



# SCHOOLWIDE BOOK REVIEW

## ***Remembering Mrs. Rossi* by Amy Hest**

Candlewick Press (forthcoming February 2007)

ISBN: 0763621633 (Hardcover)

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The coming-of-age book, *Remembering Mrs. Rossi*, is the fictional story of Annie, her schoolteacher mother, and her professor father (a creative-writing teacher). We learn about the apartment in which they live and the summers they spend at the beach. However, 8-year-old Annie experiences a life-changing event when her mother unexpectedly passes away. The book shows Annie as she (and her father) adjusts to life without Mrs. Rossi. The initial scene, after the her mother's death, places Annie and her father at the school's winter assembly in which Mrs. Rossi's class has prepared a book, which reads much like a memoir, to give to Professor Rossi and Annie.

Over the next few chapters, Annie reads the book, "Remembering Mrs. Rossi," which is included in the back of the text. The "book" that the students created is a multi-genre collection of memories of time spent with Mrs. Rossi. Annie is touched by their memories and comes to the realization that students her own age wrote a book! With encouragement from her teacher, Miss Meadows, who tells Annie that she likes how Annie turns her spelling homework into "catchy little stories," Annie starts to think about being a writer. Miss Meadows suggests to Annie that she could write a short book about something she really knows—like someone or a whole family she knows. With this encouragement from Miss Meadows, Annie decides to write about something she knows well: her family.

Many of the elements in this book had something to do with Hest's own life (please see corresponding interview in this issue for more on award-winning author, Amy Hest). Because of this, *Remembering Mrs. Rossi* is particularly effective for talking to your students about living a writerly life: How do writers get ideas? How do writers incorporate them into our stories? How do writers include setting? How do writers portray realistic dialogue? *Remembering Mrs. Rossi* is a highly teachable text. You may wish to use it to illustrate writing to remember, writing as gift, writing about difficult times, and/or exploration of different genres.

Hest confirms that she often includes characters in her stories who are writers because she is a writer. As a teacher in a writing workshop, you could use this text for launching a discussion on different motivating factors in writing, such as decisions about general topics to decisions about what details to include. Using this book could lead you to asking your students to consider questions such as these: What events have happened in your life that would make good stories? What people do you know that would be good to write about? How can you make a personal connection to your own writing?

Share the interview with Amy Hest (in this newsletter issue) with your students before, after, or during the time when you read one of her books together; share her stories of process and writing and ice cream. Your students will enjoy learning about how a famous author works!

Look for *Remembering Mrs. Rossi* coming to a bookstore near you in February 2007.

