimme states, “My real intent for the books is just for kids to have fun reading them, just simple relationships between friends without the drama of this world we live in.”

Grimme grew up in the 1960s and 70s in New Haven, Indiana, a small town outside of Fort Wayne. With farms surrounding their little home and plenty of siblings and neighbor children to play with, most of the stories in *The Front Porch Diaries* come directly from her childhood experiences. “I grew up in a simpler time,” Judith said. “At least for *us as children* it was simpler; even though it was a tumultuous time in the country we were insulated from all of that until later in life.” Still, the book is set during a time of drastic social change, and the author eases into these subjects through a child’s limited awareness and perspective, in such a way that allows parents to open a conversation with their children if they wish.

SUGGESTED QUESTIONS:

1. You say your intention is for kids to just have fun, uncomplicated stories to read, yet you’ve set your series in the mid-60s, right in the middle of the Civil Rights movement and the beginning of the Vietnam War. Two of the characters in your first book were victims of Apartheid. How are you handling these tough social and political issues on a child’s level?
2. As a missionary and sociologist who has spent many years living abroad, what do you see as the biggest difference between American children and children growing up in other cultures?
3. Even though you’ve dedicated many years of your life to serving the Lord in the mission field, this book is really neutral in terms of the Christian faith; it’s not an aggressively Evangelical children’s book. Why is that?
4. If a child is being raised in a complicated and perhaps unstable environment, how does that child benefit from reading about a family and community life so different from their experience?
5. This book is written for reading-age children age 6-14, yet uses some vocabulary and manners of speech that seem out of reach, at least for the younger children. What was your thought process on that?
6. This is Volume 1 – how many volumes do you plan to write and when will we see them?

To arrange for interviews or a digital media copy before, during and after ICRS 2017, please contact the publisher: Leslie Turner, 812-987-6148 or leslie@encouragebooks.com. This press release and related media photos available online at: <http://www.encouragebooks.com/media.html>

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EXCERPTS FROM “LUCY and la petite nouvelle”
Volume 1 of *The Front Porch Diaries* by Judith Grimme

Fall was certainly in the air at the Miller home with the variety of trees that surrounded the house, providing a lovely backdrop to the autumn sky. The grass had become emerald green from the coolness of the evenings, and the mums were blooming as if to say “Hey, look at me! I’m here to perk up your days.” On the wide front porch hung a whitewashed swing covered with a plethora of thick, inviting pillows, along with a few other wooden rocking chairs, swaying gently in the evening breeze. A few of the front windows were perched open to allow some fresh fall air to permeate the interior. From those windows could be heard the laughter and conversation of a family catching up on the day’s events.

By the time Mr. Miller arrived home, Lucy was feeling a little dizzy. Mr. Miller carried little six-year-old Lucy to his car, buckled her in and showed her how to hold her arm as much in the air as possible while leaning her head on the car door. The ride to the doctor’s office seemed long, but everyone was ready for the Millers when they arrived. The nurse immediately had Mr. Miller carry Lucy into an exam room, where she removed the towel from Lucy’s arm to see the extent of the damage.

“Not bad, for a girl!” Eddie replied. “How about if I try fishing this time, then I’ll give you another chance afterward?” “That’s fine,” Lucy said as she sat back on her elbows and watched Eddie drop the hook in the water again. They were talking away when, suddenly, Eddie jerked the line back just a little. “Did you feel something?” Lucy said as she sat up straight. Eddie answered, “Yeah, I think there is a fish on the hook. Back up a little so I have room to pull it in.” Lucy moved back toward the brush, away from the water. As she was sitting there watching Eddie, out of the corner of her eye, she spotted something moving in the grass and leaves. “Eddie, what was that!” she whispered rather nervously. Eddie replied, intently concentrating on the fish that was flipping around in the creek, “I didn’t see anything, I’m trying to keep this fish on the line...”

Lucy was anxious when she arrived at school the day Mr. Corbett was to arrive. When she met her friends, Liz and Janie before classes began, her mind kept drifting. Janie noticed Lucy’s nervousness and asked, “Why aren’t you listening to what I said, Lucy? I was asking if you think you could come for my birthday this Friday after school and spend the night at my slumber party. We will have so much fun; I am inviting you, and Liz, and Mary, and Joanna. Do you think your mom will let you come?”

“When I was talking to Janie before class, she said something about Simone not ‘looking like us’. Do you think she meant that because Simone’s skin is a little darker than mine or anybody else in my class that she’s not like us? I don’t understand how that can make any difference, because even if Simone is a little different on the outside, she sure is a great person on the inside! Besides, I think she is really pretty, like her momma, don’t you?”

Eddie and Philippe didn’t know the older boys, but they recognized two of the younger ones because they were in a different fourth grade class in the same school. “What do you guys want?” Eddie asked. “What do you care, pipsqueak!” one of the older boys sarcastically blurted out. Then another shouted out, “Get out of our way, goofballs!” Philippe stepped back off the path, because he didn’t want any trouble. Just then, three of the bigger boys decided to get physical and shoved Eddie and Philippe’s friends back. Eddie was ready to jump in to defend his friends, but Philippe grabbed onto his arm and held him back. Philippe spoke softly to his friend Eddie, “Just stay here, Eddie! We don’t need any trouble!”